

Communication and raising awareness

Getting staff and the community talking



Raising awareness about violence against women and what can be done to prevent it is vital in mobilising your council and community to act.

Inform yourself and your community of the important facts

To garner support for preventing violence against women, you will need to get your community to understand:

- **What violence is** — including emotional, physical, sexual, social and economic abuse (see Info Sheet 2).
- **Why it is important** — convey the message that violence against women is serious, prevalent and preventable (see Info Sheet 3).
- **What the underlying factors that allow violence to occur are** — clarify that factors such as alcohol, poverty and mental illnesses can contribute to violence, but do not cause it (see Info Sheet 3).
- **What the picture in your community is like** — access family violence statistics for your municipality at www.socialstatistics.com.au.
- **What can be done about it** — giving examples of what other councils have done will inspire your colleagues and community to act (see Info Sheet 6).
- **Why councils are important** — as employers and providers of more than 140 services, councils have a unique reach and influence in the community.



This is a positive message about stopping violence before it happens. We do this by promoting and celebrating equal and respectful relationships between women and men, girls and boys. Focus on positive communications.

Know your audience by mapping out the key stakeholders you wish to engage, e.g. councillors, staff, sports clubs, men, young people or new parents. Note the best ways to communicate with these stakeholders, the kinds of messages you want to convey and the activities that best suit them. Draw on examples from other councils (see Info Sheet 6). Assess the strength of your relationships with these groups: are they strong, weak or non-existent?

Develop a shared understanding by choosing the right language to convey key preventing violence against women messages. Some councils talk about promoting gender equity, others talk about a right to respect for all. For others, it is about women and girls being of equal value. Vary the type of language according to your target audience. Test your messages with a sample group before finalising them.

Convey information and key messages through images and pictures as well as words. Use images of positive gender roles and relationships between men and women. The use of images in council bulletins and newsletters can be an opportunity to break down rigid gender stereotypes.

Consult with key players and visit different council areas or community organisations who have shown an interest in this work. Share information and knowledge, and promote opportunities for discussion. Raise awareness about why council has a role and should get involved and what other councils are doing.

Determine the human and financial resources available to you. Do you have internal capacity to support the development of communication materials, or will you need to out-source? Is there a social media guru in your council who can advise on innovative approaches?

Develop branded materials featuring an image and key messages to help build a strong and consistent public profile. Coming up with a phrase or sentence that best captures your approach or vision for your community keeps the message strong. You can then use these words and images in all the communication materials you produce. Test these materials before you finalise them.

Be aware there will always be people affected directly or indirectly when you talk about this issue because the prevalence of violence against women is high. You must always include information about support services, including phone numbers and web resources, such as 1800 Respect (1800 737 732) or www.1800respect.org.au.

Five awareness raising activities

- Hold an event for White Ribbon Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, International Women's Day or International Human Rights Day with guest speakers and invite interested agencies in your community. You could also organise a march through a major town, or dedicate a match at a local football or netball club.

- Establish a Preventing Violence Against Women or Gender Equity working group to build staff awareness, skill and commitment.
- Circulate a quiz testing staff knowledge of violence prevention and gender equity with a prize for the winner.
- Put up branded signs and posters. Consider creating bookmarks, fridge magnets, magnets on rubbish trucks or fleet cars, screen savers on council and library computers and on-hold messages on council phone systems.
- Use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to get conversations going, particularly to coincide with events such as White Ribbon Day.



Useful links

White Ribbon Foundation www.whiteribbon.org.au

Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service (WDVCS) Survivor Advocate Program www.wdvcs.org.au/Survivors-as-Media-Advocates

The EVAs (Eliminating Violence Against Women Awards) Guide to Reporting on Violence Against Women www.evas.org.au/index.php/reporting-on-violence-against-women-vaw/guide-to-reporting-on-violence-against-women

VicHealth's Guide to Reporting on Violence Against Women www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/reportingVAV

Women's Health in the North: Love Control DVD www.whin.org.au/resources/preventing-violence-against-women.html#LoveControl

City of Monash: Monash Men Say No To Violence www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwQ9Ua5XHXU

Grampians Women's Health Act@Work Infographic www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVeq6ef3344

The Line www.theline.gov.au



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