

# RESPONSIBILITY 2: IDENTIFICATION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE RISK

## Identification of Persons Using Family Violence

Identification is needed when family violence is suspected, but not confirmed - it assists professionals to recognise and document what they observe within their role. When professionals see an indication that a person is using violence, Responsibility 2: Identification of family violence risk, highlights how professionals can observe and document narratives and behaviours.

Identification streamlines responses as part of Structured Professional Judgement, particularly by:

- Focusing on holding a victim-centred lens
- Identifying evidence-based risk factors through observation of narratives and behaviours

This requires professionals to understand the narratives that underlie the use of family violence, as well as the social conditions that may relate to someone's choice and intent to use family violence – such as social conditions, early life experiences, enduring beliefs and attitudes, and individual choice.

## Practice Requirements

- **Awareness of evidence-based family violence risk factors** – Risk factors reflect the current and emerging evidence-base relating to family violence risk. These risk factors underpin MARAM identification, screening, and assessment. Family violence risk assessment is used to understand the presentation of risk and to determine the level of risk.
- **Recognising family violence narratives and behaviours** – Some service users' narratives and behaviours will be a direct disclosure of their use of family violence. However, it is more common for their narratives and behaviours to only indicate the presence of risk factors. In some circumstances, professionals will need to seek and share information to confirm, or determine, your identification of risk.
- **Safely responding to identification of a person using violence** – Professionals should understand their responsibilities in order to safely respond to the identification of a person using violence, this could look like:
  - Not closing off engagement without service plan (e.g., referrals, information sharing, or secondary consultations).
  - Providing support for presenting needs, monitor any changes to their situation or engagement.
  - Seeking secondary consultation as required and engage in information sharing.

## Using the Identification Tool

### Who should use the tool?

All professionals who have a role to identify signs of family violence (Tiers 1-4).

### When should the tool be used?

This tool should be used when a service user's narratives and behaviours indicate they may be using family violence.

### How should the tool be used?

Professionals can use this tool to record observations of narratives and behaviours that may indicate a person is using family violence. Narratives and behaviours identified that indicate family violence risk will inform professional judgment on how to respond.

**Please Note:** This tool may not be able to definitively determine the presence of family violence, without direct disclosure of risk behaviours, however, it supports professionals to record information that can be analysed alongside other information.

### Practice Considerations

- **Narratives that may relate to underlying beliefs or attitudes** – Recognising narratives that may reveal underlying beliefs or attitudes that are pro-violence, discriminatory, and/or commonly associated with likely use of family violence.
- **Physical or verbal behaviour that may relate to the use of family violence** – Recognising physical or verbal behaviour that may reveal the use of coercive control and violence, such as aggression, hostility, or malice.
- **Narratives minimising or justifying** – Recognising narratives that minimise or justify beliefs and attitudes or physical and verbal behaviour.
- **Narrative or behaviour practitioners experience (of the service user)** – The person may use the above narratives or behaviours with you during a session or over time. You may experience invitations to collude or feel intimidated, manipulated, or controlled throughout your engagement with them.
- **Immediate risk** – The adult using violence may make a direct or targeted threat against an adult or child victim survivor, a third party or any other person. The adult using violence may also indicate risk to their own safety.
- In circumstances in which there are no clear evidence-based family violence risk factors but your professional experience or 'gut feeling' tells you something is not right, consider seeking secondary consultations with specialist perpetrator intervention services.

### Responding When You Identify a Person is Using Family Violence

#### Family violence is not occurring?

- Risk can change over time. If it is not currently evident that family violence is occurring, remain aware that you may identify indicators of family violence in the future.
- Building trust and rapport with service users occurs over time. The stronger this relationship becomes between professionals and service users, the more likely it is that service users will disclose risk-relevant information.

#### Family violence is occurring?

- Follow direct disclosure, do not close off your engagement with the person using family violence without putting a safety plan or strategy in place.
- If applicable to your role, undertake Intermediate or Comprehensive Risk Assessment and Management (Responsibilities 3 and 4, or 7 and 8).
- Consider the risk-relevant information, seek secondary consultation and share with others, as appropriate (refer to Responsibilities 5 and 6).
- You are not required to inform the person using violence you have shared this risk-relevant information if you believe it could increase risk to victim survivors.

#### If immediate response is required:

- Assess who is at risk of harm from the person using violence, including:
  - An adult or child victim survivor
  - Themselves (due to self-harm or suicide risk)
  - A third party identified by the person using violence (for example, a person who is the target of anger or violence, such as a victim survivor's new partner, or presumed new partner, even if this is not the case)
  - You or another professional (for example, the person using violence has made a targeted threat)
- If you determine there is an immediate risk to any person, contact Triple Zero (000) and ask for police.