**Family Violence Response for Women with Disabilities**

A quick guide to safely managing disclosures

There are a number of specialist services that exist to support women experiencing family violence. These services, and how to make a referral, can be found in our full-length resource guide.

As a frontline worker you may be the first point of contact for a woman with disability who is experiencing violence. Here are some ways to ensure the safe management of a disclosure of violence.

1. **Believe**

Believing a survivor of family violence is a key part of managing a disclosure. It is never your place to question her account of events or suggest she may be lying. One of the main reasons a woman with disability may not disclose violence is the fear of not being believed, so it is vital to provide her with a safe and supportive response.

1. **Validate**

Take time to listen and respond to a woman, before you respond to a situation by offering actions or solutions. Remember that a woman is taking a huge step in sharing her story with you. Some validating responses might be:

* *‘That sounds like it would have been really scary for you.’*
* *‘I’m sorry that you have been going through this.’*
1. **Reiterate Anti-violence Key Messages**

When you are working with a woman who is experiencing violence, it is important to reiterate the key anti-violence messages. Some key messages are:

* *‘Violence is not okay, and it’s* ***never*** *your fault.’*
* *‘Family violence is a big deal, and it is against the law.’*
1. **Making Referrals**

Your most important role when assisting a client who is experiencing violence is to direct her to the family violence services that can support her best. This may involve assisting a woman to contact a service, or making contact on her behalf, (known as a warm referral).

You should also be aware of your own organisation’s policy on handling serious incidents. This will inform what services you choose to access and how you support the woman experiencing violence.

Responses to Avoid

* Asking the woman why she did or did not act in a certain way, such as ‘why didn’t you call the police?’
* Telling the woman what you think she should do.
* Reinforcing myths and stereotypes around family violence.

If you, or anyone you know are experiencing violence please call !800 Respect on 1800 737 732 or see our full guide for a list of referral services.