



DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Information for Managers/Supervisors during COVID-19

Western Sydney University (WSU) is dedicated to ensuring the health, safety and well-being of all staff, and recognises that for those in unsafe home environments the new pressures and restrictions enforced as a result of COVID-19 may bring increased anxiety, risk and exposure to issues such as domestic and family violence (DFV).

Domestic and family violence (DFV) is behaviour by a partner, ex-partner, or a family member which is violent, bullying, threatening, coercive or controlling. This may include threats or actual harm which is physical, psychological, sexual, financial, or verbal. The University understands that DFV does not discriminate and affects all communities regardless of gender, sexuality, cultural background, disability, age or economic status.

The University understands it can be challenging for managers and supervisors working with staff in these situations.

MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS ROLE IN SUPPORTING STAFF

Managers and supervisors have an important role to play in supporting staff who are experiencing DFV. Given the unique working environment that has emerged due to efforts to control the spread of COVID-19, many staff are now working remotely. While isolation and social distancing are of vital importance in the current climate, it has been recognised that these new measures may elevate the incidence DFV matters, and result in increased risk to the safety and wellbeing of some of our staff. **We encourage you to access the advice and support available (see below) and take a supportive and flexible approach wherever possible.**

In supporting a staff member who may be affected by DFV, managers and supervisors should:

- Encourage staff affected by DFV issues to access counselling services offered via [AccessEAP](#) (see below for details)
- Treat any disclosure of a DFV matter as confidential, with respect to the staff member's right to privacy, except where there is a risk to the health and safety of the individual, or to other staff members, or when there is a legal obligation to disclose. See below for links to WSU teams who can advise you on confidentiality and other relevant matters.
- Seek advice from [Office of Human Resources \(OHR\)](#) in the first instance, or contact the [Office of Equity and Diversity \(OED\)](#), the [Work Health, Safety and Wellbeing team \(WHSW\)](#) and/or the Manager Support Hotline available through [AccessEAP](#) for further advice and support.
- Be familiar with the [Domestic and Family Violence Policy](#) and related entitlements, including up to 10 days paid Domestic and Family Violence Leave per year (see below for details).
- Where appropriate, support the affected staff member to contact your [HR Advisor](#), or the Executive Director Human Resources, to access support provisions within the University's [Domestic and Family Violence Policy](#). If the staff member is unable or uncomfortable to contact the OHR, make the contact on their behalf.
- Consider alternative work arrangements for staff concerned about their safety and wellbeing when working in a home environment. Contact [OED](#) for further advice.



UNIVERSITY SUPPORTS

Counselling Support

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers a confidential counselling and support service which is available to all our staff, including related family members at no cost. Staff who disclose a matter of DFV should be encouraged to access the service via [AccessEAP](#) or phoning **1800 818 728**. Alternatively, outside the University, [1800RESPECT \(1800 737 732\)](#) is a national family and domestic violence phone counselling service with social workers available 24 hours 7 days a week.

The EAP also offers a [Manager Support Hotline](#) available to all managers and supervisors in need of advice or support. For more information about this program view the [Employee Assistance Program Policy](#).

Adjustments to Working Arrangements

Leave options

A staff member who is experiencing DFV may access up to **10 days** paid Domestic and Family Violence Leave per year, and any other paid or unpaid leave available to them for the purpose of attending appointments, making relocation or safety arrangements, or other activities related to their circumstances. The University may grant additional paid Domestic and Family Violence Leave to a staff member based on the individual circumstances of their request. A staff member supporting a family member experiencing DFV may also request leave without pay and/or apply for personal leave for that purpose.

Further information on leave options can be found in the relevant [Staff Agreement](#), or can be provided by your local [HR Partner](#).

Flexible work options

A staff member experiencing, or supporting an immediate family member experiencing DFV has the right to request a change in their working arrangements under the [Fair Work Act](#). Some examples of flexible work options that may be requested include:

- Adjusting start and finish times to accommodate safety considerations
- Requesting a flexible working arrangement in accordance with the applicable enterprise agreement.

More information is available via the [Flexible Work Options webpage](#). Our [Workplace Flexibility Policy](#) also provides further details on requesting flexible work options, and related responsibilities for managers/supervisors.

Safety and Security

The safety of our students and staff must be considered as a priority. The current staffing arrangements in place around COVID-19 see a majority of staff working from home or remotely. Where there is significant concern for the safety and wellbeing of a staff member working in a home environment, consideration may be given to alternative work arrangements on a case by case basis. [Office of Equity and Diversity or Work Health, Safety and Wellbeing teams](#) can be contacted for further advice.

If there is a threat of harm to any individual when present on campus as a result of a DFV matter, advice should be sought from [Campus Safety and Security](#) on 1300 737 003.

Other possible safety precautions that may be helpful include the removal of staff contact information from the Staff Directory, if on campus, arranging a [security](#) escort to and from vehicles, and any other safety measures as appropriate to the individual circumstances.

If there is an immediate life threatening situation call the **NSW Police on 000**.



OTHER RESOURCES AND MORE INFORMATION

Support Lines

1800RESPECT (1800 737 732) is a national family and domestic violence phone counselling service which has social workers available 24 hours 7 days a week.

Domestic Violence Hotline (1800 65 64 63) is a 24 hour NSW state-wide telephone crisis counselling and referral service for women and persons who identify as female.

Mens Line Australia (1300 78 99 78) is a service for men who are victims of domestic and family violence or are experiencing emotional health and relationship concerns and are looking for support.

Online Resources

Domestic and Family Violence webpage:

westernsydney.edu.au/equity_diversity/equity_and_diversity/gender_equality/family_and_domestic_violence

Respect.Now.Always:

<https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/respectnowalways>

Flexible Work Options:

westernsydney.edu.au/people_and_culture/opc/your_employment/flexible_work_options

westernsydney.edu.au/equity_diversity/equity_and_diversity/gender_equality/flexible_working_arrangements

Relevant Policies and Guidelines

Domestic and Family Violence Support Policy and Guidelines:

<https://policies.westernsydney.edu.au/document/view.current.php?id=330>

Workplace Flexibility Policy:

<https://policies.westernsydney.edu.au/document/view.current.php?id=137>

Enterprise Agreements:

westernsydney.edu.au/human_resources/ohr/uws_enterprise_agreements