

Domestic Violence - Identifying and Responding

Document Number PD2006_084

Publication date 26-Oct-2006

Functional Sub group Clinical/ Patient Services - Maternity
Clinical/ Patient Services - Incident management
Clinical/ Patient Services - Baby and child

Summary This policy outlines the characteristics and consequences of domestic violence and identifies the role of NSW Health generally and Area Health Services specifically, in recognising and responding to domestic violence. The policy introduces a new preventative strategy involving universal routine screening for domestic violence in services where significant numbers of women have been found to be at risk. The aims are twofold: to reduce the incidence of domestic violence through primary and secondary prevention approaches: and to minimise the trauma that people living with domestic violence experience, through tertiary prevention approaches, ongoing treatment and follow-up counselling.

Replaces Doc. No. Domestic Violence - Identifying and Responding [PD2005_413]

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Applies to Area Health Services/Chief Executive Governed Statutory Health Corporation, Affiliated Health Organisations, Affiliated Health Organisations - Declared, Community Health Centres, NSW Dept of Health, Public Hospitals

Audience Clinical staff -emergency departments and clinical settings that provide domestic violence services

Distributed to Public Health System, Community Health Centres, Dental Schools and Clinics, Divisions of General Practice, Government Medical Officers, Health Professional Associations and Related Organisations, NSW Ambulance Service, NSW Department of Health, Public Hospitals, Tertiary Education Institutes

Review date 26-Oct-2013

Policy Manual Not applicable

Director-General **File No.** 04/432

Status Active

This Policy Directive may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Compliance with this directive is **mandatory** for NSW Health and is a condition of subsidy for public health organisations.

IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The *Policy and Procedures for Identifying and Responding to Domestic Violence* (2003) http://internal.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/p/pdf/procedures_dom_violence.pdf provides a framework for informing domestic violence responses for staff in hospitals and community health services. This document's child protection focus has been improved by amendments as detailed below.

It is important to note the inclusion of the following additional text in *section 3.1 Identification of domestic violence* (page 9), procedures section after the paragraph commencing "Ask about safety":

"Ask about child safety:

- *Do you have children? (If so) have they been hurt or witnessed violence?*
- *Who is/are your child/ren with now? Where are they?*
- *Are you worried about your child/ren's safety?*

Health workers must make a report to the Department of Community Services Helpline on 133 627 where he or she has reasonable grounds to suspect a child is at risk of harm."

Procedures in *Section 3.2.2, Counselling interventions with victims* (page 13) have also been amended by deleting and replacing dot point six under "Assess safety" with the following text:

"Are there children involved? Who is/are your child/ren with now? Are they safe? Was/were your child/ren nearby when your partner was violent to you?" Health workers must make a report to the Department of Community Services Helpline on 133 627 where he or she has reasonable grounds to suspect a child is at risk of harm (refer to Section 4.5 – Children and domestic violence)"

It is recommended that any hard copies of the document *Policy and Procedures for Identifying and Responding to Domestic Violence* (2003) in circulation also be amended accordingly.

Living with domestic violence has a serious impact on short- and long-term psychological, emotional and physical health of victims and their children. The aim is to help reduce the incidence of domestic violence through the provision of primary and secondary prevention health care services, and to minimise the trauma that people living with domestic violence experience, through tertiary prevention approaches including ongoing treatment and follow-up counselling.

The term "domestic violence" is used to refer to abuse and violence between adults who are partners or former partners. NSW Health has existing policies and strategies that address other forms of violence that are commonly experienced. Health workers may find this policy can provide guidance in responding to situations where similar dynamics occur, in particular the section on legal responses for domestic violence.

Title: Identifying and Responding to Domestic Violence

The policy and procedures were developed by the NSW Department of Health in consultation with Area Health Services, interagency partners and non-government organisations.

A core component of the policy is routine screening for domestic violence, which is to be implemented for women attending antenatal and early childhood health services and women aged 16 years and over attending mental health and alcohol and other drugs services in accordance with the policy. *Routine screening for domestic violence in NSW Health: an implementation package* provides the screening protocol, guide for managers and the learning program:

http://internal.health.nsw.gov.au/policy/hsp/domesticviolence/routine_screening.htm

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