

# The role of libraries

Victoria is home to nearly 300 public libraries. As well as their important role in providing equitable access to knowledge and resources, libraries are trusted, safe spaces that contribute to community wellbeing and cohesion.

Women and children living with family violence sometimes use libraries as places of refuge. Women experiencing violence in their homes may use the safety of library computers to explore options for getting help. Libraries can also be an “entry point”, connecting women with other relevant council services.



## Libraries responding to family violence

There are a number of ways for libraries to respond to women and children who are experiencing or have experienced family violence. Consider some of the ideas below.

### Make spaces safe

Ensure library car parks, footpaths and entrances are well-lit. Display family violence support service information on notice boards and counters.

Some libraries display stickers for the national family violence and sexual assault counselling hotline 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) on the back of bathroom doors [www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)

### Undertake training

Identifying Family Violence (IFV) training will enable library staff to be able to identify where women or their children may be experiencing or at risk of family violence. It will also equip staff with the knowledge and confidence to make a referral to an appropriate service.

IFV training is underpinned by the Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF)—the evidence-based framework used across the family violence sector to respond consistently to women and children.

For more information about how to access training, see More Resources, over page.

### Start your own program

Consider partnering with a local agency or another area of council to deliver a program for women and children in your municipality.

Some libraries are able to offer free legal advice to women while their children participate in the Story Time program.

Some libraries also offer after-school homework programs, providing vulnerable young people who may be living in violent homes with an important community connection and an opportunity to remain engaged in education in a safe and welcoming place.

For more information, contact the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) (03) 9667 5585 or [knagle@mav.asn.au](mailto:knagle@mav.asn.au)



[www.mav.asn.au](http://www.mav.asn.au)

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### Libraries preventing violence against women

Libraries also have a role to play in the prevention of violence against women, by promoting messages of gender equity and respect. Gender inequity is the key cause of men's violence against women.

Many library programs demonstrate women's capability and contributions. Libraries can continue to reinforce gender equity by celebrating women's achievements, supporting women's writing, promoting books whose main characters are women and girls and that challenge limiting gender stereotypes and displaying resources that contain anti-sexist messages.

Consider the below ideas for doing violence prevention work.

#### **Promote gender equitable books and media**

Libraries can actively promoting gender equitable books and media.

Some books, films, video games and other media contain negative portrayals of women and girls, objectify women and girls, promote limiting stereotypes of what it means to be a woman or a man, a girl or a boy, or simply fail to include women and girls, at all.

Books and other media that include strong female characters—as well as nurturing male characters—reinforce gender equity. Celebrating books written by women authors also counteracts sexist attitudes which value men's work as better or more "literary" than women's work.

You could consider putting gender equitable books on display, or reading them to children during story time. See More Resources for lists of suggested books and media.

#### **Participate in a campaign**

Consider participating in an existing anti-violence campaign. Some libraries participate in the Week Without Violence campaign in the third week of October. Others participate in the United Nations 16 Days of Action Against Gender-based Violence in November. See More Resources for campaigns information.

#### **Undertake training**

As well as IFV, training in promoting gender equity across your workplace is available through regional women's health services. See More Resources.

#### **Endorse anti-violence messaging**

Consider using bookmarks, posters or computer screen savers to promote anti-violence or gender equitable messaging. Local family violence service contact information can be included on resources like bookmarks.

Libraries are promoting primary prevention messages developed through the Generating Equality and Respect Project. Some libraries have 'Say no to violence. Say yes to equality and respect' as computer screen-saver messages and posters with the message 'Stop violence against women. Violence against women is never acceptable' on display.

#### **More resources**

For more on councils preventing violence against women, see the MAV Info Sheets: <http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity/pvaw-information-sheets/Pages/default.aspx>

For more information about the Generating Equality and Respect Program: <http://www.monash.vic.gov.au/Services/Health-Safety/Prevention-of-Violence-Against-Women/Generating-Equality-and-Respect-Program>

For information about Identifying Family Violence training, contact your Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator: <http://www.thelookout.org.au/sector-info/what-integrated-fv-sector/regional-integration-coordinators-rics>

You can find your regional women's health service at: [www.equalityandsafetyforwomen.org.au](http://www.equalityandsafetyforwomen.org.au)

For the Monash Library Service's gender equitable picture booklist: <http://www.monash.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/our-services/violence-against-women/children-books-promoting-gender-equality-challenging-gender-stereotypes-booklist.pdf>

For information about the Week Without Violence campaign in the northern metro region: <http://www.nifvs.org.au/about/getting-involved/week-without-violence/>