

Opportunities for staff induction

Why include preventing violence against women content in induction processes?



As major employers in the community, councils have a responsibility to provide employees with a safe and healthy workplace and can act as a positive model to other workplaces. A council's HR or organisational development unit can shape positive workplace cultures that prevent violence against women through gender equitable policies and practices, training and awareness.

1 in 3 women have experienced some form of violence since the age of 15ⁱ, so there will be women employed by councils who are currently experiencing or have experienced violence. In recognition of this, an increasing number of councils provide workplace support to those experiencing violence, either through a dedicated family violence policy or safety planning.



- Inform staff of policies and family violence leave provisions through your council's family violence policy or Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA), if applicable.
- Provide information on joining your White Ribbon or preventing violence against women action team, if appropriate.
- Include a brief presentation by a council director or other preventing violence against women leader.

Information to include in induction packs

- Definitions of sexism, harassment and unconscious bias.
- Ways to promote respect and equity in the workplace.
- Key facts and figures about violence against women.
- Useful service system referral information.
- Details of policies or domestic violence leave provisions for staff.
- White Ribbon publicity information, including details about your White Ribbon action team.
- Gender equity working group or preventing violence against women contact person in council, if applicable.

Ideas to consider

Induction session

- Connect preventing violence against women principles to the values of the organisation. For example, gender equity connects to respect for diversity and equal opportunities.
- Inform staff of preventing violence against women, gender equity and employee relations policies to ensure they are clear on what constitutes sexism and harassment.
- Raise awareness about what the council has done on White Ribbon Day and International Women's Day.

Principles to consider

Timing

Councils who consider preventing violence against women principles in their HR functions and induction processes have usually already implemented a program of work, having gained awareness and experience through activities or policies. Introducing preventing violence against women themes into staff induction is best considered when you have some experienced informed staff and have had some success with initiatives.

Engage your HR manager

Make sure your HR manager is informed about the following:

- **The essential facts about violence against women** – what constitutes violence and its prevalence and impacts, based on the evidence.
- **What councils have already done** – showcase the commitments other council areas have made to preventing violence against women and what other councils' HR areas have done.
- **Relevance** – preventing violence against women work is part of being a good employer as it is about respect, fairness and valuing staff. It also relates to providing a safe and healthy workplace.

Broaden understandings of HR's role in preventing violence against women

One key way to broaden HR's role in this work is by informing them ahead of events where you plan to raise awareness about council's preventing violence against women activities (such as a celebration on White Ribbon Day or International Women's Day). These events can often encourage women to disclose experiences that they may not have before. It is important that HR staff are informed and well prepared to deal with any disclosures of sexism or harassment at work, and have referral information for disclosures of violence at home.

Provide options and start the conversation

Inform HR staff of appropriate resources and training to include in your staff induction. Find a hook-in where there is already an interest, such as providing professional development for staff to apply a gender lens in their work. Your regional women's health service will have details of available training (see Info Sheet 2). Remember to include this type of material in the staff induction section of your council's Intranet site.

Enlist the support of a leader

Having a senior leader speak from a strongly informed perspective at induction can be a very effective way to get other staff thinking about preventing violence against women in their work. It is important for the director or manager to link gender equity and prevention of violence against women principles with how staff can apply them to their work.

Always provide information about local family violence services

Even if local services are sparse, which is often the case in rural municipalities, there is a real chance that some women attending induction have experienced or are experiencing violence. Therefore, including referral information in induction material is very important. Listing 1800 Respect (1800 737 732) or www.1800respect.org.au and your regional family violence service contact information can be the first step to a new reality for many women (see Info Sheet 3).

Doing something as part of induction, however small, will send the message to staff that preventing violence against women is important to council objectives.



Useful links

White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation Program

www.whiteribbon.org.au/workplaces

Safe at Home, Safe at Work Project www.dvandwork.unsw.edu.au

Women's Health in the North Gender Analysis Tool

www.whin.org.au/images/PDFs/whin%20gender%20analysis%20tool.pdf

i ABS, 2013, *Personal Safety Survey*, Cat. No. 4906.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.



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