

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic Violence is a term used to describe any form of violence or abuse experienced by a person that is perpetrated by their spouse, intimate partner, family member or informal carer.

Domestic Violence includes one or more of the following types of behaviour:

- ✦ **Physical abuse** may include pushing; shoving; hitting; punching; choking; kicking; throwing objects; driving dangerously to frighten you; or making threats to physically harm you, your children or your pets. Physical abuse may also include behaviour that threatens your physical wellbeing, for example, denying you or your children access to medical attention or restricting the provision of adequate food and/or water.
- ✦ **Verbal abuse** may include swearing or use of offensive language; constant criticism and ridicule; and making deriding or derogatory comments. Verbal abuse may also include spreading rumours or false information about you to your friends, family or colleagues.
- ✦ **Emotional abuse** is any behaviour used to create feelings of distress, fear, anxiety, confusion, and/or helplessness. Examples include: constantly criticising or belittling your actions and abilities; or making threats to have you deported from Australia, to leave you or to stop you from seeing your children.
- ✦ **Sexual abuse** is any form of sexual contact or behaviour that is forced or unwanted. This might include: touching, kissing, oral sex, vaginal or anal intercourse, viewing pornography, or any other sexual act that is not wanted. Sexual abuse may occur within marriage - that is sex without your freely given consent. Consent is not seen to be freely or voluntarily given if you are forced, threatened, intimidated or coerced to have sex with your partner; or if you are afraid that you will be harmed if you do not have sex with your partner.
- ✦ **Financial abuse** may include denying you access to the money you earn or are entitled to (Centrelink benefits); not providing adequate income for you and/or your children's personal needs; constant surveillance and monitoring of every purchase you make or threats to withdraw financial support.
- ✦ **Social abuse** may include attempts to restrict or limit your contact with family or friends; constant surveillance and monitoring of your telephone calls; and stalking.
- ✦ **Cultural and spiritual abuse** includes behaviours that demonstrate a lack of regard and respect for your cultural and/or spiritual beliefs, values and practices. Examples include: constantly criticising or belittling your cultural and/or spiritual beliefs, values and practices; prohibiting conversations in your first or preferred language; restricting you from dressing in culturally appropriate garments; or denying you access to attend cultural or religious events.
- ✦ **Damage to property** includes damage to the house, household furniture or anything else that you own or use. Examples include: breaking a plate, punching a hole in the wall, or scratching your car.

It is important to remember that:

- No-one ever deserves to be abused.
- The person being abusive is responsible for their own behaviour.
- Everyone has the right to feel safe.

IWSS would like to acknowledge the Department of Communities for providing funding for this resource and acknowledge the following organisations for their kind permission to adapt existing resources. IWSS would also like to acknowledge the graphic design created by John Garnsworthy and image by Rachel Apelt.



Domestic Violence Prevention Centre
Gold Coast Inc



Funded by

