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# SSI Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Framework

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**SSI** For equality  
of life.

# Introduction

This SSI Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Framework presents SSI's approach to becoming a domestic and family violence (DFSV) response proficient organisation to safely and effectively identify, assess and respond to DFSV. The priority is to ensure that victim survivors, including children and young people, are safe and supported when disclosing the perpetration of violence or when this is suspected.

SSI has adopted the definition of DFSV used by the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children. It is acknowledged that DFSV is prevalent across all cultures and communities, however for victim survivors from multicultural communities there are specific complexities and structural barriers that require a specialised response to ensure the safety and wellbeing of victim survivors. Clients from migrant and refugee backgrounds may face additional structural barriers such as language barriers, limited understanding of the Australian service response, discrimination and racism, visa issues, and cultural expectations that also require a culturally responsive service response.

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SSI acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and Traditional Custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work. We pay respect to Elders past and present and recognise their continuous connection to Country.

As well as structural barriers, clients of SSI are commonly subjected to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation due to, but not limited to, their gender, class, ethnicity and cultural background, religion, disability and sexual orientation. An intersectional approach is required, recognising that people can be subjected to different types of structural oppression and discrimination which can increase the severity and frequency of the abuse/violence and the barriers to accessing support.

Whilst SSI is not predominantly a specialised DFSV service provider, like many other community services our staff may be the first to detect and receive a disclosure of abuse due to the trusted relationships frontline workers develop with their clients, including children and the fact that SSI may be the only service working with an individual/family. The Framework outlines our principles, policies and priorities, and initial and ongoing response to ensure we support our clients in a way which focuses on both safety and dignity. It includes training and coaching of staff to ensure the capacity building of our workforce.

The DFSV Framework working group developed this approach through a combination of reviewing SSI's current approach, assessing the current capacity and readiness of staff and being guided by the current evidence in relation to DFSV service provision and framework implementation.

The working group commissioned the Gendered Violence Research Network (GVRN) to provide an overview of best practice and a guiding document for a way forward for SSI. GVRN reviewed SSI's DFSV Guidelines, scoping reports and thematic analyses, as well as summarising discussions from the workshop that GVRN facilitated to assist in the development of SSI's DFSV Framework.

Whilst the framework is focused on client safety and wellbeing, staff safety is also paramount and is woven into the framework.



# Elements of the SSI DFSV Framework



## Our philosophy

- Human Rights
- Equality
- Social Justice
- Accountability

## Our principles

- Shared responsibility
- Safety and security
- Trauma-informed
- Dignity, participation, and empowerment
- Respect, inclusion, equity, intersectionality, and cultural responsibility
- Staff, knowledge, competency
- Advocacy and follow-up

## Our strategic priorities

- Organisational commitment
- Capacity building - staff
- An enabling policy and procedural framework
- Accessible, flexible, person-centred service responses
- Service provision and referrals for victim-survivors
- Service provision and referrals for perpetrators, where appropriate
- Regular streamlined monitoring and reporting

# Our vision

**That clients of our service can live free of violence and abuse in safe and inclusive communities.**

We are committed to prioritising the safety and dignity of victim survivors of DFSV, including children and young people. Our approach to DFSV for SSI clients encompasses a holistic, evidence-informed response that is delivered by skilled staff. Our goal is to provide clients with a response that is safety-focussed, dignity-driven, person-centred, and acknowledges the gender drivers of DFSV, and intersectional needs of clients.

## **Philosophical underpinnings**

Our response to DFSV is informed by a shared understanding of the nature, drivers and impacts of DFSV and aligns with SSI's broader values of social justice, diversity, compassion, respect, quality, ethics and innovation.

Our response is especially informed by SSI values of:

- **Human rights**

We recognise DFSV as a violation of human rights. Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that all people are entitled to have, and the right to be safe and feel safe in public and at home is a human right (Macarthur Legal Centre 2015).

- **Equality**

We acknowledge that DFSV “is unequivocally a gendered issue in terms of frequency, perpetration, the ongoing effects, and the likelihood of victimisation” (DVNSW 2017:14) and stems from unequal gendered power relations. Research demonstrates that women and children make up the majority of victim survivors of DFSV (AIHW 2019). Nevertheless, we also recognise that individuals of all gender and sexual identities may be victim survivors of DFSV.

- **Social justice**

We recognise that “intersecting forms of oppression”, including but not limited to racism, colonialism, sexism, ageism, ableism, cisnormativity, heteronormativity, and classism influence dynamics and experiences of DFSV, and may compound DFSV (Our Watch 2021: 8).

- **Accountability**

We recognise that there is no excuse for violence and abusive behaviour – violence and abuse in any form and any relationship is not acceptable, and perpetrators should be viewed as accountable and held to account where safe and appropriate, with respect to the wishes of the victim survivor.

# Principles

Our DFSV interventions are based on key principles that enhance safety for all our clients and staff. They are grouped into seven main categories:

## Shared responsibility

- **Principle 1:** Acknowledges that addressing DFSV is everybody's responsibility.

## Safety and security

- **Principle 2:** The safety and security of victim survivors of DFSV, including clients, children and young people, and staff is paramount in working with both victim survivors of DFSV and perpetrators.
- **Principle 3:** Recognises that children and young people who are subjected to DFSV can experience adverse lifelong impacts on their health and wellbeing. As such, the focus of any intervention must prioritise the safety and dignity of children and young people.
- **Principle 4:** Record-keeping and information sharing policies are in line with relevant state/territory privacy and information sharing legislation and mandatory reporting obligations.

## Trauma-informed

- **Principle 5:** Recognises that working in a trauma-informed way with victim-survivors of DFSV is essential, and it is most likely that clients have been subjected to one or multiple types of trauma.

## Dignity, participation and empowerment

- **Principle 6:** Prioritises the dignity and rights of victim survivors of DFSV.
- **Principle 7:** Clients, including children and young people, are supported to understand their rights and have agency in making informed decision-making that affects them and their lives.

### **Respect, inclusion, equity, intersectionality and cultural responsiveness**

- **Principle 8:** Support for victim-survivors of DFSV must have an intersectional lens and be culturally responsive.
- **Principle 9:** Support for victim-survivors of DFSV should be provided in the language the client requests, where possible. If this is not possible, trained and qualified interpreters should be used. Staff should engage in best practice when working with interpreters (see DSS 2019; QCOSS 2018).
- **Principle 10:** Recognises that victim-survivors of DFSV have the right to equitable and inclusive service provision and to have their individual experiences and beliefs respected and affirmed.
- **Principle 11:** Service delivery is welcoming, non-judgmental and respectful for victim-survivors of DFSV.

### **Staff knowledge, competency and support**

- **Principle 12:** Staff have relevant practical competencies required to work with victim-survivors and perpetrators of DFSV across various programs which are up to date with best practice, are evidence-informed and safe and are non-collusive with perpetrators.
- **Principle 13:** Staff have skills in cultural responsiveness to work with clients from a diverse range of backgrounds.
- **Principle 14:** Staff are supported to screen respectfully and safely for DFSV, provide appropriate referrals, and provide an effective response to DFSV.
- **Principle 15:** Recognises that due to the prevalence of DFSV, it is likely that there will be staff who have been or are victim-survivors of DFSV, and that they have the right to be safe and supported by the workplace.

### **Advocacy and follow-up**

- **Principle 16:** Strives to support clients in their journeys through advocacy and appropriate follow-up.

# Strategic priorities

The strategic priorities set out the direction to becoming a DFSV response capable organisation and drive implementation. The strategic priorities are:

1.

## **Organisational commitment**

Organisational commitment to the DFSV Framework through appropriate funding and staffing to create a sustainable DFSV proficient workforce.

2.

## **Capacity building of staff**

Staff training to develop a strong, skilled, and capable workforce in DFSV.

3.

## **An enabling policy and procedural framework**

An enabling policy and procedural framework that adopts a safe, holistic, and end-to-end approach.

4.

## **Accessible, flexible, person-centred service responses and referrals**

Accessible, flexible, person-centred service responses and referrals that make the best use of resources, and centres victim-survivors and their safety.

5.

## **Aligned DFSV Framework with Child Safe and Trauma Informed Frameworks**

Align DFSV Framework with Child-Safe and Trauma-Informed Frameworks to ensure best practice service delivery.

6.

## **Service provision and referrals for victim-survivors**

Effective service provision and referrals for victim-survivors of DFSV, both clients and staff.

7.

## **Service provision and referrals for perpetrators**

Where safe for victim survivors, and where appropriate service provision and/or referrals for perpetrators of DFSV.

8.

## **Regular streamlined monitoring and reporting**

Regular data capture, streamlined monitoring and reporting on the identification of DFSV (including suspected DFSV) and organisational responses to them (including incident report review).

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# Priority actions on a page

## **Organisational commitment**

- Board and Executive mandate the framework for implementation
- Identify an Executive sponsor
- Allocate implementation funds for 12 months including staffing costs

## **Capacity building of staff**

- Resource the DFSV Practice Team to provide initial specialist response and support, develop policies and procedures, train/coach staff to recognise DFSV and identify referral options.
- Determine training and coaching regime for staff and action it
- Establish program focused DFSV lead positions who are paid an allowance
- Establishing a Community of Practice for lead positions

## **Policy and procedural framework**

- Develop SSI response framework Integrating DFSV policy, procedures, and state requirements across SSI under the Framework
- Review and align all relevant policies including PAC (People and Culture) DFSV policy, risk and incidents frameworks and create new ones as needed
- Align with Child Safe and Trauma Informed Frameworks

## **Accessible, flexible, person-centred service responses and referrals**

- Ensure all SSI client-centred frameworks and policies are DFSV safe and DFSV proficient
- Establish client assessment procedures such screening, risk assessment and safety planning
- Brokerage funds to be available in each program to support DFSV crisis response as required, e.g., Emergency transport, food and accommodation.
- Ensure service responses are child safe

## **Service provision and referrals for victim-survivors**

- Recognise the duty of care, and often contractual obligations, we hold for our clients (especially children) to provide safe DFSV responses
- Maintain a specialist DFSV service delivery unit for DFSV crisis response, risk assessment, safety planning and DFSV case consultation
- Advocate for and deliver services for victim survivors in language and in culture.

## **Service provision and referrals for perpetrators, where appropriate**

- Advocate for and deliver men's behaviour change programs in-language and in-culture
- Develop a safe perpetrator response procedure for suspected and known DFSV perpetrators who are clients of SSI programs.

## **Regular streamlined monitoring and reporting**

- Include a DFSV flag in Salesforce for suspected and disclosed DFSV for all programs
- Quarterly report of DFSV specialist unit sent to Executive and the Board Risk and Compliance Committee, including data report, implementation status of the Framework and DFSV incident report
- Identify outcome and impact measures for DFSV activities and create a dashboard report
- Establish a death/serious incident review team and procedure for all DFSV related death and serious incidents to be reported to Executive and Board Risk and Compliance Committee

# References

Department of Social Services (DSS). (2019). *Interpreting in Domestic Violence Situations*. DSS: Canberra, ACT.

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Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS). (2018). *A guide for engaging and working with interpreters in cases of domestic and family violence, and sexual assault*. QCOSS: West End, Queensland.

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We're SSI.  
We stand for a world in which everyone  
has access to equal opportunity.  
We are driven by equality, empathy,  
and celebration of every individual.  
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