

**Domestic,
Family and
Sexual Violence
(DFSV) of Older
Women and
Women with
Disability**

Communications Toolkit



This project is proudly supported by the NSW Women's Safety Commissioner.

We would also like to thank the lived experience advocates and members of the project working group for their valuable contributions and support throughout the project.

A message from the Ageing and Disability Commissioner

Dear colleagues, supporters, and champions of safety and equity,

On behalf of the NSW Ageing and Disability Commission (ADC), and with support from the NSW Women's Safety Commissioner, I am proud to present this important project.

Our aim is to raise awareness, deepen understanding, and strengthen the capability of frontline workers to more effectively prevent, identify, and respond to domestic, family, and sexual violence (DFSV) experienced by older women and women with disability.

The ADC is committed to upholding the rights and dignity of adults with disability and older people to live free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation in their family, home and community. Since the start of the ADC, 64%^[1] of reports have been about the alleged abuse of women. Evidence shows that women often face higher risks — women with disability are significantly more likely to experience intimate partner violence than those without disability^[2]. Alarming, up to 80% of assaults against older women reported to police each year are committed by someone they know^[3].

This project focuses on older women and women with disability as victim-survivors of domestic, family, and sexual violence (DFSV). By understanding the realities faced by older women and women with disability, this initiative equips frontline workers across aged care, disability, and DFSV sectors with trauma-informed, disability-inclusive knowledge, to ensure they are better prepared to recognise the signs of abuse, respond effectively to disclosures and refer people to the appropriate services and next steps.

This project also addresses the systemic barriers that often sideline older women and women with disability in DFSV responses, such as ageism and ableism. Challenging misconceptions, the resources also promote more inclusive and informed responses that prioritise safety, dignity, and choice.

Thank you for your commitment to this vital work. Together, we can make a real difference in the lives of older women and women with disability.

Warm regards,

Jeff Smith
NSW Ageing and Disability Commissioner



Ageing and Disability Commission

What we're seeing in NSW*



17,527

calls to the to the NSW
Ageing and Disability
Abuse Helpline
comprising 5,864 reports

66%

of reports concerning older
people were about a
woman as the subject of
abuse (3,002 reports)



54%

of reports concerning
adults with disability
were about a woman as
the subject of abuse
(693 reports)

^[1]Ageing and Disability Commission Data 5 Year Report (1 July 2019-30 June 2024)

^[2] Our Watch, 2015. Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. [online] Available at: <https://assets.ourwatch.org.au/assets/Key-frameworks/Change-the-story-Our-Watch-AA.pdf> (opens in a new tab) [Accessed 6 March 2025].

^[3] Hill, T. and Katz, I. (2019) Insights into abuse of older people - analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics datasets. [online] UNSW. Available at: <https://unsw.unsw.edu.au/entities/publication/346d17e3-b456-47ca-ad55-4d6b744992db> (opens in a new tab) [Accessed 6 March 2025].

A message from the NSW Women's Safety Commissioner

All women in NSW have the right to safety, dignity and autonomy. Yet through our engagement with women and girls across NSW, we have heard that they do not always feel safe or respected.

Domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) is widespread across the community and causes grave harm, particularly to women and children. It traumatises individuals, destroys families and undermines our ability to achieve equality in the community.

While DFSV can be experienced by anyone, it disproportionately affects certain individuals and groups, including First Nations communities, people with disability, older people, LGBTQIA+ communities and multicultural communities, particularly those facing compounding forms of disadvantage and discrimination. These intersections can result in unique experiences of violence and risk, and distinct barriers to seeking help.

Against this backdrop, I would like to congratulate the NSW Ageing and Disability Commission on leading this important project, in partnership with my Office, to more effectively prevent, identify and respond to DFSV directed at older women and women with disability. The project has produced a suite of new resources to raise awareness and strengthen the capability of frontline workers across the disability, aged care and DFSV sectors. This represents an important milestone in our collective efforts to create a safer society.

I am pleased that the project aims to address the specific needs of older women and women with disability, drawing on the insights of sector experts as well as people with lived experience of DFSV. These diverse perspectives have informed the package of resources and ensured that they are person centred, disability inclusive and trauma informed. The resources provide practical, real-world guidance about recognising the signs of abuse, safely responding to disclosures, and accessing appropriate reporting and referral pathways.

I believe that this project will strengthen the rights and enhance the safety of older women and women with disability across NSW. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this project, and I look forward to widespread use of these valuable resources.

Warm regards,

Dr Hannah Tonkin
NSW Women's Safety Commissioner



Ageing and Disability Commission

Women with disability are more likely to experience intimate partner violence compared to women without disability [1]



1 in 4 Australian women have experienced violence by an intimate partner or family member since the age of 15 [2]

Up to 50% of assaults against older women reported to police were committed by a family member in any one year [3]



[1] Our Watch, 2015. Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. [online] Available at: [https://assets.ourwatch.org.au/assets/Key-frameworks/Change-the-story-Our-Watch-AA.pdf\(opens in a new tab\)](https://assets.ourwatch.org.au/assets/Key-frameworks/Change-the-story-Our-Watch-AA.pdf(opens in a new tab)) [Accessed 6 March 2025]

[2] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2025) Intimate partner violence [online] <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/types-of-violence/intimate-partner-violence> [Accessed 4 August 2025] August 2025]

[3] Hill, T. and Katz, I. (2019) Insights into abuse of older people - analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics datasets. [online] UNSW. Available at: [https://unsworks.unsw.edu.au/entities/publication/346d17e3-b456-47ca-ad55-4d6b744992db\(opens in a new tab\)](https://unsworks.unsw.edu.au/entities/publication/346d17e3-b456-47ca-ad55-4d6b744992db(opens in a new tab)) [Accessed 6 March 2025]

How to raise awareness

Online

- Promote the resources in this toolkit across social media, in e-Newsletters, or other channels available to you.
- You can share this content from our X (Twitter), LinkedIn, and Facebook pages.

In the workplace

- Integrate these resources and modules into your organisation's staff induction and training.
- Discuss the reflective practice and guidance materials in your team meetings.
- Encourage your colleagues and peers to use these resources and tools to raise awareness within the workplace, particularly in organisations that support older people and people with disability in their family, home, and community.
- Distribute these resources to colleagues and display them around the workplace.
- Learn more about how to safeguard older women and women with disability from DFSV in their family, home, and community by completing our free e-learning modules.

In the community

- Share information and resources at community events, community centres, and in other public places.
- Connect with us to establish an Abuse Prevention Collaborative in your local government area.

How to raise awareness (Continued)

What you can do as an organisational leader

- Staff induction and learning platforms
 - Embed DFSV training modules into onboarding materials.
 - Add links to ADC resources in your internal LMS (Learning Management Systems)
 - Include DFSV awareness in any mandatory training undertaken during staff induction.
- Team meetings and internal communications
 - Schedule regular agenda items to discuss DFSV, and refer employees to these modules and resources.
 - Share updates and recommend modules and resources via internal newsletters.
- Policy and procedure review
 - Include guidance on identifying and responding to DFSV in your organisation's operating procedures.
 - Review existing policies on abuse, neglect, and DFSV, and update them to include links to these resources and provide avenues for further understanding and action.

Social media

Help raise awareness by sharing these posts from our Facebook, LinkedIn and X (Twitter). When sharing, please tag @AgeingDisabilityCommission on Facebook and LinkedIn, and @NSWADC on X (Twitter).

Calling all frontline workers, advocates and support staff.

You're often the first to notice when something isn't right. New training and resources are now available to help you recognise and respond to domestic, family, and sexual violence against older women and women with disability.

Access the training and resources here [LINK]

New DFSV training and resources out now.

Support older women and women with disability by learning how to detect and respond safely to domestic, family and sexual violence.

These training modules and resources created by the NSW Ageing and Disability Commission with the support of the NSW Women's Safety Commissioner, are free, practical and trauma-informed.

Access it now here [LINK]

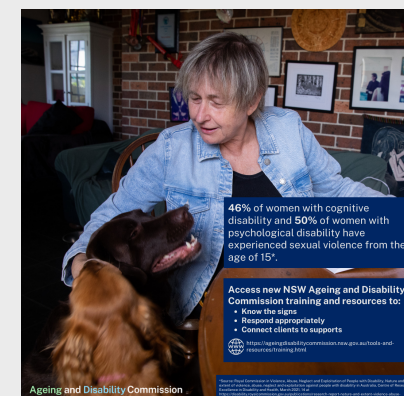
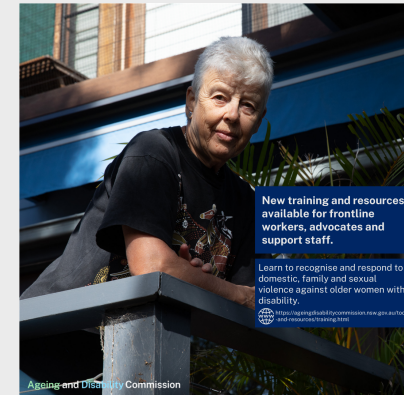
Domestic, family and sexual violence doesn't always look the same.

For older women and women with disability, it often goes unrecognised.

The NSW Ageing and Disability Commission, with the support of the NSW Women's Safety Commissioner, has developed new online training and practical resources that will teach you how to:

- Know the signs
- Respond appropriately
- Connect clients to supports

Find the training and resources here [LINK]



Generic newsletter template

New training and resources: strengthening our response to domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV)

The NSW Ageing and Disability Commission (ADC) with the support of the NSW Women's Safety Commissioner, has developed a series of training modules and resources to better help frontline workers prevent, identify, and respond to domestic, family, and sexual violence (DFSV) of older women and women with disability. The ADC encourages all frontline staff, advocates, and support professionals working in the disability, ageing, and/or DFSV sectors to use these vital resources.

Older women and women with disability face unique and often overlooked forms of gendered violence, often as a result of ageism, ableism, and other systemic barriers. Frontline workers are in a powerful position to help prevent, identify, and respond to DFSV and make a difference in the lives of those who need it.

Due to your role, you may be the first to witness signs of abuse, receive a disclosure, or be in the position to connect someone to life-changing support. This online training and resources will help you to:

- Understand what DFSV is and the unique forms of DFSV that older women and women with disability may face.
- Respond appropriately and safely when an older woman or woman with disability discloses DFSV
- Understand referral pathways and support options outside of your organisation.

This project was made with significant contributions from the DFSV working group and lived experience advocates.

This is a fantastic opportunity to strengthen your practice and help lead meaningful change in your sector.

Learn more and access the training and resources here. [\[LINK\]](#)

Newsletter template: Reflective practice resource

Develop your practice with the Reflective Practice resource

The NSW Ageing and Disability Commission (ADC), with the support of the NSW Women's Safety Commissioner, has developed a series of online training modules and resources to better help frontline workers prevent, identify, and respond to domestic, family, and sexual violence (DFSV) of older women and women with disability.

This includes a reflective practice resource, designed to support your reflection and learning as a professional working with older women and women with disability who may be experiencing DFSV.

This tool presents several narratives, allowing you to reflect on your role in different circumstances, identify best practice, and consider the challenges and obstacles that you, your colleagues, and the people you support may face.

You can use this resource independently, with your manager or supervisor, or alongside a colleague or your team to support your ongoing professional development. If you would like some guidance or if you want to compare different perspectives you can refer to the reflective practice answer sheet.

You can complete the reflective practice exercises here. [\[LINK\]](#)

Website or Intranet

New training and resources: responding to violence against older women and women with disability

Frontline staff, advocates, and support professionals working in the disability, ageing, and/or domestic, family, and sexual violence (DFSV) sectors are encouraged to complete new online training modules aimed at improving responses to DFSV of older women and women with disability.

The training and resources, developed by the NSW Ageing and Disability Commission (ADC) with the support of the NSW Women's Safety Commissioner, seek to help frontline workers better prevent, identify, and respond to DFSV of older women and women with disability.

Older women and women with disability often face unique, overlooked forms of violence. As a trusted professional working with these groups, you are in a key position to recognise the signs, respond safely, and connect clients to support.

This training offers practical, trauma-informed strategies that are aligned with state and national priorities, and reflect findings and insights from the Disability and Aged Care Royal Commissions. The training is complemented by other resources to help you in your work. These include a reflective practice resource, a guide for DFSV workers assessing and planning for safety, and factsheets.

Visit the ADC website now to build your skills and make a meaningful impact. [\[LINK\]](#)

Staff Induction and Learning Platforms

Embedding DFSV training modules and resources into staff onboarding materials

Sample Text:

A significant part of your role is to support older people and adults with disability. As part of your introduction, you will be introduced to the NSW Ageing and Disability Commission's training on Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV).

Why is this important?

Older women and women with disability face higher risks of experiencing DFSV, and it is often poorly recognised. As a frontline worker, you will play a vital role in identifying and responding to these issues.

Your responsibilities include:

- Recognising the signs of DFSV
- Creating safe environments for disclosure
- Responding appropriately and compassionately to disclosure
- Using the ADC DFSV toolkit and resources in your daily practice

Complete the DFSV Training Module [\[LINK\]](#)

Access the ADC DFSV Training Portal [\[LINK\]](#)

Download the DFSV Toolkit [\[LINK\]](#)

Team Meetings and Internal Communications

Sample DFSV agenda items for team meetings

Meeting Agenda Item: Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence (DFSV) Awareness and Training
Discussion Points

1. DFSV overview

- Remind staff of the prevalence of DFSV among older women and women with disability
- Reinforce that DFSV is a gendered harm, and is often intersectional, compounded by ageism and ableism

2. Training reminder

- Encourage staff to complete the ADC DFSV training modules and access the resources
- Share the link to the training and toolkit

3. Policy review

- Mention any updates to internal procedures or organisation policies related to DFSV or abuse and neglect
- Invite feedback on how your organisation could better support DFSV identification and response

4. Resource sharing

- Distribute ADC DFSV printable resources (e.g., summary slides)
- Encourage all staff to bookmark the DFSV toolkit for future use

5. Open discussion

- Invite questions, suggestions, or concerns
- Emphasise that DFSV is a sensitive topic and requires confidentiality and psychological safety in discussing

Tips for discussing DFSV in team settings

- Use inclusive language
 - Avoid assumptions and speak respectfully about lived experiences.
- Keep it trauma-informed
 - Acknowledge that some staff may have personal experience with DFSV
- Be clear, be supportive
 - Reinforce that the goal of the talk is to empower staff with knowledge and tools so they can deliver the best support
- Encourage curiosity and make a no-judgement zone
 - DFSV discussions should be framed as a learning opportunity
- Normalise the conversation
 - Ensure that DFSV is a regular part of wellbeing and safeguarding discussions

Policy and Procedure Review

Guide to reviewing policies for DFSV alignment

Step 1: Identify relevant policies

- Abuse and Neglect
- Safeguarding and Risk Management
- Staff Induction and Training
- Client Rights and Safety
- Incident Reporting

Step 2: Review for DFSV inclusion

Ask:

- Does the policy explicitly mention DFSV?
- Are older women and women with disability recognised as being at higher risk?
- Are there clear procedures for identifying, responding to, and reporting DFSV?

Step 3: Update language and links

- Use inclusive, trauma-informed language
- Add references to ADC DFSV training toolkit, and reflective practice resource
- Include guidance on how staff can access and use these resources

Sample wording to include in organisational policy

All staff must be trained to identify and respond to domestic, family, and sexual violence (DFSV), and be aware of how it can impact older women and women with disability.

[ORGANISATION NAME] staff are required to complete the NSW Ageing and Disability Commission (ADC) DFSV training and refer to the DFSV Toolkit for guidance on safe, appropriate responses. These resources are available via the ADC website [LINK].

Beyond this project



Free e-Learning about abuse, neglect and exploitation

The Ageing and Disability Commission (ADC) encourages anyone who supports or engages with an older person or adult with disability to complete our free online training. The training will strengthen skills to detect and respond to abuse of older people and adults with disability in their family, home and community. Training can be accessed on our website.



Helping local councils safeguard their communities

Access your local community profile to see how many reports are being made to the ADC about alleged abuse and neglect of older people and adults with disability. Local councils can use this information along with our handbook to implement proven strategies that can strengthen safeguards against abuse in your community - available on our website.



Free resources about abuse, neglect and exploitation

Need information about the ADC or to explain what abuse and neglect is? You can download resources for free to use in your work and in your community; we also have resources translated in 24 different languages. Download them [here](#).



Check back with us

We're always developing new materials to help you and your communities better understand abuse and neglect of older people and adults with disability. Check back in with us regularly or email your details to training@adc.nsw.gov.au to be added to our database.

The Ageing and Disability Commission acknowledges Aboriginal People as the First Nations Peoples of NSW, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and future. We acknowledge the ongoing connection Aboriginal people have to this land and recognise Aboriginal people as the original custodians of this land.

For information, support or to report abuse of an older person or adult with disability, call the NSW Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline on 1800 628 221 or email helpline@adc.nsw.gov.au (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm).

In an emergency, call 000.

For training or other related enquiries, email training@adc.nsw.gov.au