

AASW Family Violence Capability Statement

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AASW

Australian Association
of Social Workers

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Preamble

The Australian Association of Social Workers is the body mandated by members, Higher Education Providers (HEP) and the broader professional community, to set and maintain standard of professional conduct for social workers in Australia. The AASW has been charged with the professional accreditation of social work programs. The AASW Accredited Family Violence Social Worker Capability Statement 2018 is underpinned by [Family Safety Victoria's Family Violence Capability Framework](#), which articulates the capabilities required to ensure effective responses to those subjected to or perpetrating family violence.

These capabilities apply to social workers who work in the field of family violence and are to be read in conjunction with the [AASW Code of Ethics 2010](#) and the [AASW Practice Standards 2013](#). The Code of Ethics identifies the values and moral principles that underpin social work practice and outline the required level of attainment for ethical social work conduct and accountability. All AASW members are required to comply with this Code and it informs all AASW documents and policies. The Practice Standards 2013 outline the requirements for effective, professional and accountable social work practice in all social work contexts. They provide essential guidance to the Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards.

This capability statement provides detail on the capabilities that need elaboration in the family violence context. Unlike the Practice Standards 2013, which apply to social workers at any point in their professional lives, the applicability of some elements of the family violence capability statement will depend upon the social worker's experience, practice setting and role.

The AASW Accredited Family Violence Social Worker Capability Statement 2018 is intended to apply to all social workers, employed in the broad range of family violence roles and positions.

This capability statement does not include all entry level skills as this is an assumed foundation for a social worker seeking accreditation as a family violence social worker.

Specialist Knowledge - Knowledge of key legislative, policy, practice and theoretical frameworks

Demonstrates understanding of effective engagement practices with victims/survivors of family violence in ways which:

- help them feel believed, validated and respected
- value their knowledge and lived experience of violence, trauma, faith and culture
- understand the barriers to help seeking and disclosure
- facilitate the regaining of control through optimal input to decision-making
- respect the right to confidentiality and privacy while also describing the limitations in regard to risk and safety (including risk to children)
- place responsibility for the violence on the perpetrator and never on those subjected to violence.

Demonstrates understanding of:

- rights and entitlements of those subjected to FV when interacting with service providers
- multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage experienced by diverse individuals, cohorts and communities due to the individual and structural power imbalances they face
- the unique status and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as First Nations people and the ongoing impact of colonisation that gives rise to FV
- attitudes to gender equality and family violence that exist within diverse cohorts and communities
- culturally competent responses and practices including the need to tailor engagement strategies to work effectively in a culturally sensitive way with those subjected to or perpetrating FV from diverse cohorts and communities
- warning signs and risk indicators, including specific indicators for children and young people
- organisational policies, protocols and procedures in relation to risk assessment and responding to FV
- adherence to confidentiality protocols of services and understanding information sharing laws and regulations, including when the level of risk indicates that information should be shared to lessen or prevent that risk even without consent
- the emotional, developmental, psychological and physical safety needs of children and young people
- their professional obligations under the relevant Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework
- awareness of risk factors that indicate a person being seriously harmed or killed, including risks associated with separation and pregnancy
- awareness that victims/survivors of family violence who access support or legal services may experience increased risk
- their role and remit in contributing to safety planning where there is immediate risk of further violence

- the possible outcomes of the mandatory reporting requirements and Child Safe Standards in regard to children and young people subjected to FV
- risk management and safety planning that is responsive to the dynamics and shifts in family violence perpetration and responses and circumstances of victims/survivors
- collaborative case management and coordinated multi-agency responses to FV
- service options and referral pathways to appropriate services to meet ongoing needs of victims/survivors or perpetrators of family violence
- recognising and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access the service of their choice, including knowledge of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations and referral pathways
- range of systemic advocacy methods that can be applied to secure required reforms
- role of networks and coalitions in advocating for required reforms.

Demonstrates an understanding of tactics used by perpetrators to:

- attempt to manipulate and collude with the worker and the system (principles of predominant aggressor behaviour are relevant to this understanding)
- avoid accountability
- minimise or undermine victim/survivors' experiences of violence
- undermine victim/survivors' parenting relationships with their children.

Demonstrates:

- an understanding of the catalysts for perpetrator behaviour change including recognition of the impact that FV has on the perpetrator's children
- awareness that engaging with perpetrators around their use of violence may result in increased risk to those subjected to FV and working with the perpetrator to mitigate these risks.

Demonstrates an applied understanding of:

1. *Theoretical models and frameworks relevant to family violence including:*

- feminist theory/critical feminist theory
- theories that address human rights, the impacts of colonisation and anti-oppressive social work
- theories of power and its relation to family violence
- theories that address intersectionality
- trauma-informed and attachment theory frameworks (using a feminist critical lens) relevant to addressing the cumulative effects of FV and the impacts on the parent– child relationship
- social response models, safe and together models and the principles of identification of predominant aggressor
- practice frameworks and standards relevant to working with:
 - those subjected to family violence

- those perpetrating family violence
- children and young people who are subjected to or perpetrating violence
- those from diverse cohorts and communities who are subjected to or perpetrating violence
- family and community members who are hesitant to intervene
- awareness of how the AASW Code of Ethics and FV statements can inform, guide and support FV practice.

2. *Family violence legislation, policies, procedures including:*

- family violence legislation, policies, procedures (including current reviews and enquiries) and future practice implications
- comparison of relevant state legislation, federal legislation and where one supersedes the other(s)
- state specific thresholds for mandatory reporting, police codes of conduct, legislation around legal intervention, safety order breaches and national legislation where it exists
- the ways in which family violence organisations action these policies and procedures.

3. *Issues that may underpin the reluctance of victims/survivors of family violence to engage with services including:*

- internalised shame or guilt and worry about the future
- fear of reprisal
- fear of ostracism from family and community
- fear of punitive immigration responses or deportation
- displacement of children in the event that they are required to relocate
- fear of children being placed in care
- financial and other resource constraints
- internal and external barriers for victims/survivors, specifically systems abuse as an external barrier
- negative past experiences with inappropriate, inadequate or discriminatory service responses
- ongoing emotional attachment to the perpetrator
- safety of pets and other animals
- physical, mental/emotional illness or a disability
- previous trauma, e.g., experienced as a refugee woman, displaced person
- age
- geographic location.

4. *Strategies victim/survivors of family violence use to protect themselves and their children and to resist and manage the risks of violence, including:*

- maintaining relationships with supportive friends and family
- the importance of kinship and cultural connections for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

- sustaining sense of self-respect, individuality and identity
- recognising abusive and controlling behaviours and acknowledging, even to oneself, that it is unacceptable
- working with the victim/survivor to identify and name big and small acts of resistance to control, e.g., refusing to follow demands, or taking moments away from the perpetrator
- deciding not to share emotions or continue to develop personal connections with the perpetrator
- continuing to provide support to and care for their children
- continuing to provide and facilitate connections for the supports in the lives of their children, e.g., education, sports, friendship groups
- workplace.

5. *Demonstrates an understanding of appropriate interventions to address perpetrator accountability and responsibility within the context of perpetrators' diverse backgrounds.*

6. *The need for advocacy to ensure legislative, policy and practice reform including:*

- the structure of the FV systems and the importance of documenting gaps and issues arising in service delivery that require reform and making recommendations to government on policy and practice reforms
- the range of systemic advocacy methods that can be applied to secure required reforms
- the role of networks and coalitions in advocating for required reforms.

7. *Demonstrates an understanding of:*

- partnership development models to underpin multidisciplinary case management
- the need to analyse and document gaps and issues arising in service delivery and translate these into recommendations for systems and service improvements.

Capability 1: Engages effectively with those accessing services

Skill Indicators

- Engages with those subjected to FV in ways that demonstrate belief, respect, and valuing of knowledge and lived experience, such as active listening, checking understanding, believing and refraining from judgement and assumptions, and acknowledging existing strengths
- Engages in active listening and asking open-ended questions to build trust and understand individual circumstances and needs of those subjected to FV
- Use of culturally sensitive language to engage in a respectful way with an understanding of the local culture and customs
- Keeps the perpetrator visible and responsible in practice with victims/survivors
- Respects the ways in which victims/survivors of family violence have made decisions to manage their own safety
- Explains client rights and responsibilities in regard to limited confidentiality and informing clients when risk indicates that information-sharing with specific services or authorities is required
- Articulates that perpetrators are responsible for their behaviour and that victims/survivors of family violence are not to blame for their experiences of abuse
- Identifies and responds to intersecting factors of socio-economic status, culture, race, geography, age, disability, sexuality, women who work in the sex industry, gender identity and any other intersecting categories of potential oppression, which impact on the experience of those subjected to or perpetrating FV
- Understands the importance of culturally safe practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and acknowledges barriers to support
- Avoids stereotyping
- Shows understanding of how victims/survivors of family violence may engage with services due to previous experiences of discrimination, fear of authorities, and other barriers to help-seeking
- Provides information to those subjected to FV to support them in understanding the service system and navigating barriers to assistance
- Recognises, challenges and rejects attempts by perpetrators to minimise or deny their use of violence
- Actively avoids collusion with perpetrators
- Reflects back to the victim/survivor the assumptions and beliefs that the victim/survivor is holding about the perpetrator to minimise the potential for victims/survivors internalising the belief systems of the perpetrator.

Ability 1a: Provides responses within appropriate theoretical and practice-based frameworks

- Draws on theoretical models and frameworks to engage effectively with victims/survivors or perpetrators of family violence
- Participates in supervision and critical reflection and uses other appropriate frameworks to support practice and learn about self as a practitioner
- Provides strengths-based engagement which:
 - supports victims/survivor's autonomy, agency and expertise in their own decision making
 - makes the connection between internalised self-blame and structural discrimination
 - supports perpetrator accountability
- Explores reasons underpinning reluctance to access services with victims/survivors or perpetrators of family violence
- Develops culturally competent responses and practices including the need to tailor engagement strategies to work effectively in a culturally sensitive way with those subjected to or perpetrating FV from diverse cohorts and communities.

Ability 1b: Engages appropriately with those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

- Provides services premised on human rights, self-determination, cultural respect and safety
- Acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's connection to culture, land and community
- Recognises the resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culturally specific ways of raising children
- Consults with specialist services when working with those from diverse communities
- Addresses barriers to appropriate service provision for those from diverse communities.

Ability 1c: Engages appropriately with those from diverse communities

- Provides services premised on human rights, self-determination, cultural respect and safety
- Consults with specialist services when working with those from diverse communities
- Addresses barriers to appropriate service provision for those from diverse communities.

Capability 2: Identifies and assesses family violence risk

Skill Indicators

- Articulates the physical, emotional and behavioural indicators of family violence and sexual assault victimisation
- Engages in active listening and asks open ended questions of victims/survivors of family violence in a sensitive, respectful and non-judgmental manner to explore their family violence risks and protective factors
- Seeks information required to assess whether victims/survivors of family violence are at risk of further violence or witnessing this violence
- Identifies family violence risk factors in accordance with the relevant Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework
- Monitors and assesses risk to own safety and reports any threats to personal safety according to agency/organisation policies and procedures
- Explains client rights and responsibilities in regard to limited confidentiality and informing clients when risk indicates that information-sharing with specific services or authorities is required
- Modifies practice to address the dynamics and shifting nature of risk and supports the online safety of victims/survivors of family violence
- Articulates the physical, emotional and behavioural indicators of family violence perpetration
- Asks open ended questions of perpetrators to understand individual circumstances that may impact on the risk of violence and control escalating in severity
- Conducts preliminary risk assessments with perpetrators, following identification or disclosure of family violence, and in consultation with specialist perpetrator intervention services
- As required, assesses to identify the primary/predominant aggressor
- Implements comprehensive risk assessment processes (face to face, online, or telephone) using the tools contained within the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework
- Identifies warning signs and specific risk indicators for children and young people
- Navigates the complexities of family violence, child protection and family law
- Supports entry level practitioners in undertaking comprehensive risk assessments
- Flags incorrect identification of victims/survivors as perpetrators and seeks senior support.
- Asks questions to identify cultural risks such as community retribution and/or risks of lateral violence.

Capability 3: Manages risk and prioritises safety

Skill Indicators

- Follows own organisational policies, protocols and procedures in relation to risk assessment and responding to FV
- Makes reports to relevant authorities, where assessments indicate significant risk of harm to children and young people in a dignified and respectful way that recognises a threshold of mandatory reporting
- Implements responses that attend to the emotional, developmental, psychological and physical safety needs of children and young people, including those in contact with perpetrators
- Seeks information to inform risk assessment or referral from perpetrators about their use of violence in ways that do not increase risk for their partners, children or family
- Explores the perpetrators' understanding of how their use of violence impacts on their partner, children and other family members, and manages risk in accordance with their role
- Refers perpetrators to appropriate specialist services following identification or disclosure of perpetration.

Ability 3a: Manages risk, including high risk and complex needs, in an ongoing way

- Provides secondary consultation for identifying, preliminary and comprehensive levels of risk assessments and reviews and accepts referrals as required
- Drafts comprehensive safety plans based on the information obtained in the risk assessment that stays within the lived experience of the victim/survivor
- Gives attention to FV competent case notes that ensure the voice and agency of the victims/survivors and the actions, and consequences of these actions, of the perpetrators
- Participates in implementation, monitoring and modification of safety plans
- Foreshadows the need of services to participate in development, implementation, monitoring and adjustment of case plans, as required
- Identifies need for secondary consultation and referral to child and family services as required
- Refers perpetrators to appropriate services following identification or disclosure of perpetration
- Supports clients experiencing high levels of risk and documents perpetrator breaches of safety plans and intervention orders in order to identify and address instances in which systems failure has occurred
- Advises clients of appropriate cultural service providers and discusses potential referral pathways.

Ability 3b: Promotes accountability and establishes change-promoting relationships with perpetrators of family violence

- Assists perpetrators to take responsibility for their actions – including challenging denial, minimisation, deflecting, victim/survivor blaming – and the consequences of these actions on their partners and children
- Uses questions to explore blame, minimisation and denial to analyse the extent of perpetrators' willingness to accept responsibility for their use of violence and abuse
- Explores with perpetrators the kinds of relationships they want to have with partners, children and family members and examine how their violence undermines fulfillment of these aspirations
- Intensively examines perpetrators' commitment to their partner and children's safety and their willingness to comply with court orders
- Explores and addresses with perpetrators their attempts to undermine their partner/ex-partner's parenting
- Assesses perpetrators' motivation for change
- Maintains accountability processes throughout an intervention with perpetrators
- Builds and maintains collaborative relationships with specialist women's and children's family violence practitioners
- Works collegially, accepts feedback and engages in reflective practice, supervision other processes to ensure gender accountability between workers.

Capability 4: Provides effective services

Skill Indicators

- Provides effective support to those who have experienced family violence via:
 - participation in implementation, monitoring and modification of safety plans in accordance with their role
 - input into development, implementation and modification of case management plans, as required
 - referrals to specialist family violence and other support services as required including therapeutic supports
- Develops, implements and modifies case management plans that are inclusive of family violence responses
- Assists in service and justice system navigation and undertaking advocacy on behalf of those subjected to FV to mitigate gaps in service response
- Makes contact with appropriate services to facilitate a warm referral with client consent
- Uses high level verbal and written communication to complete reports and advocate effectively for victims/survivors
- Manages multiple caseloads
- Able to supervise students in family violence placements.

Ability 4a: Leads coordination and monitoring of multidisciplinary case management plans, and modifies plans, where required

- Facilitates multidisciplinary cross team work to document, implement, monitor and modify case management plans designed to address the ongoing needs of those subjected to or perpetrating violence
- Organises case conferences with other support, specialist or universal services, as appropriate
- Adheres to confidentiality protocols of services and information sharing laws and regulations, including when the level of risk indicates that information should be shared to lessen or prevent that risk even without consent
- Undertakes individual advocacy on behalf of victims/survivors of family violence
- Makes referrals to other agencies, as required
- Supports entry level workers to convene case conference meetings, as required.

Ability 4b: Supports women to maintain a parenting role in instances of family violence

- Assists those subjected to FV to identify:
 - how the violence has impacted on the children and relationships with the children
 - how the perpetrator's violence has been an attack on the mother-child relationship
 - the protective actions and to examine the ways in which these may have been undermined by the perpetrator
 - future actions to re-establish a strong parenting role with their children

- Identifies need for secondary consultation and referral to child and family services as required
- Advocates with and on behalf of women subjected to family violence with regard to supporting their continuous parenting and care for their children in the context of family violence, ensuring that all possible options have been explored in instances where there is a risk of child removal.

Ability 4c: Develops cross sector and multidisciplinary practice and capacity to respond appropriately to family violence

- Accesses relevant and appropriate evidence-based material to support education provision and/or (if applicable to role) training development and delivery.
- Participates in delivery of education and training to cross sector and multidisciplinary practitioners.

Ability 4d: Develops systems to support evidence-based practice and deliver services against outcome measures

- Collects and documents client data according to the requirements of the organisation and in line with best practice
- Participates in professional development and training activities to align practice with evidence base
- Collects and documents data required to underpin evidence-based practice in case management plans
- Develops and updates practice to align with known and emerging evidence, with support from senior staff
- Collects and documents data to identify system and service gaps.

Ability 4e: Works within established protocols and procedures of their sector / system

/ organisation

- Accesses established organisational and sector protocols and procedures to inform their work
- Identifies gaps in organisational and sector policies and procedures requiring attention and is involved in the development or refinement of new policies and procedures.

Ability 4f: Provides consultation services, support, supervision and debriefing to multidisciplinary organisations

- Acts as an intake point for those requesting secondary consultation services and provides advice and or services, as appropriate
- Provides secondary consultation services as required.

Capability 5: Advocates for legislative, policy and practice reform within the context of their role

Skill Indicators

- Identifies areas for service improvement and advocating within own service and sector to ensure effective practice in responding to FV
- Engages in activities designed to increase awareness of issues pertaining to FV and the needs of children within service organisations and the broader community
- Engages in networks, coalitions and collaborations focusing on policy and legislative reform
- Identifies systemic gaps and makes recommendations to government on policy and practice reforms required to more effectively respond to family violence.

Ability 5a: Engages in activities to increase awareness of family violence across the broader community

- Sources materials to support work with the media and the community
- Understands the role of the survivor in advocacy
- Develops case studies to support the delivery of public presentations
- Develops material for inclusion in press releases or in response to media requests
- Undertakes public speaking with cross sector and multidisciplinary organisations.

Ability 5b: Works with others to achieve legislative and policy reform

- Participates in networks and coalitions focusing on policy and legislative reform, as required
- Participates in practice research activities, as required.

Ability 5c: Makes recommendations to government on policy and practice reforms required

- Develops case studies which make visible areas of policy requiring reform
- Documents trends in service delivery which make visible areas of policy requiring reform.



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