

Family harm – workplace safety and care

One in three women and one in five men have experienced physical or sexual abuse. ¹ What's your response as an employer or colleague?

Why is it a workplace issue?

In 2018, [Police family harm investigations](#) totalled 133,028, up by more than 11,000 on the previous year.

[New Zealand research²](#), found that the impacts on women at work of living with family violence were complex, interlinked and often long-term. Some of the impacts are listed below.

| Impact of domestic violence on victims in the workplace | Percentage of respondents |
|---|---------------------------|
| Late to work | 84% |
| Concerns over childcare | 65% |
| Did not disclose at work | 53% |
| Time off work due to injury | 53% |
| Getting to work | 38% |
| Unwell/distracted at work | 16% |

Women don't disclose family violence at their work because of privacy and shame [92%]³, so assume these figures are low.

The [Domestic Violence – Victims' Protection Act 2018](#) outlines how employers can assist workers who are victims of family violence. Find out more.

Listen to Janet Fanslow, Associate Professor in the School of Population Health at Auckland University on this [RNZ podcast](#)

Look at Jane Guy's [presentation](#) (Central Lakes Family Services) at Waves 2019 on the impact of family violence on employees.



Family violence in NZ

How is family violence defined?

Family violence [which includes domestic violence, sexual violence, and Intimate partner violence] is defined in the [Family Violence Act 2018 - Section 9](#):

- Physical, sexual, and/or psychological abuse, including intimidation and harassment
- A pattern of behaviour made up of a number of acts, with certain [defined] features
- Of any person or persons in, or previously in, a 'domestic' relationship (spouse, family member, close personal relationship).

Who is affected? ⁴

NZ Police attend one family violence incident every 4 minutes. It is estimated that only 18% of all incidents are reported.

- 33 strangulations presented before courts each week and 4 arrests per day
- On average 15 women, 10 men and 9 children are killed every year by a member of their family
- 50% of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) deaths occurred at the time of actual or intended separation.

Other facts available through It's Not Ok - [The True Picture](#)



When looking at workplaces language is important - for example asking: 'I can see you might be struggling with something...?'

The right to protection is in law

[Domestic Violence - Victims' Protection Act 2018](#) adds legal protections in the workplace for people affected by domestic violence and provides a baseline for employers including:

1. Workplace safety
2. Leave entitlements
3. Making connections with specialist organisations for support
4. Employers cannot discriminate against victims of domestic violence.

Effective workplace practice is key to successfully supporting victims of family violence

Sport and sexual violence

[Ending Sexual Violence in One Generation](#) identifies the prevalence of sexual violence by males against females in sport. A multi-level organisational approach is most effective in preventing sexual and domestic violence.

- Promote gender equitable attitudes and behaviour
- Build on sexual and domestic violence prevention through the sport pipeline
- Improve response to sexual and domestic violence
- Develop healthy, respectful people and communities.



Case Study

South Canterbury [Rugby boss Craig Calder](#) is leading his local clubs in taking a stand against domestic violence with the [Stand Up campaign](#) started in 2018. Involving key community stakeholders, the campaign developed resources now being shared with other clubs. Change so far includes more community discussion and action around domestic violence issues, more communication between individuals, greater reporting of 'lower level' family harm and a change in mindset as to what constituted 'family harm'. Longer term changes will be tracked by NZ Rugby as part of the programme evaluation.

People have a deeper understanding of family harm, domestic violence and sexual violence.

Insights into action

"It's really important that that first disclosure when someone is telling someone for the first time about their experience of domestic violence that people know how to respond appropriately" [Holly Carrington, SHINE]

| | Employers |
|------------------------|--|
| Knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal obligations see Victims' Protection Act Factsheet. • Read the DV Free Guidelines on policy and procedure. • Understand the signs and impact of family violence |
| Leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear position statement from leadership visible to all • Support includes flexible working conditions, appropriate responses & language |
| Help seeking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear information about where to seek help • Identified 'first responders' |
| | Colleagues or co-workers |
| Knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how family violence affects people |
| Supporting a colleague | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer support not advice • Be available and approachable • Consider your own safety and theirs |
| Children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to deal with disclosure |

Getting Help

If you're worried, call the Police. Early – don't wait and wonder.

- In an emergency, phone the Police on 111
- To find out about services in your area, ring Shine's Helpline 0508-744-633
- Are you OK? Info line: 0800 456 450
- National network of Stopping Violence Services <http://nnsvs.org.nz/>
- Oranga Tamariki [Worried about a child?](#)

References

- 1 Jane Guy, Family Violence Regional Co-ordinator, Central Lakes; from Presentation at WAVES 2019
- 2 Rayner-Thomas, M.M. (2013) [The Impacts of Domestic Violence on Workers and the Workplace](#). Submission for Master of Public Health
- 3 Wathen, J. et al (2015) [The Impact of Domestic Violence in the Workplace](#), Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.
4. Data sourced from: <http://www.areyouok.org.nz/family-violence/statistics/>
5. Raliance (2017) [An Overview Report: How Sport Can End Sexual Violence in One Generation](#).