# Primary Prevention of Family Violence

This video focuses on **primary prevention of violence against women with disabilities.** It explains the drivers – or causes – of violence against women with disabilities. It also identifies some of the actions people can take to challenge the attitudes, beliefs and practices that allow violence to occur in the first place.

Primary prevention focuses on what needs to happen to stop violence from occurring in the first place. It takes a whole-of-population approach to identify the drivers of violence and then seeks to address each of these drivers in order to create a society where violence is not accepted and is less likely to occur (Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth 2015, p.15). A primary prevention approach tells us that family violence is preventable and that if we focus on addressing its drivers across all levels of our society, we will be able to create a world where all people live safe and free from violence.

Successful primary prevention requires a strong early intervention and response system. This means that people experiencing violence can get the support they need, while at the same time, prevention efforts are underway to reduce future rates of violence.

To do this, primary prevention focuses on addressing attitudes/norms, practices and structures that condone or support violence. For instance, challenging negative sexist and ableist beliefs and practices that excuse violence experienced by women with disabilities is an example of primary prevention in action.

The disability sector has a key role to play preventing violence against women with disabilities.

## Understanding inequality

Gender inequality is a major driver/cause of violence. Disability inequality is another form of discrimination. Many people with disabilities do not experience the same opportunities as people without disabilities. When disability inequality and gender inequality come together (intersect) they create double disadvantage. These inequities can result in some groups of people experiencing higher levels of violence as well as greater barriers to seeking support.

On all measures of social and economic participation, women with disabilities are disadvantaged compared to women and men without disabilities.

* Women with disabilities are twice as likely to experience violence than women and men without disabilities (Women With Disabilities Australia & University of New South Wales and People with Disabilities Australia, 2013).
* Women with disabilities experience all forms of violence at higher rates, increased severity and for longer than women without disabilities (State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, 2016).
* Women with disabilities have poorer sexual and reproductive health outcomes and are less likely to be involved in decision making about their sexual and reproductive health (O’Connor, 2011)
* Women with disabilities are more likely to be homeless, sole parents and have less access to education (State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, 2016).

## Taking action to prevent violence against women with disabilities

In Australia, *Change the Story* sets out the national shared framework for the prevention of violence against women and their children. It was developed following an extensive review of the international and Australian evidence base regarding what drives violence against women. The framework identifies the key drivers of violence against women as well as the corresponding actions required to address each of these drivers. These are called the **gendered drivers** and **essential actions.** These help to shape what primary prevention action must look like to contribute to the change required to end violence against women.

Since its launch in 2015, companion guides have been developed exploring in greater detail the drivers of violence against specific population groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and LGBTIQ people. These provide greater exploration of how other forms of inequality such as racism, colonisation and dispossession, and homophobia, biphobia and transphobia intersect with sexism to drive violence.

Primary prevention is an emerging field and work is underway to further explore the drivers of violence against women with disabilities. By putting a disability lens on the gendered drivers, we can begin to see how these manifest to drive the high rates of violence experienced by women with disabilities.

### Gendered drivers of violence against women (Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth,2015)

* Condoning of violence against women
* Men’s control of decision-making and limits to women’s independence
* Stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity
* Disrespect towards women and male peer relations that emphasise aggression

The following lists identify the essential actions that can be taken to prevent violence against women and includes examples of actions to reduce gender and disability inequality.

### Essential actions to prevent violence against women (Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth 2015)

* Challenge condoning of violence against women
* Promote women’s independence and decision-making in public life and relationships
* Foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles
* Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys
* Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life

### Essential actions to prevent violence against women with disabilities

* Challenge attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, systems and practices that condone violence against women with disabilities
* Ensure women with disabilities are supported to make their own decisions to the greatest extent possible in all areas of life
* Promote positive images and role models of people with disabilities and challenge gender and disability stereotypes
* Encourage respectful and equal relations with and among people with disabilities and the broader community
* Promote and normalise gender and disability equality of in public and private life

#### Examples of what this might look like in your workplace

* Ensure all staff undertake professional development on preventing violence against women with disabilities
* Identify opportunities to promote the independence of women with disabilities, including education, communication, transportation, and finance.
* Reinforce and role model positive messages about having a disability or being a woman in your workplace
* Ensure your clients have access to accessible information about their rights regarding sex and relationships
* Review your policies and programs to identify unintended inequalities as well as opportunities for participation of women with disabilities
* Speak out when you see people excusing violence against women with disabilities, including in the media
* Place the needs, rights, and decisions of survivors of violence with disabilities at the centre of your work
* Review your marketing and communication materials to ensure it does not reinforce gender or disability stereotypes
* Hold perpetrators accountable for violence against women with disabilities, including those with disabilities
* Increase opportunities for participation of women with disabilities in all areas of your service

#### Examples from the video

* Bella’s friend reinforces that Bella has the right to decide if, and when, she has sex
* Bella’s support worker provides Bella with support to take control of her finances and to advocate to her mother on this
* Bella’s mother supports her to attend the workshop to learn more about sex, consent, and her rights
* Baz’s friend challenges his belief that he is entitled to sex with Bella
* Bella hears the same message about her right to safety, respect and equality from her mother, friend, and worker

## Where to go for additional information and support

#### Support for someone experiencing family violence

In an emergency, always call **Victoria Police** on 000.

**1800RESPECT** is the national family violence counselling, referral and information service and is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week**.** Phone 1800 7377 328 or [www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)

**Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre** is Victoria’s family violence support service and is open 24 hours, 7 days a week.Phone 1800 015 188 or [www.safesteps.org.au](http://www.safesteps.org.au)

**Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA House)** provides sexual assault counselling and crisis support. Phone 1800 806 292 or [www.casahouse.com.au](http://www.casahouse.com.au)

**Djirra** provides information, referral, support, legal service, and workshops for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Victoria who are experiencing family violence.Phone 1800 105 303 or (03) 9244 3333 or <https://djirra.org.au/>

**InTouch – Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence** supports women and children from migrant and refugee communities who are experiencing violence. Phone 1800 755 988 or <https://intouch.org.au/>

**With Respect** provides specialist LGBTIQ family violence support and counselling.Phone 1800 LGBTIQ (1800 542 847) or <https://www.withrespect.org.au/>

**WIRE** offers a free information and referral service for all Victorian women**.** Phone (03) 8346 5200 or email [support@wire.org.au](mailto:support@wire.org.au) or [www.wire.org.au](http://www.wire.org.au)

## Additional information and resources

**Our Watch** is a national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. [www.ourwatch.org.au](http://www.ourwatch.org.au/)

**Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS)** is the national research organisation on addressing violence against women and their children.[www.anrows.org.au](http://www.anrows.org.au/)

**Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV)** is a statewide Victorian organisation working to build the capability of professionals, organisations and systems to prevent and respond to violence against women.[www.dvrcv.org.au](http://www.dvrcv.org.au/)

## Women with Disabilities Victoria information and resources

A range of additional fact sheets and resources can be found at [www.wdv.org.au](http://www.wdv.org.au/)

You can also find out more about Women with Disabilities Victoria’s **Workforce Development Program on Gender and Disability.** The program is a primary prevention strategy which aims to:

* prevent violence against women with disabilities
* improve gender and disability responsive service practice, and
* improve the status and opportunities of women with disabilities.

The Program works with women with disabilities, social service and government organisations and workforces to increase awareness and capacity to prevent violence against women with disabilities. It does this by implementing cultural change strategies and delivering gender and disability equitable, responsive and inclusive services.

The program is supported by the Victorian Government through the Office for Women as an initiative under the Family Violence Industry Plan.

For more information about the program or to engage Women with Disabilities Victoria to provide training to your organisation please contact (03) 9286 7800 or email your inquiry to [wdv@wdv.org.au](mailto:Bianca.Evans@wdv.org.au)

## References

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