



CENTRE FOR
Women's Safety
and Wellbeing



Intersecting family and domestic violence and alcohol and other drug capability building initiative

Project summary

Background

It is widely acknowledged that incidence of family and domestic violence increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Media has recently highlighted the prevalence of family and domestic violence in Australia, and research has established that alcohol and other drug use, while not a cause, increases the frequency and severity of family and domestic violence incidents. National and local plans to reduce violence against women and children place increased emphasis on whole-of-community, whole-of-government responses to family and domestic violence. This includes an evidence-based and well-planned response to family and domestic violence.

Alcohol and other drug use and family and domestic violence frequently co-occur.¹ Worldwide, between 34-39% of men receiving treatment for alcohol and other drug dependence report recent physical violence toward an intimate partner or ex-partner, compared with 5-21% of men in the general population.² There is good evidence demonstrating that integrated alcohol and other drug and family and domestic violence perpetrator counselling results in: greater levels of engagement than is usual for men's behaviour change programs; better alcohol and other drug outcomes than alcohol and other drug counselling alone; and more sustained perpetrator behaviour change.³

Women with alcohol and other drug dependence are exposed to disproportionately high levels of male violence. Women victim-survivors of family and domestic violence who use alcohol and other drugs are at a higher risk of experiencing more frequent and more severe violence, and rates of perpetrator conviction for violent offences are lower if the victim-survivor uses alcohol and other drugs.⁴ A recent study identified a strong correlation between women's exposure to male violence during childhood and subsequent harmful use of alcohol and other drugs in adulthood.⁵ Although lifetime experience of violence is a significant risk factor for harmful use of illicit drugs,⁶ many family and domestic violence refuges will not admit women who are actively using alcohol and other drugs.⁷

The government commitment to addressing family and domestic violence provides an opportunity for services that support people experiencing (victim-survivors), and those who use (perpetrators), family and domestic violence to increase their capability to address intersecting issues to achieve improved outcomes including increased safety and wellbeing of families.

Rationale

Due to the prevalence of intersecting alcohol and other drug use and family and domestic violence:

- there is rationale to increase the capability of family and domestic violence organisations and workers to appropriately address alcohol and other drug issues for both perpetrators and victim-survivors

¹ Miller P, Cox E, Costa B, et al. (2016). *Alcohol/Drug-Involved Family Violence in Australia (ADIVA)*. Canberra: National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund (NDLERF).

² Gilchrist, Gail, Fay Dennis, Polly Radcliffe, Juliet Henderson, Louise M. Howard, and David Gadd. 2019. "The interplay between substance use and intimate partner violence perpetration: A meta-ethnography". *International Journal of Drug Policy*. 65: 8-23. DOI: 10.1016/j.drugpo.2018.12.009

³ Easton, Caroline J., Cory A. Crane, and Dolores Mandel. 2017. "A Randomized Controlled Trial Assessing the Efficacy of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Substance-Dependent Domestic Violence Offenders: An Integrated Substance Abuse-Domestic Violence Treatment Approach (SADV)". *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*. 44(3): 483-498. DOI: 10.1111/jmft.12260

⁴ Yates, Sophie. 2019.

⁵ Beijer, Ulla, Christina Scheffel Birath, Valerie DeMartinis, and Britt af Klinteberg. 2018. "Facets of Male Violence Against Women With Substance Abuse Problems: Women With a Residence and Homeless Women". *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 33(9):1391-1411. DOI: 10.1177/0886260515618211

⁶ Coomber, Kerri, Richelle Mayshak, Paul Liknaitzky, Ashlee Curtis, Arlene Walker, Shannon Hyder, and Peter Miller. 2019. "The Role of Illicit Drug Use in Family and Domestic Violence in Australia" *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*: 1-21. DOI: 10.1177/088620519843288

⁷ Yates, Sophie, 2019.

- alcohol and other drug workers have an important role in identifying family and domestic violence and intervening sensitively and appropriately.

The family and domestic violence and alcohol and other drug capability building initiative is a collaborative workforce development project between peak bodies in the family and domestic violence sector (the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing, and Stopping Family Violence) and the peak body for the alcohol and other drug sector (the Western Australian Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies).

Project aim

The project focuses on supporting organisation development across the family and domestic violence and alcohol and other drug sectors. Sustainable workforce development is best achieved through service worker training as well as organisation and systems enhancement.⁸

Organisation and systems development includes (but is not limited to):

- organisation culture, identifying any barriers to legitimising the role of services to address the intersecting issue that is not their primary focus
- organisation approach to relationship development and maintenance for systemic and sustainable partnerships and care coordination pathways
- policies and procedures that support routine screening, assessment and safety planning processes that inform appropriate service provision to meet individualised needs
- supporting staff skills enhancement
- establishing eligibility criteria informed by risk analysis

Change management at an organisation level, including partnership and care coordination, requires 'ownership' and commitment to continuous quality improvement.

Participants

Participating services in this project include an alcohol and other drug residential treatment service (both a mixed gender residential program, and a women and children's residential program); a service/program that supports men who are perpetrators of family and domestic violence; and a service/program that supports women experiencing family and domestic violence.

Project Activities

The Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing, Stopping Family Violence, and WANADA are developing a supported self-review tool for services to review their capability to meet the needs of people with intersecting family and domestic violence and issues associated with alcohol and other drug use.

The tool will be trialled at the three participating organisations.

At the service level, activities within the project include:

1. The opportunity for a limited number of participating service workers to attend Lead Auditor training (five days) to support the continuous improvement processes
2. Family and domestic violence training for the alcohol and other drug service workers (approximately 2 days)
3. Alcohol and other drugs training for family and domestic violence service workers (online introductory course and a further half a day training in person)
4. Contribution towards identifying potential capability building risks and mitigation strategies
5. A desktop audit of documents, including organisational chart (structure), organisation's mission statement and vision, service brochures, screening/assessment tools, treatment/recovery/support plan template
6. Participation of service manager(s) and workers in a supported self-review using the self-review tool. Where appropriate consultation will also be had with service users (approximately one to two days)
7. Opportunity to provide feedback on the tool – and response to a report developed for your service based on the review.