

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING DISCLOSURES OF FAMILY VIOLENCE AND ELDER ABUSE

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Southern Melbourne Primary Care Partnership
Elder Abuse Prevention Network



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INTRODUCTION

Background

Southern Melbourne Primary Care Partnership (SMPCP) is one of 28 PCPs across Victoria who bring together health, local government and community services to improve the health and wellbeing of their communities. As a platform whose main role is to bring people together to address health and social issues, PCPs are well placed to support Elder Abuse Prevention Networks (EAPNs) through shared vision, resources and commitment.

The SMPCP EAPN is one of 10 EAPNs funded by the Victorian Government to utilise a primary prevention approach in addressing elder abuse and was established in January 2018. The EAPN currently consists of 26 member organisations across the local government areas of Bayside, Glen Eira, Kingston, Port Phillip and Stonnington. As a component of the Monash Health Integrated Model of Care for Responding to Suspected Elder Abuse, activities also take place within the local government areas of Cardinia, Casey and Dandenong.

Disclosures of elder abuse

Although network activities are focused on primary prevention, it is inevitable that disclosures of elder abuse will take place at times. Discussing elder abuse provides people with an opportunity to recognise and respond to situations they have experienced or witnessed and this may entail disclosing abuse to EAPN representatives. This guide has been developed to support EAPN representatives to appropriately manage disclosures for the victim-survivor, witness and EAPN representative.

It is important to note that while EAPN representatives may receive disclosures of elder abuse there is no expectation that they will be responsible for ongoing case management or support for the victim-survivor. This is the responsibility of specialist referral agencies.

Organisational policies and procedures

While this guide refers to disclosures which may occur as a result of SMPCP EAPN activities, it recognises that many EAPN member organisations may have their own policies and procedures which address disclosures of elder abuse and family violence. This guide in no way replaces organisational policies and procedures, which should be adhered to as a first priority in all instances where they exist.

Acknowledgements

This guide contains local information to support individuals carrying out activities as representatives of the SMPCP EAPN. Content has been drawn from other sources and the authors would like to acknowledge the work of Our WATCH, 1800RESPECT and Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria.

Know your role

There is no expectation for you to become a counsellor or provide ongoing support. The most important thing you can do is listen without judgement and show that you believe what you have been told.

As a member of a primary prevention network, it is unlikely you will come across a situation where someone is at immediate risk. If you do find yourself in this rare circumstance, discuss it with your manager or supervisor immediately. They will decide what to do next.

The table below outlines basic expectations.

You should	You should not
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be supportive• Be non-judgemental• Allow the person to make decisions• Have accurate referral information on hand	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide advice• Try to fix the situation• Provide counselling• Try to find out more details about the situation• Force the person to tell you anything

If managing disclosures causes you distress in any way, you are encouraged to access support via your organisations Employee Assistance Program. Alternatively, 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732) provide free phone and online counselling to practitioners.

Managing disclosures: victim-survivors

Immediate response

- Make sure a private space is available to talk
- Listen without judgement
- Acknowledge what the person has told you and that this must be difficult for them
- Condemn the use of violence
- Ask if they are safe right now. Call triple zero (000) if they respond no
- Explain that you are willing to assist but there may be limits to your skills and experience
- Ask if they would like contact details for support services - they may say no, respect this
- Provide contact details for support services if required - explain that these numbers will connect them with understanding experts (see support number section on page 5)
- Follow your organisation's policies or procedures if you have them, including reporting the incident to your manager or supervisor

- Enable the victim-survivor to be in control of decisions

What do I say to a victim-survivor?

It's not possible to have a standard script that is suitable for all situations but you may find some of the phrases below useful to help express empathy and support.

- *Thanks for sharing your experience with me...*
- *That sounds like a terrible experience...*
- *I imagine it has taken a lot of courage for you to share your story with me...*
- *It is because of experiences like yours that we are involved in this work...*
- *I don't have any special training in helping people with experiences like yours but I can give you contact details for people who do...*
- *What you choose to do from here is up to you, but I can provide you with contact details for free specialist*

services you can contact if you would like to...

Follow up

If the victim-survivor would like follow up, or your manager or supervisor decides referral is appropriate, contact details for support services can be found on page 5. Managers and supervisors are encouraged to consult the

decision-making guide *Elder abuse: prevention to action* for support in choosing appropriate services.

If you, your manager or supervisor are unsure what to do, secondary consultations are available from the *Monash Health Elder Abuse Liaison Officer* on 9265 7835 | 0431 453 950 selina.nivelle@monashhealth.org.

Managing disclosures: perpetrators

While it is less likely, it is possible that someone who has perpetrated elder abuse may disclose their behaviour to you. The same basic principles of response apply.

Immediate response

- Make sure a private space is available to talk
- Listen without judgement
- Acknowledge what the person has told you and that this must be difficult for them
- Don't minimise or justify the use of violence
- Condemn the use of violence
- Ask if they are at risk of harming someone right now. Call triple zero (000) if they respond yes
- Explain that you are willing to assist but there may be limits to your skills and experience
- Ask if they would like contact details for support services - they may say no, respect this
- Provide contact details for support services if required - explain that these numbers will connect them with understanding experts (see support number section later in this guide)
- Follow your organisation's policies or procedures if you have them, including reporting the incident to your manager or supervisor

What do I say to a perpetrator?

It is not possible to have a standard script that is suitable for all situations but you may find some of the phrases below useful to help express empathy and support.

- *Thanks for sharing your experience with me...*
- *I imagine it has taken a lot of courage for you to share your story with me...*
- *Talking to me is an important first step; the next step is to talk to someone who has special training to help you. I can give you contact details...*
- *I am concerned for the safety of the people around you and I feel like you are too. I would like you to contact...*

Follow up

If the perpetrator would like follow up or your manager or supervisor decides referral is appropriate, contact details for support services can be found on page 5 of these guidelines.

If you, your manager or supervisor are unsure what to do, secondary consultations are available from the *Monash Health Elder Abuse Liaison Officer* on 9265 7835 | 0431 453 950 selina.nivelle@monashhealth.org.

Support numbers



Legal

Seniors Rights Victoria
1300 368 821

Community legal services
St Kilda – 8598 6635
Peninsula – 9783 3600



Counselling and mediation

Better Place Australia
1800 214 117



Financial counselling

Seniors Rights Victoria
1300 368 821
Better Place Australia
1800 214 117

Online financial counsellor search
<https://bit.ly/1IYN0T>



Advocacy

General community
Office of the Public Advocate
1300 309 337
Seniors Rights Victoria
1300 368 821

Recipients of aged care packages
Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)
1800 700 600

Better Place Australia
1800 214 117

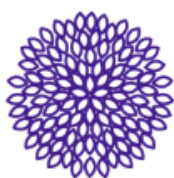
Residents in aged care or recipients of aged care packages
Elder Rights Advocacy
9602 3066



Family violence counselling and support

General community
1800 RESPECT
1300 737 732
The Orange Door
1800 319 353

Male victims and perpetrators
Men's Referral Service
1300 766 491
Mensline Australia
1300 766 491



Sexual abuse support

South East Centre Against Sexual Assault (SECASA)
9594 2289



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support

Djirra
1800 105 303



Multicultural services

In Touch – 1800 755 988

A specialist family violence service that works with multicultural women, their families and their communities.

PRONIA – 9388 9998

Support for members of the Greek community experiencing elder abuse.



LGBT&I support

Thorne Harbour
1800 105 303

Switchboard Victoria
1800 542 847