

Womenwithdisabilitiesvictoria

empowering women

Presentation by Women with Disabilities Victoria
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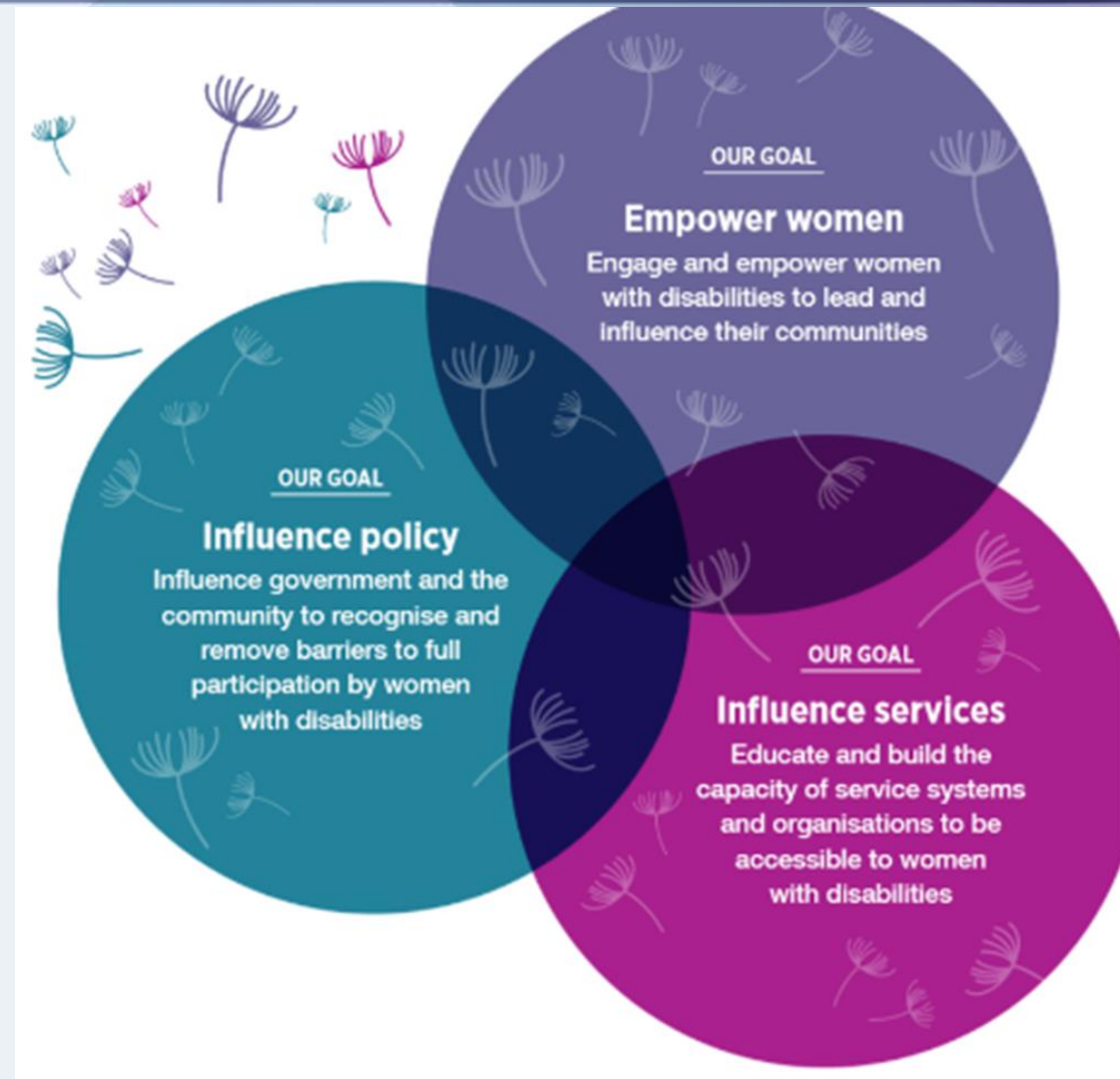
Statewide Maternal Child Health Nurse Conference
26 October 2018

Our vision and goals

Women with Disabilities Victoria is an organisation run by women with disabilities, for women with disabilities.

Our Vision

A world where all women are respected and can fully experience life.



Priority areas of work

Our Priorities

Our commitment to create opportunities for women with disabilities to realise their leadership and advocacy potential is central to our work within each priority area.

Violence

We will **prevent and respond to violence and abuse against women with disabilities.**

NDIS

We will **work to make the NDIS relevant and responsive to women with disabilities and empower women to engage with the new system.**

Health

We will **promote access to health services for women with disabilities.**



Image from the site, 'This is what disability looks like'

Responsive Access Project

Funded in response to a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Aim is to support workforces, that intersect with women with disabilities experiencing family violence, to provide more effective and appropriate responses. We are:

- ▶ Developing training on family violence and women with disabilities for specialist family violence and universal services
- ▶ Supporting a range of workforces to address the needs of women with disabilities in developing their own FV training and resources
- ▶ Creating resources including video, presenting and consulting.

Who are women with disabilities?

Can include women with physical, psycho-social, cognitive (acquired brain injury, intellectual disability), communication and sensory disabilities and chronic health issues. Can be temporary, episodic or permanent.

Women with disabilities:

- ▶ may not identify as having a disability, even if they are in receipt of NDIS funding or a Centrelink payment for people with disabilities
- ▶ may not want to disclose their disability:
 - ▶ due to fear of judgement or discrimination
 - ▶ because they may be tired of having to 'educate' providers about their disability
 - ▶ because they may not trust you yet
 - ▶ because they have had negative experiences with parenting services or child protection.

Intersectionality: Women with disabilities may experience disadvantage due to being a woman and having a disability. May face additional disadvantage if they have other experiences of diversity or marginalisation: Aboriginal, CALD, refugee, newly settled, LGBTI, in prison or ex-prison, sex workers etc.

The social model of disability.

The statistics

Gender-based and disability-based discrimination intersect and increase the risk of violence for women with disabilities:

- Family violence is the leading cause of death or disability in women under the age of 45 in Australia
- Women with disabilities experience higher rates of family and sexual violence than women and men without disabilities
- Over one third of women with disabilities experience family violence
- Some women with disabilities are at higher risk of family violence and sexual assault than others, for example women with intellectual disabilities
- Women with disabilities experience violence over longer periods of time
- Women with disabilities experience violence from many perpetrators.

Forms of family violence experienced by women with disabilities

Women with disabilities may experience the same types of violence as women without disabilities as well as disability based forms of violence:

- control of: decision-making; finances; communication; social activities
- threats to: challenge mother's right to custody/access or remove children; remove care and support; harm animals, for example guide dogs or companion animals; institutionalise
- denial of: the right to make decisions; support; access to health care
- taking control of/hiding disability or communication aids and equipment
- providing care in a cruel, rough manner
- sexual demands in return for assistance
- over or under medication
- technological abuse.

'I wanted to leave this house to just have time away and I got off my wheelchair to change... into my clothes and he came in to my room and took a wheel off my wheel chair so I couldn't then leave.'

(Voices Against Violence research participant)

Intersecting reforms

A very complex and fast changing scene:

- ▶ Introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme Australia-wide
- ▶ Reform of the family violence sector in Victoria due to the Royal Commission into Family Violence with implications for a huge range of workforces.

WDV is working to bring the family violence and disability sectors together. We are working NDIS and family violence services so people with disabilities experiencing family violence can receive the supports they need.

November 2017, Domestic Violence Victoria and WDV co-hosted a forum to provide the family violence sector with NDIS information.

There is still a lot of work to be done.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

A radical transformation of disability services:

- ▶ a fundamental shift to a consumer-led model
- ▶ the move to a national system
- ▶ an explosion in the number of staff needed to meet demand
- ▶ a shift from block funding to a competitive marketplace
- ▶ entry of private sector, for-profit organisations into the marketplace
- ▶ entry of individual contractors providing direct services to clients.

By 2018-2019, when the NDIS is fully implemented it is anticipated it will support approximately 485,000 consumers (NDIS, 2016).

In 2015, nearly one in five Australians reported having a disability (18.3% or 4.3 million people).

Of these 2.4 million Australians with disability (living in households) needed assistance with at least one activity of daily life (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Implications of the NDIS

Many women with disabilities may not want to go through the application process for NDIS funding, even if they might be eligible.

Women may be receiving services from varied providers who may or may not have much family violence knowledge.

It can take time to change NDIS plans.

There may not be a disability provider to collaborate with. The woman may be managing her own funds. The perpetrator may be controlling the funds.

Accessibility is more than just a ramp

Accessibility is about much more than ramps: beliefs, attitudes, language, communication style even before you get to thinking about services.

Unconscious bias: We all rely on shortcuts and past knowledge or experiences to make safe assumptions. This creates what we call 'unconscious bias'.

Ableism: a set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with disabilities.

'The soft bigotry of low expectations'.

The Advocate – FV sector newsletter

Working with women with disabilities

This tip sheet was developed for workers by Women with Disabilities Victoria with support from DVRCV.

Women with disabilities experience **higher levels** of violence than other women but are **under-represented** as users of family violence, sexual assault, counselling and victim support services.

Workers can **support women** with disabilities by maintaining a **strengths-based approach** and **avoiding deficit language**.



Focus on the person and their support requirements rather than the disability.

✓ "Leanne **has an acquired brain injury** and **understands new information best** when it is clear and succinct and a written summary is provided. **She is able** to assess her own level of risk when given sufficient time to understand and consider her situation."

It's more important to **understand her strengths and the support she requires**.

A woman **may not describe herself as having a disability** despite receiving National Disability Insurance Scheme or Centrelink payments for people with a disability. This may include people who have a chronic health condition, an illness or an impairment, who belong to the deaf community or who have a mental illness.



✗ "Leanne's acquired brain injury causes difficulties with short term memory, and increases her vulnerability and risk."

Avoid **describing people as their disability**



✓ "Mia has schizophrenia."
"Eleni has autism."

✗ "Mia is schizophrenic."
"Eleni is autistic."



If you are describing a woman's disability:

Avoid **deficit language**

Use **factual language** that doesn't **reinforce stereotypes, imply weakness or alienate** women.

✓ "Does your partner provide you with support?"

✗ "Are you *dependent* on your partner?"



People are not 'bound' by wheelchairs, they are enabled by them.

✓ "Mia uses a wheelchair."

✗ "Mia is *wheelchair-bound*."

✓ "Hanh uses some spoken words and a communication device. She understands spoken and written English."

✗ "Hanh has communication *problems*."



Talk about accessibility rather than disability.

✓ "Louise has early stage dementia."
"Jenny was recently diagnosed with depression."

Describe facilities, language and signage as **accessible**, not **disabled or handicapped**.

✗ "Louise *suffers* from dementia."
"Jenny *struggles* with depression."

✓ "Fatima requires an **accessible** refuge."

✗ "Fatima requires a refuge with a *disabled* toilet."

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Working with women with disabilities

- ▶ A strengths-based approach is essential when working with women with disabilities.
- ▶ The woman with a disability is the expert on her own impairments and how they impact on her life.
- ▶ Working with women with disabilities means you generally need to take more time and ask the right questions and provide information in the way that is best for her.
- ▶ Non-collusion with perpetrators – The partner, whether he is a carer or not, is more likely to be viewed as a ‘good bloke’.
- ▶ Using the Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) for increased safety for victim/survivors and greater perpetrator accountability.

‘...as my ‘carer’ they’d look to him oh, and he’d discredit me and then they’d not believe what I’d say. And ‘oh, she’s just making this up’. The whole community could not believe that this person could do this. It makes it so much harder for the victim to voice something, cause they know nobody’s going to believe them!’

(Voices Against Violence research participant)

Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative (Victoria)

Short-term funds for up to 12 weeks, to a maximum of \$9,000 per person, while the woman and her family violence worker develop a longer term plan (in addition, to Family Violence Flexible Support Packages that can be accessed by all women).

- ▶ For immediate disability support to access a family violence crisis accommodation response, while exploring longer term housing and support options, or immediate disability support to remain safe in their own home.
- ▶ A family violence worker will determine that a woman, or her children, have a disability as defined by the Disability Act (2006). The woman does not have to be eligible for, or receiving NDIS funds, if she meets the definition of the Disability Act.
- ▶ A referral will be made to the disability and family violence liaison officer (during business hours), or the Safe steps family violence response centre (24 hours a day, seven days a week).
- ▶ The family violence liaison officer can, where appropriate, approve short-term funds for disability related supports such as attendant care, hire of equipment, sign/Auslan interpreting or transport costs.

Disability Family Violence Liaison Officer

(03) 9843 6304 Mobile: 0437 741 920

Disabilityfv@dhhs.vic.gov.au

1800 RESPECT services for professionals

National Sexual Assault Domestic Violence Crisis Service: 1800 737 732

<https://www.1800respect.org.au/professionals/>

- ▶ Secondary consult: information and resources for professionals who support people impacted by sexual assault, domestic and family violence
- ▶ 1800RESPECT counsellors can also provide clinical consultations and referrals to support for professionals experiencing work-induced stress and trauma

Inclusive practice when working with people with a disability:

<https://www.1800respect.org.au/inclusive-practice/supporting-people-with-disability/understanding-the-issues>

Our Right to Safety and Respect

- ▶ Women need to know their rights. 'They need to provide information on our rights and support services. Unless you know the systems you don't know what to ask for and you don't have any power.' (Sam, WDV member)
- ▶ Women with Disabilities Victoria video and video guide (including Easy English version)
Our right to safety and respect:
<https://www.wdv.org.au/publications/safeguards-project/>



Easy read version – Our Right to Safety and Respect



We need to trust our own feelings.

and



Learn to know when we do **not** feel safe. Like

What do we feel when we are

- worried about something
- scared.



We can learn more about

- our rights



- how to feel strong as a woman with a disability

- how to speak up



- how to make choices.

Other Easy English Resources

- ▶ Making Rights Reality: a set of 8 easy read/easy English booklets about sexual assault and family violence.
<https://www.secasa.com.au/pages/making-rights-reality>
- ▶ Victoria Police Easy English Resources, includes *Family violence: What police do* (Note: Victoria Police website is being redeveloped, web search 'Victoria Policy Easy English' if the link fails)
https://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=45257

Parenting with a Disability

New ABC radio series *We've got this. Parenting with a Disability*, produced by Eliza Hull a mother with a disability:

- ▶ <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/we've-got-this:-the-early-years/10395862>
- ▶ Single mother, Jen Blyth, is deaf, and when she was pregnant with her son Dexter, she had to advocate and fight to have an interpreter during birth.
- ▶ For Emma and Vaughn Bennison, parents of Lucy, 10 and Julian, 15, the greatest challenge of being parents that are blind, are the misconceptions that people have about what they can and can't do.

Women with Disabilities Victoria

<https://www.wdv.org.au/>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/womenwithdisabilitiesvictoria>

Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/WDVtweet>

* [Sign up to the WDV eNews](#)

* [Sign up to the Violence & Disability Quarterly](#)

Voices Against Violence: Landmark collaborative research and seven part report on the extent and nature of violence against women with disabilities in Victoria including interviews with women with disabilities about their experiences of violence:

<https://www.wdv.org.au/resources>