

Suggestions for supporting members experiencing Domestic and Family Violence (DFV)

Do's

- **Do provide clear information about paid DFV leave and other entitlements to support workers at this time.** Domestic violence can impact work; workplace and union support can assist workers in feeling safe enough to disclose if they need protection.
- **Do be sensitive.** Approach your discussion with the same sensitivity and confidentiality you would use with any sensitive workplace issue.
- **Do assure the member that you will respect their privacy and keep the matter confidential.** Discuss the information only with those who need to know.
- **Do ask what impact domestic violence is having on their work life.** Your concern is with the impact domestic violence is having on your member's ability to attend work without interference, for them and their colleagues to be safe in the workplace, and for the member to have the necessary time to attend to their personal and family responsibilities under the circumstances.
- **Do assure them they are not to blame.** The only person responsible is the abusive person. Be aware that some victims may feel that they have to manage the abusive person or may feel embarrassed that their relationship has become violent.
- **Do encourage them to keep a diary** in relation to any domestic violence incidents and the impact on work such as attendance or abusive phone calls.
- **Do ask what they would like you to do.** Do they want you to advocate on their behalf, a co-worker to accompany them to court or need to be walked to their car? Ensure they have control over next step.
- **Do discuss a safety plan.** Ask them what they need to ensure that they and their colleagues are safe at work. Go through the possible actions listed in the safety plan.

While trying to be helpful, we can sometimes overstep the line, try to avoid the following:

Don'ts

- **Don't look for warning signs or indicators.** Be aware that many workers experiencing domestic violence at home will not experience it at work and may not wish to disclose. Don't jump to conclusions and infringe on their right to privacy.
- **Don't become personally involved.** Your role is not to fix the domestic violence but to help your member at work. Under no circumstances should you visit the member's home or place yourself at risk.
- **Don't make this a conversation in the staff room.**
- **Don't be judgemental or ask questions about why the violence is occurring.** Your responsibilities are to ensure staff can get to work and do their job safely. Asking questions like "why don't you leave" is inappropriate. It is the worker's decision to stay or go. These situations are often complicated and difficult.
- **Don't judge their decision.** Don't ask for details about what is happening in the home or in the member's private life. This is a workplace issue and what is happening at home is not your concern. You are not a domestic violence counsellor, so refer your member to domestic violence experts who can assist.
- **Don't tell them what to do.** You are not a domestic violence expert. After you have informed them of your role and what you can do to assist, let them make the decisions about matters which affect them.
- **Don't think you know best about what will make them safe.** One size does not fit all. Don't take the law into your own hands and attempt to contact the perpetrator.