

November: Family violence

Family violence (or domestic violence) is a serious matter affecting many lives directly and indirectly. It can harm adults, young people and children physically and emotionally, now and in the future. Abuse in families and relationships is not normal, in fact, it is a crime.

Family violence occurs when a person uses violent and/or abusive behaviour to control someone with whom they have some type of 'family relationship'. This includes step children and adopted children, defacto couples, gay and lesbian couples who live together and the extended family (relatives) of those couples.

No one should have to cope with family violence alone. You may, of course, choose to approach friends or other family members, or a community group for support and assistance. There are also many professionals available to help people who have experienced family violence. In the ACT, our police officers have been specifically trained to investigate family violence.

There are a number of things that police can do to assist those who have experienced abuse or those who use violence, for example:

- investigate whether a criminal offence has been committed and if so, they may charge the offender
- obtain an Emergency Protection Order from the court on behalf of a person, either to prevent family violence from occurring, or to protect a person from further harm, and
- referral to support agencies such as the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and other service agencies.

The Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS) is a non government crisis support agency that provides 24 hour, 7 day a week assistance to all people affected by family violence. DVCS provides direct crisis intervention and telephone support, access to safe accommodation, court support to people who have been subjected to family violence, referrals and information for women, men and young people.

DVCS can be contacted on (02)6280 0900 (24 hours).

Further information on family violence can be found on the ACT Policing's website at www.afp.gov.au/act .

Source: ACT Policing