

Family Violence Guide¹ – Staff Training

Family violence has an impact on the wellbeing and safety of staff and customers. Effective family violence policies and processes can reduce risks and improve outcomes for staff and customers.

One part of a business response

Training is one part of a business response for customers experiencing family violence – see other guides [here](#).

Recognise, Respond, Refer

Whether responding to colleagues or customers, the aim of training is to enable staff to recognise signs of family violence, respond appropriately and refer to an appropriate service. Staff are not expected to be “social workers”, in fact it can be harmful for staff to provide assistance that should be provided by experts.

Training for all staff

Business-wide staff training should include:

- The nature and prevalence of family violence (including emotional and financial abuse);
- Attitudes that contribute to abuse and responding appropriately to these in the workplace
- Understanding that while family violence can affect anyone, it “is a gendered issue, in terms of frequency, how it’s perpetrated, the ongoing effects and the likelihood of victimisation”² (We suggest basing training on the [Change the Story Framework](#)).
- Practical strategies to respond to a colleague who discloses, or may be experiencing, family violence.
- The impact of hearing the family violence stories of others (“vicarious trauma”)
- Details of the supports the business will provide to staff affected by family violence, including any training, leave, external referrals, and who can handle staff concerns/disclosures

¹ This, and [other guides](#), have been developed for businesses and government departments to assist the development of family violence policies.

² Mary Barry, CEO, Our Watch

- Customer and staff safety

Additional training for specific staff

Additional training should be provided depending on the roles, such as customer facing staff, those who support/manage those staff and staff who are implementing customer family violence policies.

Consider having family violence experts presenting alongside trainers who have expertise in the business' operations and policies.

A quality training provider can work with the business to identify how staff training can be tailored to the different roles.

Choosing a Training Provider

The subject of family violence is complex.

A skilled trainer must understand these complexities, but be able to clearly impart the information and skills that staff need to fulfil their roles.

The trainer must be able to respond appropriately to staff in the audience who may be victims/survivors of family violence, others who may be/have been perpetrators and those who are resistant to training or make others in the group feel unsafe.

This requires a level of skill, and understanding, which not all training providers have.

The business should be confident that the information provided, and strategies recommended (for example how to respond to colleagues or customers who disclose family violence) are appropriate and evidence-based.

Risks can arise if training simply provides information about the topic without preparing staff to apply the information in practice, to identify risks and to respond to disclosures to protect customer and staff safety.

Some questions to ask a potential training provider:

- How did you acquire your expertise in this topic? (Look for professional training (eg social work and/or experience working with people experiencing family violence).
- How do you account for the likelihood that there will be victims/survivors as well as perpetrators in your audience?
- How do you respond to attendees who may disclose that they are victims/survivors of family violence?
- How do you respond to staff who may be reluctant/refusing to engage? (as well as recognising that some staff may be reluctant based on personal experience/trauma, a trainer should also be confident to respond to individuals who may be disruptive or dismissive of family violence as a problem.)
- What is the basis for your advice to the audience about responding to co-workers or

customers who disclose family violence, and for how you respond to disclosure or perpetrators in the training setting? (You should hear a confident response that their advice, and their own responses, are based on research/evidence, and that they ideally have some personal experience applying these strategies in practice)

- What are some common myths about family violence that you would address in training?

Confident responses to these questions do not guarantee a high-quality provider, but may help to give an indication of the trainer's ability and expertise.

Seek references from other businesses.

On-Line Training

Face-to-face training is preferable wherever possible, however it may be appropriate to provide some training on-line, particularly as a follow-up to initial face-to-face training. Where training is being provided on-line, businesses should also be prepared to provide support if issues arise for some members of staff. The provider, or other specialist organisation, may be able to provide some advice about how such support might be provided.

Ensure that all training, even if via video or on-line, includes appropriate warnings for those who may have been affected by family violence.

Ongoing resources and support

Provide reference material for staff, including on self-care. Ensure staff know who to talk to if they need support. Ensure any staff assistance programs are provided by professionals who have received family violence training.

Review and Provide Training Regularly

Seek feedback from front-line staff, supervisors and managers about how effective they found the training, and whether they have found it useful in practical situations.