



# Involving Supportive Family in a Person-Centred Response to Elder Abuse

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HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS IN FAMILIES, ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITIES



## SERVICES OFFERING SUPPORT FOR THOSE IMPACTED BY FAMILY VIOLENCE

**1800RESPECT**

NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOMESTIC  
FAMILY VIOLENCE **COUNSELLING** SERVICE



**1800 737 732**

Aboriginal  
Family Violence  
Legal Service



**1800 105 303**



**Seniors  
Rights  
Victoria**



**1300 368 821**



Family Violence  
Response Centre



**1800 015 188**

Service offered by your workplace

**with  
RESPECT**

LGBTIQ



**1800 542 847**



**LA TROBE  
UNIVERSITY**



# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

On completion of this training module, participants will be able to:

- Describe a rationale for involving supportive family in the context of elder abuse
- Understand the ways in which supportive family can be involved in promoting safety for the person experiencing abuse
- Work with the older person to identify who within their family and social network can be safely and constructively involved
- Engage directly with supportive family separately or through a meeting with the older person

# THE INTEGRATED MODEL OF CARE FOR RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED ELDER ABUSE

**Project steering committee**

Chaired by Director of Seniors, Ageing and Carers,  
Department of Health and Human Services

**Project management**

Provided by the Department of Health and  
Human Services

## The four components:

Workforce training

To build capacity of the workforce to respond to  
suspected elder abuse

Elder Abuse liaison officer

To provide secondary consults (clinical advice) for  
practitioners across the care continuum

Counselling and mediation (incl. financial  
counselling)

To provide onsite access to therapeutic options

Elder Abuse Prevention Network

To undertake awareness raising activities and  
develop/revise policies and interagency protocols

**Source: DHHS**

Appropriate  
response for  
older people  
and their  
families

Aboriginal, CALD, LGBTI elements to be included in all aspects of the integrated model of care.



# ADVANCED PRACTICE MODULES

1. Inclusivity and trauma informed practice in elder abuse
2. Involving supportive family in a person-centred response to elder abuse
3. Engaging safely with alleged perpetrators of elder abuse
4. Responding to elder abuse where decision-making capacity is an issue





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# QUICK REVIEW OF Level 1 Training

Recognising & Responding to Suspected Elder Abuse

# DEFINING ELDER ABUSE

Two **definitions of elder abuse** used by the Victorian Government:

*“Any act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust, which results in harm to an older person. Abuse may be physical, sexual, financial, psychological, social and/or neglect”*

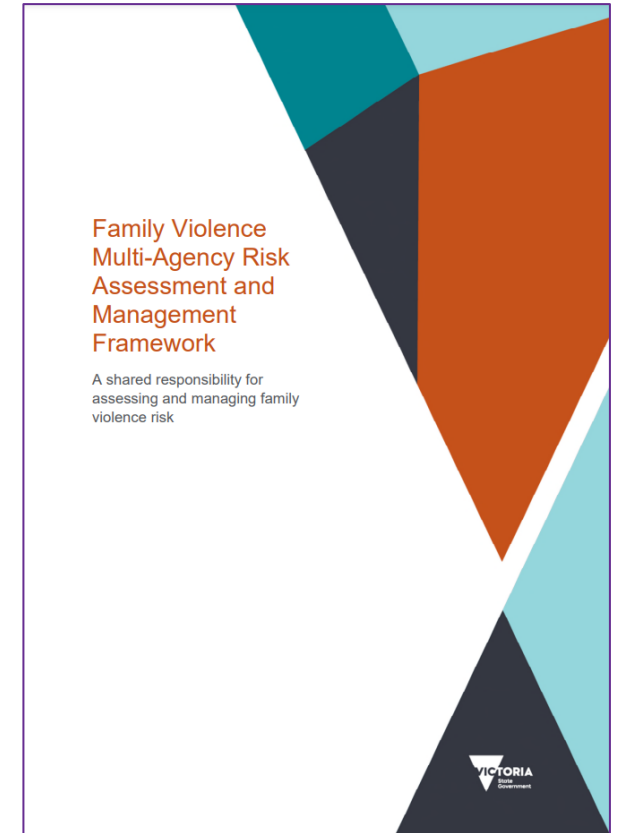
*(Australian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, 1999)*

*Elder abuse is a form of family violence ... defined as “any act occurring within any family or family-like (including unpaid carer) relationship where there is an implication of trust, which results in harm to an older person.”*

*(MARAM Practice Guides: Foundation Knowledge, 2019, p.47)*

# MARAM FRAMEWORK & THE RESPONSE TO ELDER ABUSE

- The Victorian Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework aims to ensure all relevant services in Victoria identify, assess and manage family violence risk in a safe and consistent way.
- Embedded in Part 11 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008.
- It is a best practice assessment and management approach supported by tools and practice guidance. Includes risk assessment questions and guidance **addressing family violence towards older people**.





# RISK ASSESSMENT: STRUCTURED PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT

- Combines four elements to determine the seriousness of risk
- Older person's assessment of fear, risk and safety may in some circumstances override professional judgement of other risk factors identified
- Point-in-time assessment of the level of risk



# RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO ELDER ABUSE

- Recognise potential signs of elder abuse and family violence risk (to older person and others)
- Connect with older person (and family as appropriate) and sensitively ask about their experience of family violence
- Listen carefully, without judgement, and validate the older person's/family member's story
- Respond to risk
- Offer options and pathways
- Document and share info. with other services (as permitted by legislation)



# INVOLVING SUPPORTIVE FAMILY IN A PERSON-CENTRED RESPONSE TO ELDER ABUSE

# TERMINOLOGY FOR THIS TRAINING

**‘Family’** – those with a significant personal relationship with the older person. This includes biological relatives, partners, ex-partners, offspring, siblings, friends, carers, community and others who play a significant role in the person’s life. The term refers equally to same-sex partners and same-sex-parented families.

**‘Perpetrator’** – a person who has used controlling behaviours, abuse and violence against another person in their family, or family-like relationship. We acknowledge many other terms are used, including ‘person using family violence’.

# PERSON-CENTRED FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

In the context of elder abuse, the older person is at the centre, with families involved and supported to increase safety ...

...acknowledging that family can be a source of harm or a key resource in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the older person



# LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION



(10 minutes)

Why focus on relationships that are important to an older person when responding to elder abuse?

# WHY FOCUS ON THE RELATIONSHIPS IMPORTANT TO AN OLDER PERSON?

“All responses to allegations of abuse should be respectful of the existing relationships that are considered important to an older person.” (With Respect to Age – 2009, p.9)

- Can assist in preventing elder abuse
- Can provide information about risks to their safety along with their strengths and resources
- Family, friends, neighbours and community members can support those living with elder abuse and increase their safety
- Those aware of the abuse may require support



# IDENTIFYING SUPPORTIVE FAMILY MEMBERS

# IDENTIFYING THE RELATIONSHIPS IMPORTANT TO AN OLDER PERSON

⚙ Tools for eliciting this information:

→ Questions

→ Developing an ecomap or genogram  
– see MARAM for templates



# IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND SAFETY

## Areas Of Enquiry With The Older Person

- **Identification** e.g., Who do you tend to have the most contact with?
- **Closeness** e.g., Who are the people you feel closest to?
- **Relationship with the perpetrator** e.g., Do they have any contact with the person using abuse or violence? (via phone, internet, etc)
- **Support and helpfulness** e.g., How might, or have, these people support/ed you?
- **Confidence in safety** e.g., Would you feel confident that they wouldn't tell the person using abuse or violence?



# HELPING MAKE INCLUSION SAFER

What does the older person anticipate:

- The other person will do with the information they receive?
- Will be the impact on their safety of confiding in the person?
- Will be the impact on the relationships between the older person and supportive family members?
- Will be the impact on the relationships between the perpetrator and supportive family members?

# IDENTIFYING SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND SAFETY – SMALL GROUP EXERCISE



Instructions (15 mins):

1. Spend the first 5 minutes on your own generating a list of questions relating to the five areas of enquiry  
Remember to use the exact language you would use when posing the questions
2. After generating your questions, share these with the other members of your small group
3. As a group decide on your best three questions and select someone to report back to the main group



# FACILITATING THE INVOLVEMENT OF SUPPORTIVE FAMILY

# OPTIONS FOR FACILITATING THE INVOLVEMENT OF SUPPORTIVE FAMILY



## OPTION 1

Explore the possibility of the older person talking with supportive family member(s) on their own



## OPTION 2

With the older person's informed consent, speak directly with the supportive family member(s) separate to the older person



## OPTION 3

Meet with the older person and supportive family member(s)



# **OPTION 1: TALK WITH OLDER PERSON ABOUT THEM SPEAKING WITH FAMILY MEMBERS**



# LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION



Whiteboard Exercise (10 mins)

1. What might constrain an older person from talking with others about what is happening?
2. How might you have a conversation about this with them and what could you say in response?



## **OPTION 2: SPEAK DIRECTLY WITH FAMILY MEMBERS WITHOUT THE OLDER PERSON BEING PRESENT**

# DIRECT CONTACT WITH SUPPORTIVE FAMILY WITHOUT THE OLDER PERSON PRESENT

## Circumstances in which this might occur:

- Request from the older person (and with informed consent)
- Identifying the opportunity and proposing it as an option to the older person
- “It may be helpful if those who care about you ... can hear and learn more about what is going on for you”
- Family contacts the practitioner directly and expresses concerns

## Don't forget to:

- Seek and document consent
- Discuss with the older person what may or may not be okay to talk about

# POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF SPEAKING DIRECTLY TO SUPPORTIVE FAMILY SEPARATELY (1)

- The relationship is strengthened – e.g., through affirming their importance in the older person's life
- The supportive family members' capacity to contribute to keeping the older person safe is strengthened – e.g., by
  - Offering education about elder abuse
  - Increasing awareness of the risks posed by the person causing harm
  - Informing them of plans for emergency procedures
  - Highlighting actions/conversations that may inadvertently place the older person at greater risk
  - Advice around how to respond if contacted by the person who is being abusive

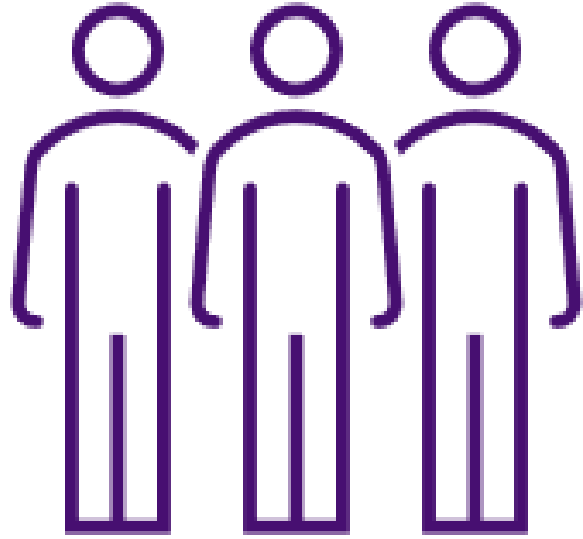
# ADVICE TO GIVE SUPPORTIVE FAMILY MEMBERS ABOUT CONTACT WITH PERPETRATORS

- The person who is being abusive may invite you to collude with them
- They may deny, minimise, justify their abuse
- They may blame the older person for their use of violence
- The older person's safety is paramount – what might the ramifications of your response be for them?
- Don't engage in a conversation about the violence or confront the person causing harm



# POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF SPEAKING DIRECTLY TO SUPPORTIVE FAMILY SEPARATELY (2)

- Acknowledgment of the impact of elder abuse on supportive family members and an opportunity to support them in their role
  - Providing information about supports for them and the older person  
e.g., Seniors Rights Victoria's "Concerned about an older person" booklet
- Provides opportunity to explore risks to safety that also may exist for supportive family members



## **OPTION 3: MEET WITH THE OLDER PERSON AND FAMILY MEMBERS (TOGETHER)**

# MEETING WITH AN OLDER PERSON & SUPPORTIVE FAMILY: POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- Provides a safer environment for an older person to speak with supportive family about their wishes
- Utilises the knowledge and support of family
- Supports problem solving and planning
- Contributes to the older person's safety

# ELEMENTS OF A PRODUCTIVE MEETING WITH THE OLDER PERSON & SUPPORTIVE FAMILY (1)

- Secure agreement from all parties that details of the meeting and of the abuse experienced will not be disclosed to the person who is being abusive
- Negotiate a clear purpose for the meeting
- If possible, prepare participants ahead of time about the purpose and process for the meeting
- Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to contribute while privileging the voice of the older person who is experiencing elder abuse

# ELEMENTS OF A PRODUCTIVE MEETING WITH THE OLDER PERSON & SUPPORTIVE FAMILY (2)

- Use the purpose and structure of the meeting to keep discussions on track
- Acknowledge contributions
- Normalise the likely diversity of emotions, attitudes, values and proposed actions
- Check in how attendees are feeling emotionally
- Confirm any plans, actions and next steps at conclusion of the meeting

# MANAGING DIFFERENCE AND CONFLICT IN THE MEETING

- Acknowledge all perspectives
- Validate shared concerns and themes
  - “You want the best for your mother”
- Acknowledge and validate the impact of the conflict on everyone
- “I can see it’s a difficult issue for you both”
- Prioritise the expressed wishes of the older person
- “While all your concerns are understandable, your mother clearly wants ..abc .. And it's important we work together to do what we can to support her with this"
- Negotiate next steps
- "Can we agree to disagree for now and focus on what we can do to support your mum’s wishes?"



# PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

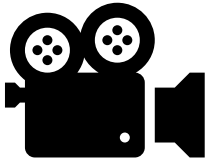


# CASE SCENARIO: INTRODUCING BEV

(See handout)



# PRACTICE DEMONSTRATION: MEETING WITH BEV & SYLVIA



<https://vimeo.com/thebouveriecentre/review/457634777/600ab6fde6>

# MEETING WITH BEV & SYLVIA: WHAT DID YOU NOTICE?



In what ways did the practitioner conduct the meeting that was congruent with the elements of an effective meeting presented earlier?

What were the key strategies used to address difficulties that arose in the meeting?

What could have been done differently?

# SMALL GROUP EXERCISE: FAMILY-RELATED INTERVENTIONS FOR PROMOTING SAFETY

Instructions (15 mins):

- In your small group, brainstorm the practical actions that could be negotiated with Bev and Sylvia to increase Bev's safety. These should address what can be done:
  - Within the family
  - Using relevant external services and resources
- Appoint a person to record your listed actions and to report back to the main group



# LEARNING FROM TODAY

What will you take from today  
that you can use in your practice?