

Good Practice Guidelines

DO

- **Take the client seriously** – it is crucial that she feels believed when she does decide to seek help.
- **Reassure the client that it is not her fault** – no one deserves to be threatened or abused
- **Prioritise her immediate safety** – recognize that her situation may be life threatening. Inquire about her current circumstances and any fears she may have.
- **Be sensitive to her needs** – if possible, provide a female worker to work with the survivor.
- **Provide a safe place to talk** – always try to provide a private space for the survivor to talk.
- **Maintain confidentiality** – do not disclose information about a woman or her whereabouts to anyone unless legally required to do so. Information about clients should only be shared with other professionals and colleagues on a strict need to know basis.
- **Express to the client that she is not alone in her experience** – isolation is a common form of abuse and many women feel isolated in their experience of abuse, as they might have kept it a secret.
- **Be aware of contributory factors** – language difficulties, cultural influences, family pressures and immigration status may compound the experience and tolerance of abuse.
- **Provide factual information** – be aware of other services available to survivors in your area and elsewhere.
- **Refer elsewhere if necessary** – when referring women to other services, offer to make the call for them rather than just signposting.

DON'T

- **Ask her why she didn't leave earlier** – there are many reasons why women do not leave abusive relationships
- **Ask her to just stop contact with her abusive adult child** – women often feel responsible for their children long after their 18th birthday and are anxious about not being disloyal
- **Ask her what caused the violence** – this will make her feel it was her fault
- **Be judgmental** – we all have the right to live free from violence and abuse
- **Make decisions for the client** – many survivors are used to being told what to do and you are not the best person to make decisions on their behalf
- **Pressure the client to make a decision** – often women are seeking advice prior to leaving an abusive environment and may just want some information
- **Ignore her beliefs/fears of threats** – remember she is in the best position to judge her own safety and welfare
- **Give out her personal information** – only share information that is necessary. Be extra cautious when sharing client details with agencies over the phone.
- **Be dismissive or casual about the violence/abuse** – all disclosure of domestic violence should be treated seriously
- **Make assumptions about other service providers** – before you refer a client elsewhere, make sure you have a clear understanding of the services that agency provides.
- **Offer to mediate between the client and the abuser** – when dealing with survivors of domestic violence never compromise your personal safety