

Domestic and family violence specialisation

Definition

Responding to victim-survivors of domestic and family violence (DFV) is specialised work. Specialist DFV services are victim-survivor-centred and safety is paramount, culturally appropriate and responsive to the needs of marginalised cohorts.

DFV practice is trauma and gender-violence informed, utilises a human rights and social justice framework, and takes a child-aware and parent-sensitive approach when working with families. Specialist DFV services work with an intersectional feminist lens, demonstrate an understanding of DFV as a gendered issue and work to empower victim-survivors ([DVNSW, Good Practice Guidelines, 2022](#)).

Note: sexual violence must be acknowledged as a form of both domestic and family violence which DFV practitioners must be familiar with, however working solely in the sexual violence field requires specific additional skills.

In practice this looks like:

- The safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors and practitioners is paramount
- Access and equity is prioritised – culturally safe and responsive to the diverse needs and intersectionalities of victim-survivors is available
- Practitioners use domestic violence-informed and trauma-informed practice
- Services ensure victim-survivor-centred practice and empowerment, including incorporation of client feedback.
- Children and young people are recognised and supported as victim-survivors in their own right
- Confidentiality and informed consent is practiced
- Non-judgmental support and inclusive surroundings are available
- The service collaborates with the local service ecology
- The service upholds and advocates for victim-survivor rights
- The service participates in prevention activities that aim to redress the underlying inequalities and power imbalances that women encounter in day-to-day life.
- Competency, accountability and continuous improvement:
 - Regular client feedback and actions taken to address
 - Ongoing practitioner training and knowledge building
 - Strong governance
 - An empowering and collaborative work environment is available

Note: there is currently no accreditation framework for specialisation.

SPECIALISATION CHECKLIST

Safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors and practitioners

- ☐ Threats to the safety of victim-survivors, including children, are identified and responded to effectively.
- ☐ The safety hazards of practitioners and others are identified and responded to effectively.

Access and equity – culturally safe and responsive to the diverse needs and intersectionality's of victim-survivors

- ☐ Services are culturally safe, responsive and appropriate to the diverse needs and experiences of victim-survivors, including children.
- ☐ Practitioners have a thorough understanding of the diversity and intersectionality's of victim-survivor experiences and are culturally safe and responsive.
- ☐ Services are accessible and prominent in the community.
- ☐ Services provide culturally safe and appropriate practice for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors to be supported and guided.

Domestic violence-informed and trauma-informed practice

- ☐ Services are committed to working in a DFV-informed and trauma-informed way that aligns with a strengths-based framework.
- ☐ Services address the impacts of vicarious trauma on staff.

Victim-survivor-centred practice and empowerment

- ☐ The service meaningfully partners with victim-survivors to ensure they are at the centre of all decisions relating to them.
- ☐ The service works from an empowering, person-centred and strengths-based framework that is child-aware and parent-sensitive, and practitioners treat all victim-survivors with respect, dignity, sensitivity and equality.
- ☐ The service recognises children and young people as active contributors and clients in their own right.

Confidentiality and informed consent

- ☐ Victim-survivors have their right to confidentiality and privacy respected and are informed of situations where their right to confidentiality may be limited.
- ☐ Victim-survivors have a right to access their data.
- ☐ The service meets ethical and legal obligations in relation to confidentiality and privacy. The service also has secure record-keeping procedures and informs victim-survivors of these procedures.

Non-judgmental support and inclusive surroundings

- ☐ Services support, listen to, and respond to victim-survivors in a respectful, dignified, sensitive and non-judgemental way.
- ☐ Practitioners provide safe, non-judgemental and inclusive surroundings.

Collaboration with local service ecology

- ☐ Services are committed to actively engaging with the local service ecology and improving the outcomes of victim-survivors, including children, through coordination, collaboration and integration that provides continuity of care.

Upholding and advocating for victim-survivor rights

- ☐ Services and practitioners advance the rights and interests of victim-survivors at an individual level in a victim-survivor centred manner that is culturally safe.
- ☐ Services acknowledge systemic issues and work to influence policy and legislation to uphold the rights of, and improve responses to, victim-survivors of DFV and those at risk.

Participating in prevention activities

- ☐ Services participate in activities that tackle the drivers of DFV and promote perpetrator accountability for violence prevention.

Competency, accountability and continuous improvement – ongoing practitioner training and knowledge building, strong governance and an empowering work environment

- ☐ Practitioners have the skills and training to work effectively with victim-survivors of DFV.
- ☐ Services demonstrate accountability to victim-survivors by monitoring, evaluating and continuously improving practice.
- ☐ Services support practitioners by providing a positive and empowering work environment, training and inducting new staff, and embedding practices for professional development.
- ☐ The organisation has strong governance which delivers sustainable accountable, transparent and responsive services in addition to ensuring legislative, regulatory and funding compliance.