

Family and Domestic Violence – Clients/Consumers/Tenants Policy

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Approval

Policy owner: Executive Manager, Specialist Community Services

Business Unit: Specialist Community Services

Approved by: Executive Manager, Specialist Community Services

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1. Purpose

1. Specialist Community Services (SCS) recognises that Family and Domestic Violence contributes to a range of issues, including mental health, physical health, financial wellbeing, housing and homelessness as such SCS is committed to supporting a strong integrated response to Family and Domestic Violence
2. FDV is a violation of basic human rights. SCS believes that people are entitled to live in dignity, free from fear and harm in their own home or domestic environment and that children have the same rights ascribed to adults with respect to violence and abuse.
3. As a service provider for vulnerable people including people experiencing FDV and/or whom have a trauma background, SCS is committed to having strong and robust policies and procedures in place to support our practice.

2. Scope

1. This is an SCS policy, applicable to all staff, volunteers and clients/consumers residing within or accessing the following SCS services:
 - Mental Health Service (MHS)
 - Housing Plus (HGP)
 - Tom Fisher House (TFH)
 - Passages Youth Engagement Hubs (PYEH)

3. Policy principles

1. SCS acknowledges that no form of violence is acceptable and is committed to supporting clients/consumers and tenants who experience violence.
2. SCS encourages clients/consumers and tenants who use violence, to address their behaviour in collaboration with specialist community sector partners.
3. SCS is committed to prioritising the safety of all clients/consumers and tenants along with their children (where relevant to service) experiencing FDV through the provision of safe, secure and appropriate supports.
4. SCS recognises that FDV is a whole of community issue and can have a lasting impact and requires a whole of community and multi system response.
5. SCS supports education and changing attitudes towards FDV in our community through our service delivery including the promotion of non-violent, respectful and equitable relationships.
6. SCS is committed to participating and contributing in an integrated and efficient response to FDV. SCS in collaboration between clients/consumers and tenants and specialist FDV community services will provide opportunities for clients/consumers and tenants to access specialised support and prioritise client/consumer and tenant safety.
7. SCS recognises the importance of providing respectful, non-judgmental and culturally-sensitive support to clients/consumers and tenants experiencing FDV and recognises that from time to time clients/consumers and tenants may choose to remain in or return to a violent relationship. As a trauma informed service SCS will endeavour to deliver support in respect of their decision.
8. SCS recognises that staff/volunteers may play a pivotal role in the early detection of FDV through the context of their day to day interactions and they are required to raise any concerns with Management.
9. SCS adheres to the requirements of the Residential Tenancy Act, and where it applies, permits modifications to property to provide additional safety and security for clients/consumers and tenants experiencing FDV.
10. SCS will provide referrals for clients/consumers and tenants for additional support as required.
11. SCS has a compassionate approach to pursuing tenant liability and rent arrears for clients/consumers and tenants experiencing FDV which are reviewed, on a case by case basis and at the discretion of Management.
12. SCS is committed to ensuring staff are provided with professional development related to FDV where appropriate to their role and that responsive attitudes and actions reflects the Vinnies values.
13. SCS recognises that language strongly influences thoughts and perspectives and as such can either contribute to a culture of inequality or one of safety and respect, within the service environment.
14. SCS will strive to ensure that people from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds including their communities, are respected and that their individual needs are met through culturally appropriate intervention and management of services.
15. SCS promotes the rights of clients/consumers and tenants to choose to have support services from someone from their cultural background and have access to an independent interpreter where this is required.
16. SCS appreciates that tenants experiencing and escaping FDV may have barriers to providing support documentation such as formal identification and where this occurs exceptions will be at the discretion of the Service Manager of the program.
17. SCS recognises the rights and vulnerabilities of the child exposed to an FDV environment and adheres to the SVDPWA Safe Guarding Children Policy promoting the best interests of children/young people.
18. SCS acknowledges that the majority of our clients/consumers and tenants may be more vulnerable to experiencing or engaging in FDV behaviours and apply relevant and appropriate policies and procedures across our services.
19. SCS is committed to keeping up to date with best practice in relation to FDV and building strong relationships with FDV providers to ensure that our services remain relevant and comply with associated legislation and standards.

4. Roles and responsibilities

1. The Executive Manager, Specialist Community Services is responsible for maintaining the currency of this policy.
2. Society representatives are required to adhere to this policy. Failure to comply may be considered a breach of our policies and may result in disciplinary action.

5. Review

1. This policy will be reviewed at least every two years, after consultation. Some circumstances may trigger an early review; this includes but is not limited to legislative changes, organisational changes, incident outcomes and other matters deemed appropriate by the SCS Management Team and Executive Manager SCS.

6. Further assistance

1. Society personnel should speak with their Manager regarding any questions about the implementation of this policy.

7. References

References made in this policy are:

1. SVDPWA-PP-1030 Safeguarding Children Framework Policy
2. Residential Tenancies Legislation Amendment (Family Violence) Act 2018, *Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, Western Australia*

8. Related documents and legislation

Related documents and legislation at the time of approval include:

1. SVDPWA-PP-1008 Risk Management Framework Policy
2. SCS-PP-4008 Community and Sector Engagement Policy
3. SCS-PP-4024 Consumer and Client Participation Policy
4. SCS-PP-4007 Risk Management Approach Policy
5. Youth Work Code of Ethics, The Association for Youth Work Western Australia
6. Privacy Act 1988. *Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, Australian Government*
7. Residential Tenancy Law 1987, *Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, Western Australia*
8. SVDPWA Family and Domestic Violence Policy- Staff (to be developed)
9. FDV Path to Safety Strategy 2020 to 2030
10. National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (the National Plan), *Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2011*
11. National Standards for Mental Health Services 2010
12. Homelessness Service Standards, *Department of Communities/Child Protection and Family Support, Government of Western Australia*

9. Approval and amendment history

Version	Approval authority	Date	Amendment summary
1.0	EM, SCS	01/10/2020	Initial version
1.1	EM, SCS	01/12/2021	Conversion to new template
2.0	EM, SCS	04/07/2022	Content review and update

10. Definitions

Term	Definition
Domestic violence	refers to acts of violence that occur between people who have, or have had, an intimate relationship. While there is no single definition, the central element of domestic violence is an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner through fear, for example by using behaviour which is violent and threatening. In most cases, the violent behaviour is part of a range of tactics to exercise power and control and can be both criminal and noncriminal" (COAG, 2011, p2).
Family violence	is an inclusive term that refers to violence between family members, as well as violence between intimate partners. It involves the same sorts of behaviours as described for domestic violence and is the most widely used term to identify the experiences of Indigenous people, because it includes the broad range of marital and kinship relationships in which violence may occur (COAG, 2011, p2).
FDV	Family and Domestic Violence
Gendered language	is defined as social constructs (which refers to the roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society at a certain time considers appropriate for men or women) that define traditionally masculine or feminine roles.