

SETSCoP

Communique: Victoria Domestic and Family Violence sub-group

Videoconference – 7 February 2022

On 7 February, 2022, SETSCoP held its first meeting for members of the Victoria Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) sub-group. The focus of the meeting was to understand the variety of supports being implemented by SETS providers for clients experiencing DFV and share information regarding the training completed or planned for staff relating to DFV supports.

Providers have had **difficulty recruiting settlement practitioners with specialist DFV support skills**. This led to upskilling of existing staff through training and implementing processes and procedures for supporting the team who are case managing clients who have disclosed DFV. Several providers have been able to employ a case worker with a DFV specialist focus, who works within SETS and for some across other programs also.

Providers are also developing **training for bi-cultural workers** who are supporting clients who have experienced DFV, which includes a culturally appropriate component. This previously was not included in some training programs. These bi-cultural workers often face additional challenges, due to their involvement within the community.

Many providers have had their staff complete Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (**MARAM**) **training**. Various providers fit within different tiers, due to the current service provision. Providers have also completed DV Alert training. Providers noted that this training is likely something that will need to be repeated on a regular basis. Also training with a focus on coercive communication (see links below in shared resources).

Many providers are implementing **policies and procedures** which are informed by the MARAM framework, as well as tools, such as intake and assessment documents. It was noted that some of these documents lack a cultural lens and an understanding of the conditions that allow violence to flourish in different communities.

Case workers noted the **increase in number of referrals** for DFV support and the link between these referrals and COVID-19 impacts. It is expected that more referrals will be received when face-to-face service resumes at a higher level.

Providers discussed the need to work extensively with external partners who can provide specialist support in this area. There is a need to seek support from **specialist providers of DFV support**, due to their knowledge and understanding on this issue. These specialists often have a gap, which SETS providers fill, in their lack of cultural understanding and their application of culturally responsive practice. The need to collaborate with external providers and maintain relationships to promote information sharing in order to assist clients is critical.

Providers discussed the **need to raise awareness with clients of the processes** followed once a report of DFV has been made. Some clients were unable to retract statements after reporting DFV and were unaware of the consequences once reports had been submitted. In addition, community members have responded negatively to providers who support clients through processes which occur following a report of DFV, particularly where it relates to children.

Providers stated that there had been a higher number of requests received from people residing in Australia, some over the phone who did not disclose their visa status, some who have been in Australia more than 5 years and also some on other visa types who are **not eligible for SETS support**. Providers noted that some arrivals use their first 5 years after arrival supporting their children and only after this time have learnt about DFV and supports available, which is when they reach out for support. Those who are ineligible for SETS support are most often referred to external services.

The **language used** to discuss this DFV is important to consider as it can prevent some clients from coming forward. Some providers discuss the topic using terms such as “family strengthening” and “healthy relationships”. It is also important to incorporate these discussions with everyday conversations held with clients, to encourage understanding and disclosure when necessary.

Providers are also in the process of developing **audio-visual resources** to go alongside the written resources available, due to the number of clients who are illiterate in their first language.

Shared Resources

Australian Muslim Women’s Centre for Human Rights DFV training - <https://amwchr.org.au/training-and-consultation/>

Muslim Women, Islam and Family Violence: A guide for changing the way we work with Muslim women experiencing family violence - <https://amwchr.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/women-oppose-violence-workers-guide.pdf>

Training for the information sharing and MARAM reforms: <https://www.vic.gov.au/training-for-information-sharing-and-maram>

DV Alert Training: <https://www.dvalert.org.au/enrolment-listings>