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## People with a disability who experience violence, abuse or neglect

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### Summary

- People with a disability, especially women and girls, are twice as likely as other women and girls to experience violence.
  - In an emergency, call triple zero (000)
  - If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, abuse or neglect there is help available. As a starting point, call the National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline on 1800 880 052. They can help you find the best way to deal with an issue and will usually refer you to an appropriate service.
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People with disabilities are among some of the most vulnerable people in our society due to their dependence on others for care and support or because of social isolation, their place of residence or the nature of their disability.

While anyone can experience violence, abuse or neglect, people with disabilities are at greater risk. And of all people with a disability, women and girls with disabilities are at even greater risk.

As a person with a disability, you have the rights to freedom, respect, equality and dignity. You have the right to live to your full potential, to have control over your own life and to live free from abuse or neglect. If you or someone you know is experiencing violence, abuse or neglect at the hands of an individual or an organisation, it is important to seek help.

In an emergency, call **triple zero** (000).

### Recognising violence, abuse and neglect

Violent behaviour by a person towards another can include abusive behaviour that is physical, sexual, intimidating and forceful. People with a disability are more likely to experience violence from a carer or family member. The Victorian *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* defines family violence as:

(a) behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person if that behaviour is:

- physically or sexually abusive
- emotionally or psychologically abusive
- threatening
- coercive
- in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person.

(b) Behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, behaviour referred to above.

The most commonly reported forms of violence experienced by women with a disability are psychological, physical, sexual abuse, controlling behaviour and economic abuse.

Abuse is when the actions of someone violates your human rights. Abuse can be physical, mental, psychological, sexual or even financial.

Neglect is the failure by a service provider or a person caring for you to provide adequate care to you. Types of **neglect** include:

- Physical neglect - failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing and protection. Supervision medical or dental care that places you at undue risk through unsafe environments or practices
  - Passive neglect - withholding or failure to provide the necessities of life
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- Wilful deprivation - wilfully denying you assistance and thereby exposing you to the risk of physical, mental or emotional harm
- Emotional neglect - restricting your social, intellectual and emotional growth or wellbeing

Violence involves physical force being used to hurt, damage or kill someone.

All of these actions are in conflict with your basic human rights. None are acceptable. If you or anyone you know is experiencing violence, abuse or neglect there is help available.

### **Women with disabilities and violence, abuse and neglect**

Women with disabilities are more often victims of violence and are less likely to know how to get help than women without disabilities. In fact, violence against women and girls with disabilities is twice as likely to occur when compared to women and girls without disabilities.

### **Where to go for help**

There are services that can help if you are experiencing (or have experienced) violence, abuse or neglect.

#### **Safe Steps**

**Safe Steps** provides a 24 hour family violence response to women and children through a range of support services including safe house and refuge accommodation, outreach services, information and advocacy. Call **Safe Steps** on **1800 015 188 24** hours 7 days per week.

#### **Sexual Assault Crisis Line**

The **Sexual Assault Crisis Line Victoria** (SACL) is a state-wide, after-hours, confidential, telephone crisis counselling service for victims and survivors of both past and recent sexual assault. This service can provide support, legal and medical advice as well as advocacy with service providers and other medical professionals. Call the Sexual Assault Crisis line on **1800 806 292**.

#### **Victorian Centres against Sexual Assault (CASA)**

**Victorian CASA Forum** is the peak body of the 15 Centres Against Sexual Assault and the Victorian Sexual Assault Crisis Line. The website has a wide range of resources and information about sexual assault translated into languages other than English. It also has information about support groups.

#### **The National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline**

The **National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline** is a telephone service for reporting cases of neglect and abuse of people with a disability. The hotline works with callers to find the best ways of dealing with the issues they report and will usually refer you to an appropriate service. Call the hotline on **1800 880 052**.

#### **1800 Respect**

**1800 Respect** is a 24-hour information, counselling and support line for anyone experiencing or seeking to support someone experiencing sexual assault or violence.

#### **Victoria Legal Aid**

**Victoria Legal Aid** (VLA) can help with free legal advice about family violence intervention orders and with other legal problems. Call VLA on **1300 792 387**.

#### **Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response**

The **Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response** initiative can provide *immediate* support to for women and children to enable them to access crisis accommodation or provide the supports required to enable them to remain safe in their own home. Short-term funds can be provided while the woman works with a family violence case manager to develop a longer term plan.

Call the 24-hour Family Violence Response Centre on **(03) 9322 3555** or **1800 015 188** (toll-free).

#### **Tell Someone**

The **Tell Someone website** provides family violence information for people with a mild intellectual disability and the

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community.

### Where to get help

- In an emergency, call triple zero (000)
- Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, call (03) 9486 9866
- National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline, call 1800 880 052
- Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre (previously the Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service), call (03) 9322 3555 or 1800 015 188 - 24 hours a day
- inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, call (03) 9413 6500 or 1800 737 732
- Domestic Violence Referral Lina, call 1800 633 937
- Women With Disabilities Australia, call (03) 6244 8288
- National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service, call 1800 737 732

**This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:**

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