

Family Violence Fact Sheet

What is Family Violence?

This fact sheet contains information about what family violence is.

Economic abuse

Economic abuse happens when a family member controls how you use money to make you financially dependent on them.

Some examples of economic abuse are:

- maintaining total control over finances
- withholding money, credit cards or physical resources from you such as a car, passport or phone
- Stealing from your money or assets
- Forbidding you from attending school or work.

Khadija (they/them): *my mother maintains total control over my bank account and only gives me a weekly allowance of \$100. Once I have used my allowance, she refuses to give me any more money.*

This is an example of economic abuse as Khadija's mother is controlling how they use their money, making them financially dependent on her.

Image-based abuse

Image-based abuse happens when a family member uses a nude or sexual image of you without your permission in order to get revenge (revenge porn), embarrass, control or blackmail you.

Some examples of image-based abuse include:

- secretly filming consensual activity between you and the family member
- threatening to distribute nude or sexual images of you
- accessing your personal computer files and stealing your intimate images.

Amara (she/her): *my partner and I have frequently taken nude images of one another with each other's consent. Recently, I told her that I wanted to break up with her and in response, she threatened to share the nude images she has taken of me with her friends unless I stay with her.*

This is an example of image-based abuse. Amara's partner has threatened to share nude images of her without her permission to control and blackmail her. It is irrelevant that the images were originally taken with Amara's permission as it becomes abuse when there is no permission for the images to be shared

Legal abuse

Legal abuse happens when a family member uses the law or legal threats to intimidate, exhaust, exploit or disempower you.

Some examples of legal abuse are:

- deliberately causing delays.
- making false reports to the courts or police
- interfering with or destroying legal documents
- not doing what the court has ordered.

Abishek (he/him): *I am trying to get full custody of my children against my ex-wife due to her history of alcohol and drug abuse. She is very angry about this, so she has refused to provide and even destroyed crucial legal documents.*

This is an example of legal abuse as Abishek's ex-wife is using the law to exhaust and disempower him by deliberately causing delays and interfering with the legal process.

Neglect

Neglect happens when a family member tries to scare or control you by denying you the things you need to live a safe, comfortable, and healthy life.

Some examples of neglect are:

- not giving you enough good quality food, water, clothing, personal care and personal support
- not giving you a place to live that is safe, clean and healthy.

Nikau (he/him): *I have a physical disability and my Aunt is my guardian and full-time carer. She keeps me locked in my bedroom most of the day, only letting me out to go to the bathroom. She only feeds me two meals a day and she never cleans my room or gets my medication.*

This is an example of neglect as Nikau's Aunt is denying him the things he needs to live a safe, comfortable and healthy life.

Psychological or emotional abuse

Psychological or emotional abuse happens when a family member verbally or non-verbally harms you in a way that is psychologically or emotionally damaging.

Some examples of verbal psychological or emotional abuse include:

- undermining your worth through constant criticism or insults
- yelling or screaming at you.
- excessively harassing or checking up on you.

Some examples of non-verbal psychological or emotional abuse are:

- intentionally damaging or destroying our property or threatening to do so

- being violent towards an object or pet or threatening to do so
- being excessively possessive of you
- making you feel as though there is no way out of the relationship.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse happens when a family member physically hurts you or takes away your control over your body.

Some examples of physical abuse are:

- hitting, scratching, kicking, pushing or strangling
- physically restraining you (such as locking or tying you up)
- using a weapon or object against you
- force feeding you or denying you food
- stopping you from having medication, medical care or hygienic assistance
- threatening to do any of the above.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse happens when a family member sexually assaults or pressures you without your consent.

Some examples of sexual abuse are:

- rape (including marital rape).
- unwanted touching or pressure to perform sexual acts.
- forced prostitution and forced sex with others.
- denying you contraception when you want to use it.
- threatening to do any of the above.

Social abuse

Social abuse happens when a family member isolates you from your friends, family or community.

Some examples of social abuse are:

- preventing you from seeing other people
- forbidding you from participating in social and community activities
- not allowing you outside your room or home
- needing to know everywhere you have been or are going, or everyone you have seen or are planning to see.

Spiritual or religious abuse

Spiritual or religious abuse happens when a family member uses your spiritual or religious beliefs to hurt, scare, manipulate, or control you.

Some examples of spiritual or religious abuse are:

- ridiculing or preventing you from practising your spiritual or religious beliefs
- forcing you to participate in spiritual/religious practices when you do not want to
- forcing you to raise your children according to spiritual or religious beliefs you do not agree with
- using spiritual or religious leaders' teachings to justify something.

Stalking

Stalking happens when a family member makes repeated unwanted contact with you online or in person in a way that makes you feel afraid, nervous or harassed.

Kai (they/them): *my ex-partner repeatedly messages me, despite me asking them to not contact me after our breakup. They also occasionally show up at my workplace and my co-workers tell me when they are there so I can hide from them.*

This is an example of stalking as Kai's ex-partner is making repeated unwanted contact with them and this is making them feel scared and unsafe.

Reproductive abuse

Reproductive abuse happens when a family member stops you from making your own choices about your reproductive system.

Some examples of reproductive abuse include:

- forcing or pressuring you to become pregnant, have a baby or have an abortion
- forcing or pressuring you to have an operation to stop you from being able to have a baby or remove parts of your genitals
- making you have unprotected sex

- interfering with your birth control
- knowingly passing on a sexually transmitted infection to you.

Jiao (she/her): *my husband desperately wants to have a baby, but I have repeatedly told him I am not ready yet. In response to this, he frequently removes his condom while we are having sex and destroys my contraceptive pills.*

This is an example of reproductive abuse as Jiao's husband is stopping her from making her own choices about her reproductive system.

If you are being affected by family violence help is available

If you are in immediate danger call 000.

The Orange Door
orangedoor.vic.gov.au

1800RESPECT
1800 737 732 • 1800respect.org.au

Sexual Assault Crisis Line
1800 806 292 • sacl.com.au

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre
1800 015 188 • safesteps.org.au



Law Clinic

deakinlawclinic.org.au

Deakin University CRICOS Provider Code: 00113B