# Early Intervention in Family Violence

This video focuses on **early intervention of violence against women with disabilities.** It covers how to recognise some of the early warning signs that someone might be at risk of family violence and take action to address these.

## What is early intervention?

Early intervention – or secondary prevention – aims to ‘change the trajectory’ for individuals at higher-than-average risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence (Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, 2015). By taking action at the early signs that someone is at risk, it may be possible to reduce the likelihood they might experience violence, increase their safety or intervene early to minimise the impact and escalation of violence.

Early intervention can include:

* Identifying early warning signs
* Supporting people to understand what family violence is, what their rights are, and what they can do if they need support
* Providing information or linking people to education or empowerment programs, advocacy, or peer support groups.

## Recognising early warning signs

Early intervention means understanding who might be at risk of family violence and taking action to assist them to reduce this risk and keep safe. You might recognise some of these early warning signs from the film.

* Loss of control, power, or decision-making
* Isolation from family, friends, or community
* Being demeaned, criticised or spoken down to in front of others
* Limited control or access to personal finances, or knowledge of how this is being used
* Monitoring, limiting or controlled someone’s movements or use of technology

Other things can increase risk too, for instance, if a woman lives in a rural or remote area, is culturally isolated or is older (Healy, 2013).

Here are some examples:

* A woman who does not have access to a communication board and is being isolated from services and the community
* A woman with disabilities who is prevented from or unable to secure employment and is financially dependent on her partner
* A woman with disabilities whose parents control her finances and do not allow her any choice in how her money is used.

Controlling behavior might appear as acts of care or protection, but it is important that all people are able to make decisions about their lives and are supported to be safe, empowered, and independent.

## Early intervention tools you could use to support your clients

As a worker there are several things you can do to support your clients.

* **Listen to women with disabilities:** women report that the most important help they received was having someone listen to them (Women with Disabilities Victoria, 2019.
* Provide **accessible information** **to support women to their rights, including their right to safety and respect,** or link them to education and services who specialise in this
* If you are worried someone might be experiencing family violence, **seek information from a specialist service on how to take appropriate action that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of your client**
* **Build their self-esteem, confidence, and experience** to make decisions and advocate for themselves

**Reduce isolation** by linking them to peer support groups or other opportunities to build social connection

**Build your own knowledge** of what other supports, information and programs are out there that might assist your clients, including understanding the drivers of violence against women

* Work with your client to **identify opportunities across all areas of her life to build independence and decision making,** such as employment, education, housing, parenting and personal relationships.
* Work with **their family and friends so that they understand what supported decision making is**, and how they can act to support this
* Identify opportunities to **support and foster women’s independence,** for instance access to communication aids or confidence to access public transport.

**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 state-wide 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**

Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth (2015), Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia, p.15.

Healey, Lucy, (2013), ‘Voices Against Violence: Paper 2: Current Issues in Understanding and Responding to Violence Against Women with Disabilities.’ Women with Disabilities Victoria, Office of the Public Advocate, Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria.

Women with Disabilities Victoria (2019), Fact Sheet 03 Violence against women with disabilities.