

Tip Sheet: Identifying Narratives

Identifying Narratives or Behaviours Linked to the Use of Family Violence

When professionals engage with a person suspected of using violence, what they say (their narratives) about themselves, their relationships, other family members and their behaviours will give an insight into their attitude, experiences, and the way they understand their use of controlling behaviours and violence.

Some narratives and behaviours will be a direct disclosure of person's use of violence. However, it is more common for 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 the identification of risk.

Practice Tip: You should frame your engagement with the service user around your role and expertise. By letting them know you can help them with the service that is your core role, you will have the chance to gain insight into patterns of behaviours. These include patterns within their interpersonal relationships and the narratives they use to describe family members, their circumstances, their experiences and themselves.

Responsibility 2 of the MARAM Adults Using Family Violence Practice Guidance, highlights narratives and/or behaviours (see practice guidance for further information). These narratives and/or behaviours may include:

- **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.
- **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 that professionals experience** – The person may use the above narratives or behaviours with professionals during engagement. Professionals may experience invitations to collude or feel intimidated, manipulated, or controlled throughout the engagement with them.
- **Immediate risk** – The person using violence may make a direct or targeted threat against a victim survivor, a third party or any other person. They may also indicate risk to their own safety.

Narratives Relating to the Person Using Violence's Role in Partner, Child, and Family Relationships

Family violence is most often underpinned by core beliefs and attitudes developed through a combination of social norms and early life experiences. The most important core beliefs related to family violence are (often overlapping) beliefs about gender roles and violence attitudes. These attitudes can extend to the role that the person suspected of using violence believes they should perform within a family unit, for example:

- A person may believe they should perform their family role in ways that are controlling or violent because that is their right, their role, or their obligation.
- A person may feel entitled to control aspects of another family member's life because of their position in the family in contrast with the other family member, or where their position is reinforced by beliefs about binary gender roles.
- The person using violence may state their behaviour is justified, and that the victim survivor 'deserved it, because they disrespected the person's authority.
- These perceptions often coexist with and are enabled by disrespectful or demeaning attitudes about other family members.
- For further examples of narratives, please see Section 2.5 of Responsibility 2 of the MARAM Adults Using Family Violence Practice Guidance

Please see [here](#) for the full Practice Guides, including key examples. For more information on putting the Practice Guides into practice, please see the [PUV Training provided by No to Violence](#).

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the Centre) would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the past, present, and emerging Traditional Custodians and Elders of this country on which we work.