

Working well with women with disability

Good Practice

The target audience for this series is sexual assault, domestic violence and women's health and wellbeing service workers in Queensland.

Workshop 3

Good Practice

This workshop series was designed, developed and delivered with women with disability. It is targeted to people who work in the sexual assault, women's health and wellbeing and domestic and family violence workforce.

Workshop 3 provides information and resources to enable good practice in working with women with disability experiencing domestic and family violence. This workshop was developed by Siobhan Gibbs with contributions from Smiley.

Please watch the Workshop 3 video and explore the resources linked in this handout to learn about the following topics:

- Experiences from women with disability.
- Communication tips.
- Capacity and consent.
- Abstract vs. concrete language and thought.
- Safety planning for women with disability.
- Working alongside support workers.
- Adjusted counselling practice advice from workers

Taking Care

The subject matter in this workshop will discuss gendered violence, abuse and neglect. This may be triggering or difficult for some.

Here is a good organisation for both personal and professional help and support:

<https://www.1800respect.org.au/>

1800RESPECT
NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOMESTIC
FAMILY VIOLENCE COUNSELLING SERVICE

Key statistics



In 2014-2015 a total of **71,775 incidents** of domestic and family violence were reported to Queensland Police.

Source: *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016-2026*

Domestic and family violence as an issue for **71% of cases** involving the death of a child with recent involvement with the child protection system.

Source: [Queensland Child Death Case Review Committee report for 2013-2014](#)

In 2014-15, Indigenous women were **32 times as likely** to be hospitalised due to family violence as non-Indigenous women.

Source: DV Connect 2020

Socio-demographic characteristics of victims

The 2016 PSS found that for persons living with disability or a long-term health condition the likelihood of experiencing violence (physical and/or sexual) was higher for the following socio-demographic groups:

Persons aged 18 to 24 years of age (17%) and 25 to 34 years of age (13%) compared with those aged 35 years and above (all below 10%)

Persons belonging to **the lowest, second, and third quintiles of socio-economic disadvantage (6.4%, 6.5% and 6.8% respectively)** compared with those belonging to the highest (3.5%)

The 2014 General Social Survey also found that of **persons living with disability or a long-term health condition, those who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or other were more likely to experience physical and/or threatened violence (19%)** compared with those who identified as heterosexual (8.2%).

Source: [Disability and Violence – In focus: Crime and Justice Statistics 2021](#)



Working alongside support workers

Collaboration and partnerships between the disability and DFV sector are critical in providing good support to women with disability experiencing violence.

The ANROWS Whatever it Takes report highlights cross sector collaboration as critical in providing good practice support for women with disability experiencing DFV. The report highlights DFV service responsiveness and expertise in supporting women's safety. It also notes that time constraints and lack of knowledge around support needs and benefits for women with disability may be barriers in providing the best support possible.

Cross sector collaboration can help break down these barriers and stop women falling through the cracks. A good first step is finding out about local disability services and building connections so that the disability sector will be comfortable to make contact in regard to referrals and the DFV sector has a point of contact for information and ongoing support.

A useful resource that can help is 'Domestic and Family Violence Training & Resources for the Disability workforce' which are available at www.workupqld.org.au. These resources support people working in the disability sector to recognise and respond sensitively and appropriately to DFV. In addition to raising awareness of DFV and how to respond these resources assist the disability workforce to understand the role of the DFV worker and service, safety planning and how to maintain professional boundaries to keep themselves and the woman they are working with safe.

Support workers can help DFV services to respond well to women with disability by:

- Providing practical support such as transport.
- Providing emotional support, for example sitting with the women while waiting for her appointment
- Debriefing with the woman after appointments.
- Supporting the woman to consider what they may need to take care of themselves.
- Helping DFV services to understand and access support options such as the NDIS.

High risk DFV risk assessments

Here are some examples of plain language questions that could be used in safety planning with women with disability.

Example question	To assess for..
Have you ever been to court to get an order - a piece of paper that says he can't come near you?	<i>Domestic Violence Order</i>
Does he hurt you? Like... May need to give examples of physical abuse	<i>Physical abuse</i>
Does he tell you he is going to hurt you/your children/pets/himself?	<i>Threats to harm/kill</i>
Does he have a gun? Does he know someone who has a gun?	<i>Access to weapons</i>
Does he follow you? Does he check your phone?	<i>Stalking/monitoring</i>
Does he decide what happens with your money?	<i>Financial abuse/control</i>
Does he stop you from seeing friends/family/worker?	<i>Social isolation/abuse/control</i>
Have things gotten worse since you have become pregnant?	<i>Increased risk</i>
Are things getting worse? Can you tell me how it is getting worse?	<i>Escalation of violence</i>
Are you more scared since you have left him? Can you tell me why?	<i>Risk of homicide</i>
Are you scared he might kill you? What makes you feel that way?	<i>Risk of homicide</i>
Do you know if he has ever hurt an ex-girlfriend?	<i>History of violence</i>
Has he ever put his hands around your neck/throat, and you felt like you couldn't breathe? Did this happen today/tonight?	<i>Strangulation and how recent</i>
Has he ever you made you have sex with him when you didn't want to?	<i>Sexual abuse</i>
Have children been around when he is hurting you? Have children been around when he telling you he is going to hurt you?	<i>Child abuse/witness</i>
Does anybody know about what he is doing to you?	<i>Supports/safety options</i>
What do you usually do to try and stay safe?	<i>Ability to safety plan</i>

Source: WWILD 2020 Copyright

Learn more

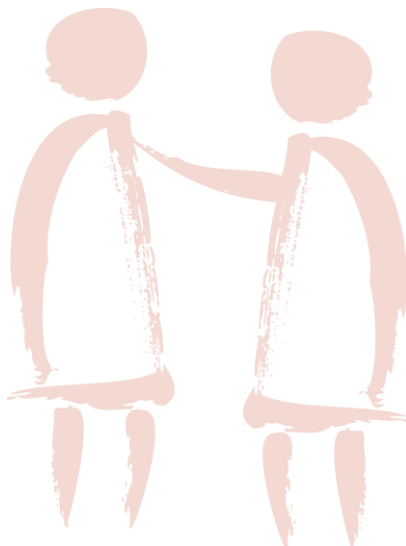
- Responding to Women with Disability Experiencing DFV, WorkUP Queensland [Responding to Women experiencing DFV](#)
- Advice to workers from Introduction to Intellectual Disability Training, WWILD [Introduction to Intellectual Disability](#) (scroll down to video, start watching at 0.15 minutes)
- Adjusted Counselling Practice when working with Women with Intellectual Disability, WWILD [Adjusted Counselling Practice](#)

Case study - Ellen

A young woman, Ellen, has come for her first meeting with you. You are an intake officer at a sexual violence service.

Ellen has disclosed sexual assault from her housemate, and her support worker has come with her to the meeting. Your goal is to check for her safety, and to see what supports your service can provide her.

- *What are the steps you would take when Ellen first arrives at the service?*
- *What would be the goals of your meeting with Ellen?*



Resources

<p>Resources for workers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>WWILD Training (Counselling) – Supporting Recovery from Trauma</u> • <u>Safety Planning with People with Disability – 1800 Respect 2021</u> • <u>Disability Support Toolkit, 1800 Respect</u> • <u>Training & Resources for the Disability sector</u>
<p>Resources for people with disability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>WWILD Easy Read Resources</u>
<p>Further information/reading</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Australia’s Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016-2026</u> • <u>Disability and Violence – In focus: Crime and Justice Statistics 2021</u> • <u>Queensland Child Death Case Review Committee report for 2013-2014</u> • <u>ANROWS, Whatever it Takes, Access for Women with Disabilities to DFV Services</u>