

This document aims to provide practical guidance to employers in regional manufacturing businesses that supporting employees impacted by family violence.

### **BRMG Statement on Family and Gender Based Violence**

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The Bendigo Regional Manufacturing Group (BRMG), stand firmly against family and gender-based violence and all forms of abuse.

As a membership our commitment to safety, respect, and dignity extends beyond the confines of our workplaces and into the communities where we live and serve.

#### **Our Commitment**

**Supportive Workplace:** We strive to create an environment where all employees feel safe and supported.

**Awareness and Education:** We are committed to raising awareness about family violence and its impacts.

**Community Engagement:** BRMG actively supports local initiatives that combat family violence and aid survivors.

**Policy and Advocacy:** We will advocate for policies that protect individuals from family violence and support survivors' rights.

Family violence is a societal issue that requires collective action.

Our BRMG Membership is committed to being part of the solution, promoting a culture of respect that upholds the safety and well-being of every individual.

Together, we can make a difference.

#### **What is family violence?**

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Family violence is when a partner, ex-partner, carer, family member or someone you are in a 'family-like' relationship with uses threatening, controlling or violent behaviour that makes you scared for your own – or someone else's – safety and wellbeing.

#### **What does family violence look like?**

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Family violence can take many forms, including (but not limited to):

- **Physical or sexual** – Attacking or hurting you, making you afraid to say 'no', or using force to scare you.
- **Emotional, psychological, cultural or spiritual** – Putting you down, making you feel worthless, or stopping you from practicing religious, spiritual, or cultural rituals.
- **Financial** – Managing or controlling your money.
- **Threatening** – Saying they will hurt your family, pets or harm themselves if you leave; threatening to tell others about your visa or immigration status, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or personal health information; or telling you that you will lose your children if you don't do as you are told.
- **Coercive** – Making you feel guilty when you see family or friends, or making you doubt your own memory and interactions (sometimes called 'gaslighting').
- **Controlling or dominating** – Stalking or monitoring you.

#### **Who is affected by family violence?**

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Family violence can affect people of all genders, ages, abilities, sexual orientations, and social, cultural, and religious backgrounds.

## Family and Gender Based Violence Employer Factsheet

It can occur between current or former spouses; current or former de facto partners; parents and children; siblings; grandparents and grandchildren; against elders; in LGBTIQ+ relationships; between relations according to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship rules; within shared households; and against pets.

Family violence also harms children's health, wellbeing, and development.

### **How to respond if an employee tells you they are impacted by family violence?**

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#### **1. Recognise**

If you notice an employee displaying signs of experiencing family violence create a safe and private space to check in and share your observations using non-judgemental language.

#### **2. Respond**

If you receive a disclosure of family violence:

- Listen without interruption or judgement
- Reassure that the violence is not their fault, and is never okay
- Believe and validate their experiences
- Provide information that will support the person to make their own choices (as much as possible)
- Maintain confidentiality as strictly as possible

#### **3. Refer**

Provide information about workplace supports and specialist support services who can help the person to explore their options. Remember you are not a counsellor.

Responding to a disclosure of family violence can be emotionally draining. Look after yourself and seek support if needed. For more information about the signs of family violence, and starting a conversation refer to: [Safe + Equal, Identifying family violence.](#)

#### **Support services for employees**

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If someone is in immediate danger, call **000**.

Consider referring your employee to one of these free services:

##### [1800RESPECT – 1800RESPECT.org.au](#)

- 1800 737 732 (24 hours, 7 days)
- National domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support service.

##### [The Orange Door in Loddon](#)

- <https://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/>
- 1800 512 359, located at 57 View Street, Bendigo
- Adults, children and young people's family violence services, child and family services, Aboriginal services and services for people who use violence.

##### [Safe Steps](#)

- <https://www.safesteps.org.au/>
- 1800 015 188 (24 hours, 7 days).
- Counselling service for women and children.

##### [No to Violence – Men's Referral Service](#)

- [ntv.org.au](http://ntv.org.au)
- 1300 766 491 (24 hours, 7 days)

Counselling service to support men concerned about their behaviour.

## Family and Gender Based Violence Employer Factsheet

### Other ways to support impacted employees

- Refer them to your **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**. Consider setting one up if you don't already have one.
- Consider **flexible working arrangements** which can help your employee, for example:
  - working remotely
  - flexible or altered working hours
  - job redesign (temporary or ongoing)
  - relocation or transfers
- Limit electronic communication and other communication for others, for example:
  - **block or filter** calls, emails or other communications
  - **change** email addresses or phone numbers
- **Assist employees to find specialist support services.** Refer to 'Support services for employees' section
- Ask if there are any other ways you can help.

### Obligations as an employer

#### Family violence leave

Under the Fair Work Act, employees (including part-time and casual employees) are entitled to **10 days of paid** family and domestic violence leave each year.

Employees who are experiencing family and domestic violence can take this leave to deal with the impacts of family and domestic violence where it is not practical to do so outside their work hours. This might include:

- making arrangements for their own or a family member's safety (including relocation)
- attending court or accessing police services
- attending counselling, or appointments with medical, financial, or legal professionals.

Employees can access the full amount of leave from the day they start work. The leave can be taken as single or multiple days, or as part days by agreement. An employee's leave balance renews each year on their work anniversary and doesn't accumulate from year to year.

**Confidentiality** – Employers must take reasonable steps to keep information about notice or evidence for family and domestic violence leave confidential.

**Pay slips** – Employers must not mention paid family and domestic violence leave on payslips.

**Protections from discrimination** – It's unlawful for an employer to take adverse action against an employee (or potential employee) because they are (or have been) experiencing family and domestic violence.

#### Provide a safe workplace

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, employers must provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and free of risks to health, so far as is reasonably practicable. For more information contact: [Worksafe](#).

#### Can I ask for evidence?

Employees must let their employer know as soon as possible if they need to take family and domestic violence leave. Sometimes this will be after the leave has started.

An employer can ask for evidence to show that the employee needs to do something to deal with family and domestic violence. Types of evidence an employee can provide include:

- a statutory declaration
- family violence support service documents
- documents issued by a police service, or a court

Refer to: [Fair Work Ombudsman website](#) and [Fair Work Ombudsman Family and domestic violence leave factsheet](#)

### Are there resources to support employers?

The below resources can help employers respond to family and gender-based violence. Responding can be emotionally draining. Look after yourself and seek support if needed.

**Family violence leave policy considerations:** [Supporting staff: family violence leave policy considerations | vic.gov.au \(www.vic.gov.au\)](#)

#### Practical guidance resources:

[Safe + Equal \(https://safeandequal.org.au/\)](https://safeandequal.org.au/)

- [Responding to disclosures](#)
- [Supporting Businesses and Workplaces](#)

[Our Watch \(https://www.ourwatch.org.au/\)](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/) have free practice guides available to download including:

- [Workplace support for staff who experience family violence](#)
- [Responding to disclosures](#)
- [Video series](#)

### How can my workplace contribute to preventing family violence?

Fostering a positive workplace culture that does not tolerate discrimination or violence in any form is a first step in reducing risk of domestic and family violence. Having workplace family violence clauses and paid leave entitlements is a demonstration of your workplace's commitment to supporting staff and contributes to a supportive workplace environment

### What if we think an employee is using family violence?

Use the below principles to guide a workplace response.

- Never excuse or minimise family violence.
- Prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the victim/survivor within and outside the workplace.
- Hold perpetrators to account for their actions.
- Maintain a safe work environment for victims/survivors, supporters and witnesses.
- Respect the rights of perpetrators to fair processes and employment.
- Support preventative workplace initiatives to address the underlying drivers of violence.

The **recognise, respond, refer** approach can be adapted to raise concerns with staff who may be involved in violence.

### Resources and training initiatives for managers and staff

**Respect@Work** – Who is responsible for preventing workplace sexual harassment? – [free online course](#)

#### Online video resources

- **Films for Change** – [Respect in the Workplace #1](#)
- [Family violence video series](#), Our Watch

[Family and Domestic Violence Awareness Digital training – AiGroup](#) – regularly hold online 1.5hr courses for businesses, employers and employees.