



# Family Violence Resource Kit

## For employees of Mildura Rural City Council

### Introduction

Mildura Rural City Council acknowledges that violence in the workplace and in the community, in all its forms, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Council recognises employees sometimes face situations of violence or abuse in their personal life that may affect their attendance or performance at work. Therefore, Council is committed to providing workplace support to staff experiencing family violence.

Council encourages any employee experiencing situations of violence or abuse in their personal life to contact one of Council's Employee Assistance Providers – See Appendix A for further details.

### Family Violence

Family Violence is prohibited under the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)* (the Act). The Act prohibits behaviour that amounts to family violence.

Behaviour that may amount to family violence includes but is not limited to:

- assaulting or causing personal injury to a family member or threatening to do so;
- sexually assaulting a family member or engaging in another form of sexually coercive behaviour or threatening to engage in such behaviour;
- intentionally damaging a family member's property, or threatening to do so;
- unlawfully depriving a family member of the family member's liberty, or threatening to do so;
- causing or threatening the death of, or injury to, an animal, whether or not the animal belongs to the family member to whom the behaviour is directed;
- controlling contact with people outside the family;
- denying the second person the economic or financial autonomy the second person would have had but for that behaviour;
- children witnessing this abuse.

### Family Violence Resource Kit

This resource kit has been developed in five parts:

#### 1. Employees

To assist employees who are experiencing family violence. Information includes: EAP, external counselling and support services; assistance from Council; developing a safety plan and changes to the work environment; accessing leave; proof required and privacy.

#### 2. Supervisors / Managers

To provide supervisors/managers with information on how to provide workplace assistance to employees who may be experiencing family violence. Information includes: EAP, external counselling and support services; developing a safety plan, and changes to the work environment; access to leave; privacy and proof required.



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### 3. Colleagues

To provide information to colleague on how they can support a colleague experiencing family violence. This resource kit contains information on EAP, external counselling and support services.

### 4. Human Resources

Human Resources will provide employees, supervisors/managers and colleague with support and information about providing workplace support for employees experiencing family violence.

### 5. Payroll

Council will protect an employee's privacy and ensure approved leave is processed on the payroll system as Compassionate Leave so related absences are not identifiable to other staff.

# 1. Employees

## How family violence may affect you at work

Family violence can impact on you at work in different ways:

- Being prevented or delayed from getting to work;
- Being harassed or intimidated at work;
- Crying at work;
- Struggling to manage your workload and deadlines;
- Covering up for what is happening.

Family violence can be stressful, upsetting and distracting. It can make it hard to perform your duties and can also be a workplace safety risk.

Counselling and support services available to you if you are experiencing family violence.

Council staff have access to confidential counselling services to assist in examining the nature of their problems and work out ways to assist with work related and personal issues. This is offered through our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) – Please refer to Appendix A for further details.

Other counselling and support services available include:

- 1800 Respect – 1800 732 732 (24 hour help) [www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)
- Police – 000 (24 hours)
- inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence – Freecall 1800 755 988 or (03) 9413 6500 (10am - 4pm Monday to Friday) [intouch.asn.au](http://intouch.asn.au)
- Kids Helpline – Freecall 1800 55 1800 (24 hour help) [kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)
- Mallee Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Unit Mildura – 5021 2130 [www.msau-mdvs.org.au](http://www.msau-mdvs.org.au)
- Men's Referral Service - Freecall 1300 766 491 <http://mrs.org.au/>
- Loddon Mallee Homelessness Network – Freecall 1800 015 188 <http://loma.net.au/>
- Centacare Mildura – 5051 0000 (8:30am – 5pm Monday to Friday) <https://www.centacareballarat.org.au/>
- Mallee Family Care – 5021 7400 (Family relationship Services) [www.malleefamilycare.com.au](http://www.malleefamilycare.com.au)
- Haven – 5018 4200 [www.havenhomesafe.org.au](http://www.havenhomesafe.org.au)
- Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Service – 1800 105 303 <http://fvpls.org/>
- Safe Steps – Freecall 1800 015 188 or 9322 3555 (After Hours Service) [www.safesteps.org.au](http://www.safesteps.org.au)
- Sunraysia Community Health Mildura – 5022 5444 [www.schs.com.au](http://www.schs.com.au)
- Mallee District Aboriginal Service Mildura – 5018 4100 [www.mdas.org.au](http://www.mdas.org.au)

Human Resources also has printed information from Victorian Legal Aid available should any employee wish to access this.

**Do you need to tell your work about what is happening?**

You only need to tell your supervisor/manager about things that directly affect or impact on your work.

This includes anything that could pose a workplace safety risk.

Is the abusive person:

- Constantly calling, emailing or texting you at work?
- Following you to or from work?
- Making threats to harm you or your colleague at work?
- Threatening to tell your boss embarrassing personal information?
- Coming into or hanging around your workplace to intimidate you?

If any of these things are happening, you should tell your supervisor/manager. Your job and your safety and the safety of your colleagues might be at risk.

If you are worried about telling your workplace, it is best to get advice from an expert first.

See the list of counselling and support services available in this kit.

### **Mildura Rural City Council Support**

If you are experiencing family violence and it is affecting your work-life, your supervisor/ manager or Human Resources can develop a safety plan which may include changes to the work environment or access to additional leave.

### **Safety Plan**

In order to provide workplace support if you are experiencing family violence and to provide a safe work environment for all employees, your manager/supervisor may approve any reasonable request for temporary changes to your work environment. They will work with you to develop an appropriate safety plan for the workplace.

Temporary workplace changes included in the safety plan may include:

- Changes to your span of hours or pattern of hours and/or shift arrangements;
- Job redesign or changes to your duties;
- Relocation to suitable employment within Council;
- A change to your telephone number and email address to avoid harassing contact;
- Any other appropriate measure including those available under existing provisions for family friendly flexible work arrangements found in the Mildura Rural City Council Enterprise Agreement.

Where you are no longer experiencing family violence, the temporary changes to your work environment may revert to your substantive position by mutual agreement.

### **Access to Leave**

If you are experiencing family violence, you will have access to your Personal Leave for medical appointments, legal proceedings and other activities related to family violence.

Where required, your manager will have the authority to grant you access to additional discretionary paid leave under the guidelines in Council's Enterprise Agreement. Access to this leave will not be unreasonably refused.

### **Proof**

If you are experiencing family violence and need access to leave (or carer's leave if you are supporting a person experiencing family violence) or to make temporary changes to your work environment, you will need to provide Council with proof. Proof can be in the form of an agreed document issued by Council's Employee Assistance Program; or your doctor; a Police Service; a Court; a Family Violence Support

Service; or a lawyer.

### **Family Violence Specialist**

Council may engage the services of a family violence specialist to further support you if Council considers this is required and appropriate.

### **Privacy**

All personal information regarding your disclosure of family violence will be kept confidential in line with Council's Privacy Policy and relevant legislation.

### **Work Performance**

No adverse action will be taken against you if your attendance or performance at work suffers as a result of experiencing family violence. However, the principles of serious misconduct will apply as defined by Council's Performance Management Policy.

## **2. Supervisors/Managers**

### **Disclosure of Family Violence**

Family violence issues should always be discussed in a safe and private place and you must maintain confidentiality in relation to family violence incidents and any other disclosures to the extent permitted by law.

You must not take on the role of a counsellor, but rather provide support for work related issues. If you become aware of harm experienced by children, refer the employee to the Police, EAP or the counselling and support services identified in the earlier part of this resource kit for guidance and advice.

You are encouraged to seek support from Human Resources for any family violence case disclosed to you. Human Resources can provide further resources and guidance, including dealing with colleague of an employee experience family violence.

If, as a supervisor/manager, you are feeling worried or under pressure after an employee discloses a situation of family violence to you, please seek support from Human Resources or one of Council's EAP providers – Please refer to Appendix A for contact details.

### **Having a Confidential Discussion with an Employee**

If an employee discloses to you that they are experiencing family violence, you can work with them to provide access to appropriate external counselling and support services and to develop a safety plan including changes to their work environment.

Appropriate discussion points may include:

- Offer the employee access to Council's EAP – Please refer to Appendix A for contact details;
- Offer understanding in terms of work performance and provide the employee with the option to access leave, if required;
- Discuss with the employee necessary changes to their work environment for their safety plan;
- Provide employee with a copy of these guidelines;
- Direct the employee to counselling and support services listed in this kit.

### **Developing a Safety Plan**

Council can work with the employee to develop a workplace safety plan which may include the following:

- A change and/or unpredictable rotations of work schedule, work site, or work assignment if such a change is possible and would enhance safety at work.
- If leave is required, a plan to return to work.
- If the employee is absent from the workplace, make arrangements to remain in contact with them.
- Review the safety of the employee's parking/ transport arrangements.
- Have telephone calls at work screened or change telephone numbers and email accounts.
- Review the safety plan regularly and continue to make changes if required.

For further information on developing a safety plan [please](#) contact Human Resources.

## **Privacy**

You are required to keep all personal information concerning family violence confidential in line with Council's Privacy Policy and relevant legislation.

## **3. Colleagues**

Family Violence can also affect colleagues.

### **How it may affect you**

As a colleague, you may have to fill in for or otherwise assist absent or non-productive employees; and where practical, you may have to protect an employee from unwanted phone call/visits and where safe, accompany an employee to their car and otherwise participate in a safety plan.

If you are feeling worried or under pressure as a result of a colleague experiencing family violence, you are encouraged to speak with your supervisor/manager or Human Resources.

You can also contact one of Council's EAP Providers, please refer to Appendix A for details.

### **What you can do**

If a colleague discloses to you that they are experiencing family violence, encourage them to speak with their supervisor/manager or Human Resources.

You can also refer them to the counselling and support services identified in the earlier part of this resource kit.

## **4. Human Resources**

Employees and colleagues are encouraged to contact Human Resources if they or a colleague are experiencing family violence.

Supervisors/managers are required to seek support from Human Resources for any family violence case disclosed to them. Human Resources can provide further resources and guidance, including dealing with colleague of an employee experience family violence.

Human Resources can provide further information on family violence including referrals to a family violence specialist as well as assisting in the development of a safety plan.

Human Resources have printed information from Victorian Legal Aid available.

## **5. Payroll**

Council will process approved leave agreements on the payroll system as Compassionate Leave so it is not identifiable to other staff.

## Related information

- Sick & Carers Leave Policy
- Online Leave Application / Hardcopy Leave
- Application Form
- Mildura Rural City Council Collective Enterprise Agreement Number 8.

## Translation Services

If you require it, a professional translator can be arranged at no cost to you.

## Further information

For further information contact

Council's Family & Domestic Violence Officer:

Tim Rodger

Employee Relations Officer

Phone 50188180

[tim.rodger@mildura.vic.gov.au](mailto:tim.rodger@mildura.vic.gov.au)

Council's Human Resources Coordinator:

Angela Umback

Phone: 5018 8183

[angela.umback@mildura.vic.gov.au](mailto:angela.umback@mildura.vic.gov.au)



# Employee Assistance Program

## For employees of Mildura Rural City Council

Council recognises that staff are important and that occasionally there are personal or workplace issues that may impact on the health and well-being of staff. These may be work related, health, family or emotional concerns.

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) targets the early identification and resolution of workplace or personal issues that may impact adversely on work performance, productivity and general wellbeing.

### What is so good about EAP?

- It's free (up to 3 visits)
- Independent
- Strictly Confidential
- All counselling is conducted by professional counsellors
- You can choose between telephone counselling or face to face counselling during work hours or in your own time

### What to expect

- An initial response from a counsellor within 24 hours
- A meeting or phone counselling session to occur within 48 hours
- Quick and confidential assessment
- Short-term counselling and/or external referral if you require ongoing support

### How to access the EAP

EAP appointments can be made by simply telephoning on of our EAP providers below or by contacting Council's Occupational Health & Safety Coordinator who can assist. Your manager/supervisor or Human Resources may also suggest the use of EAP but the decision is always voluntary.

You may use the EAP in your own time. In this case no one will know. You may request through your manager/supervisor to attend in work time or may just ask to take some sick leave.

Remember, when taking leave during work hours please request approval from your manager/supervisor beforehand. You don't need to divulge in the nature of the problem but you do need to get approval to take leave.

### EAP Contacts

Mildura Rural City Council's EAP Coordinator is David Searle who can be contacted on 5018 8181. Our EAP service providers can be contacted as follows:

Dowdy's Wellbeing Centre	Kerry Buchecker & Associates	P & C Hunt Counselling Services	Sunraysia Psychological Services	The Magnolia Clinic
Richard Dowdy ☎ 5021 4192	Kerry Buchecker ☎ 5022 8533	Peter Hunt ☎ 5023 8809	Eric Bruton ☎ 5021 5171	Bernadette Hodgson ☎ 5023 0075
233 Deakin Avenue, Mildura	195 Deakin Avenue, Mildura	18 Woodley Drive, Mildura	Unit 1/173 Ninth Street, Mildura	148-150 Pine Avenue, Mildura