



# Family Violence Policy

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Line Manager	
Origin	WFGS Or School
School	Wodonga Primary

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## **Introduction**

Wodonga Federation of Government Schools (The Federation) and its member schools: Wodonga Primary School, Wodonga South Primary School, Wodonga West Primary School, Melrose Primary School, Baranduda Primary School, Wodonga Middle Years College, Wodonga Senior Secondary College, Belvoir Special School are committed to creating a school community where all staff and students are committed to creating a safe and supportive workplace and learning culture.

Wodonga Federation of Government Schools and its member schools recognise that staff, parents/carers and students may be among those within the community who may be at risk of or are experiencing or have experienced family violence, and the impact of this is not restricted to their personal life, but can also extend to the work and learning environment.

Family violence is a complex social issue with many complex elements that should be considered when responding to staff, parents/carers and students affected.

## **Policy**

This Family Violence Policy and its associated procedure outlines the Federation's and its member school's commitment to supporting staff, parent/carers and students who are affected by family violence.

The Federation and its member schools commit to:

- Creating a safe and supportive work and study environment that has zero tolerance of violence in any form and against any gender
- Creating a work and study environment where staff and students experiencing family violence feel safe and supported and not disadvantaged or discriminated against for disclosing family violence
- Providing the necessary reasonable adjustments to staff members and students who are experiencing family violence to support them in work and/or study to feel safe and to remain employed or enrolled in study
- Educating all levels of leadership and employees on how to identify, respond and refer staff members or students who are experiencing family violence to the appropriate support either within or outside the school
- Ensuring that a consistent approach, and levels of protection are made available to members of the school community who are affected by family violence
- Implementing Respectful Relationship Education

The Federation and its member schools recognise that staff members and students have the right to choose whether, when, and to whom they disclose details of their personal circumstances in relation to family violence and whether or not they wish to make a formal report to police. All child related matters will be reported according to the mandatory reporting obligations. They may disclose details to their supervisor, human resources, Principal, or someone with whom they feel comfortable. Information disclosed by an employee or student in relation to family violence will be kept confidential and only disclosed in exceptional circumstances such as where disclosure may prevent risks to dependents, is required by law or to maintain the safety of the staff member and/or other staff.

## Procedure

### Definitions

Term	Definition
Family Violence	<p>Emotional abuse—blaming the victim for all problems in the relationship, undermining the victim’s self-esteem and self-worth through comparisons with others, withdrawing interest and engagement and emotional blackmail</p> <p>Verbal abuse—swearing and humiliation in private and public, focusing on intelligence, sexuality, body image or the victim’s capacity as a parent or spouse</p> <p>Social abuse—systematic isolation from family and friends, instigating and controlling relocations to a place where the victim has no social circle or employment opportunities and preventing the victim from going out to meet people</p> <p>Economic abuse—controlling all money, forbidding access to bank accounts, providing an inadequate ‘allowance’, preventing the victim seeking or holding employment and taking wages earned by the victim</p> <p>Psychological abuse—making threats regarding custody of children, asserting the justice system will not believe or support the victim, destroying property, abusing pets and driving dangerously</p> <p>Spiritual abuse—denial and/or misuse of religious beliefs or practices to force victims into subordinate roles and misusing religious or spiritual traditions to justify physical violence or other abuse</p> <p>Physical abuse—direct assaults on the body, use of weapons (including objects), assault of children, locking the victim out of the house, sleep and food deprivation, and</p> <p>Sexual abuse—any form of pressured/unwanted sex or sexual degradation, causing pain during sex, coercive sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease, making the victim perform sexual acts unwillingly and criticising or using degrading insults.</p>

Family member

A family member, in relation to a person (a relevant person), means— (a) a person who is, or has been, the relevant person's spouse or domestic partner; or (b) a person who has, or has had, an intimate personal relationship with the relevant person; or (c) a person who is, or has been, a relative of the relevant person; or (d) a child who normally or regularly resides with the relevant person or has previously resided with the relevant person on a normal or regular basis; or (e) a child of a person who has, or has had, an intimate personal relationship with the relevant person. A relationship may be an intimate personal relationship whether or not it is sexual in nature.

A family member of a person (the relevant person) also includes any other person whom the relevant person regards or regarded as being like a family member if it is or was reasonable to regard the other person as being like a family member having regard to the circumstances of the relationship, including the following— (a) the nature of the social and emotional ties between the relevant person and the other person; (b) whether the relevant person and the other person live together or relate together in a home environment; (c) the reputation of the relationship as being like family in the relevant person's and the other person's community; (d) the cultural recognition of the relationship as being like family in the relevant person's or other person's community; (e) the duration of the relationship between the relevant person and the other person and the frequency of contact; (f) any financial dependence or interdependence between the relevant person or other person; (g) any other form of dependence or interdependence between the relevant person and the other person; (h) the provision of any responsibility or care, whether paid or unpaid, between the relevant person and the other person.

## Responsibilities

Role	Responsible for
Member School Councils	The School Councils of each member school are required to support the actions outlined in this document.
Member School Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dealing with and refer reports of family violence that impact on students.</li> <li>• Ensuring that all staff and students are aware of relevant laws, school policies and procedures, and supports.</li> <li>• Providing support to staff, parents/carers and students who may be at risk of or are experiencing or have experienced family violence.</li> <li>• Promoting Respectful Relationships Education.</li> <li>• Be aware of disclosure and referral process.</li> <li>• Ensuring that staff, parents/carers and students who disclose they are at risk of or are subject to family violence are not discriminated against or victimised.</li> <li>• Provide information on support services and options for colleagues and students that may be affected by or at risk of being affected by family violence.</li> </ul>
Member School Leadership Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarising themselves with the nature, features and dynamics of family violence.</li> <li>• types of abuse that might occur within their area of responsibility and be alert for any indications of such conduct.</li> </ul>
All staff/volunteers/contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarising themselves with the relevant laws and The Federation’s policy and procedures in relation to Family Violence, and complying with all requirements.</li> <li>• Reporting any reasonable belief that a child’s safety is at risk to the relevant authorities (such as the police and the Department of Health and Human Services) and fulfil their obligation as mandatory reporters.</li> <li>• Reporting any suspicion that a child’s safety may be at risk to their supervisor (or, if their supervisor is involved in the suspicion, to a responsible person in the school).</li> <li>• Providing an environment that is supportive of all children’s emotional and physical safety.</li> <li>• Contacting their supervisor or principal if they are affected by family violence and require assistance in accessing the support outlined in this policy.</li> <li>• Provide information on support services and options for colleagues and students that may be affected by or at risk of being affected by family violence.</li> <li>• Extend special consideration to students affected by family violence.</li> </ul>

## **Support for staff who may be at risk of or are experiencing or have experienced family violence**

The Federation and its member schools are committed to creating an environment where staff feel safe and are confident in seeking support. Principals and colleagues will sensitively assist staff who may be at risk of or are experiencing or have experienced family violence to select work options that support their individual circumstances.

The Federation and its member schools are committed to ensuring staff confidentiality and privacy. All staff records concerning family violence will be kept confidential and only disclosed in exceptional circumstances such as where disclosure may prevent risks to dependents, is required by law or to maintain the safety of the staff member and/or other staff.

A range of internal and external supports are available to all staff and, where relevant their families. These include:

- Approving sick leave, carer's leave, annual leave, long service leave and family violence leave
- Up to twenty (20) days family violence leave per year for medical appointments, legal proceedings and other activities related to family violence (this leave is not cumulative but if the leave is exhausted consideration will be given to providing additional leave). This leave is in addition to existing leave entitlements and may be taken as consecutive or single days or as a fraction of a day and can be taken without prior approval
- Approving any reasonable request from a staff member experiencing family violence for:
  - Temporary or ongoing changes to their span of hours or pattern of hours and/or shift patterns
  - Temporary or ongoing job redesign or changes to duties
  - Temporary or ongoing relocation to suitable employment
  - A change to their telephone number and email address to avoid harassing contact
  - Any other appropriate measure including those available under existing provisions for family friendly and flexible work arrangements
- Providing access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and other external support services. A list of the services, including 24 hour support services, and their contact details can be accessed through the school's Principal or later in this policy
- Developing and implementing Workplace Safety Plans

## **Support for students who may be at risk of or are experiencing or have experienced family violence**

The Federation and its member schools are committed to the child safety standards and promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have a zero tolerance for child abuse.

Everyone working at a Federation member school is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

A range of internal and external supports are available to all students and, where relevant their families. These include, but not limited to:

- Special consideration with school work

- Providing access to external support services. A list of the services, including 24 hour support services, and their contact details can be accessed through the school's Principal or appointed contact person
- Developing and implementing Safety Plans

### **Assistance to school staff**

The Federation and its member schools will work with all staff to equip them with the skills and knowledge to respond to any situations related to family violence as a matter of priority, with appropriate sensitivity and confidentiality, and in a culturally appropriate manner.

It is important to understand that staff and students that have been, are currently experiencing, or are at risk of being affected by family violence may need to address immediate or short term issues as well as ongoing or long term issues. Staff need to allow flexibility and ongoing support under such circumstances. Flexibility in these circumstances may also include recognising that some staff may not want any action taken on their behalf and such decisions should be respected.

### **Identifying staff and students potentially affected by or experiencing family violence**

There are several indicators that may be a potential sign that a staff member or student is affected by family violence. These include, but not limited to:

- A staff member or student may not be delivering their usual quality of work, or have difficulty managing deadlines
- They may be getting lots of telephone calls, texts, emails or visits from their partner, spouse or parent/carer that seem to be unwelcome
- They may be repeatedly taking time off or being late
- They may be wearing clothes that are inappropriate for the season, such as long sleeves that might be hiding bruises, or wearing same clothing given their temporary arrangements
- They may have a sudden change in behaviour, such as becoming anxious or upset for no apparent reason or display protective behaviours of children

### **How can principals and staff show support?**

If you believe a staff member or student may be affected by family violence you can take a number of actions to support them, such as:

- Asking the staff member or student if and what type of support they might need from you
- Listening and taking conversations seriously and non-judgementally
- Being culturally sensitive and appropriate
- Focusing on the staff members and students and that of their family
- Suggesting the staff member, parent/carer or student call a family violence support line and offer to be with them when they make the call
- Respecting the staff member's decisions
- Offering your support and understanding
- Calling 000 if there is an immediate risk of harm
- Seeking out information or support services, internally and externally (where appropriate), that will assist the staff member, parent/carer or student in coping and managing the situation

- Allowing time for appointments (i.e. counselling, housing, children's education, doctor) at short notice and without interrogation
- Providing flexibility in relation to performance management:
  - Continue to have regular conversations about the job requirement, performance expectations and development opportunity of the feedback cycle in a sensitive manner
  - With assistance for HR, offer to develop workload strategies for work to be managed and assessed taking into consideration the circumstances.

Discretion is a priority with any supportive action.

HR is available to support both Principals and colleagues and affected individuals. EAP is available for afterhours service support. Details on the EAP can be found at 1300 361 008.

In any circumstances involving children staff must fulfil their mandatory reporting obligations. For further information please see the Child Safety Policy and Mandatory Reporting Policy.

### **Suggested referral services for both women and men affected by family violence**

If you or someone you know is at risk or is experiencing violence, we encourage you to contact 1800RESPECT, the National Sexual Assault, Family and Domestic Violence Counselling Service.

1800RESPECT (1800 737 732 / [www.1800RESPECT.org.au](http://www.1800RESPECT.org.au)), is a confidential and interactive online and telephone counselling service, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The service provides support to people who are experiencing or are at risk of sexual assault, family and/or domestic violence, as well as this who have experienced this in the past. It also provides support to the family and friends of people family violence.

MensLine provides telephone and online support and information service for Australian men, and can be accessed on 1300 78 99 78 or [www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au). MensLine offers support to men with family and relationship concerns, including those who experienced family violence, and also assists perpetrators not to reoffend.

Individuals can contact the services on their own or seek support and assistance in making this contact from their principal or colleague.

### **Support services available to principals and/or colleagues dealing with a staff member, parent/carer or student affected by family violence.**

The health and wellbeing of principals and colleagues is also important in instances where they may be supporting a staff member, parent/carer or student affected by family violence.

A range of internal and external support services are available to principals and colleagues when supporting a staff member, parent/carer or student in these situations.

#### *Internal support services*

Staff may contact their Principal, senior educational liaison or HR for advice, support and assistance as required.

#### *External support services*

A list of external support services, including 24 hour support services, and their contact details is made available on the Federation's website.

## **Perpetrators of family violence**

The Federation and its member schools are equally aware that in addition to there being staff, parents/carers and students who are affected by family violence, there is likely to also be perpetrators and that this must also be handled appropriately and sensitively.

When dealing with a perpetrator, safety is paramount for everyone involved. Principals and colleagues should consult HR for advice on how to address a staff member that may be a perpetrator of harassment or family violence. It is important that in any dealings with the perpetrator, that the message is conveyed that any act of violence or harassment is unacceptable and that the Federation or member school will not tolerate nor endorse this type of behaviour. Principals or colleagues should fulfil their Mandatory Reporting obligations where required.

There may also be instances where alleged preparators are using work resources and time to be abusive towards other. It is never acceptable to use our workplace to be abusive to those within or outside the workplace. Such behaviours may include, but not limited to:

- Emailing, phoning or texting while at work
- Using work IT systems to access private information about someone
- Acting abusively towards other staff, student and parent/carers
- Taking time off to pursue litigation that is designed to harass or undermine someone
- Manipulating pay or roster systems to avoid child support or other obligations (this can be a form of financial abuse)

If you think that this is the case, please contact your Principal or HR.

## **Training and supervision on matters of Family Violence**

Training and education is important to ensure that everyone in The Federation understands that preventing and responding to family violence is everyone's responsibility.

The Federation and its member schools aim for all staff to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any matters relevant to responding and preventing family violence. Our staff are trained to identify, assess, and minimise risks of family violence and to detect potential signs of family violence.

Member schools also support new and existing staff through ongoing supervision to ensure that they understand The Federation and its member school's commitment to preventing and responding to family violence.

## **Prevention of family violence**

The Federation and its member schools are committed to the prevention of family violence. The Federation and its member schools will take steps to target factors that give rise to the conditions for family violence.

As part of our commitment to prevent family violence:

- Our Principals will actively promote gender equality and speak out against gender-based violence.
- Our schools will provide:
  - professional learning for leadership staff for the planning and implementation of the whole school approach to promote respectful relationships and gender equality
  - professional learning for teachers delivering Respectful Relationships curriculum in the classroom
  - professional learning for all school staff on gender equality, the prevention of gender-based violence and Respectful Relationships Education.
- Our schools will undertake a thorough assessment and planning process to identify gaps and limitations in existing culture, policies and practices in gender equality.
- Our schools will create mechanisms for staff feedback on gender equality in the workplace.
- Our schools will identify, resource and implement key actions to promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence.
- Our schools will engage with external experts for advice and support in promoting gender equality and respectful relationships among staff and students.
- Our schools will build partnerships with expert family violence services to increase school capacity to respond to students and staff who experience, witness or perpetrate gender-based violence.
- Our schools commit to continual improvement and evaluation of Respectful Relationships Education.

### **Relevant Policies and guidance**

- Wodonga Federation of Government Schools' Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment Policy
- Wodonga Federation of Government Schools' Gender Equality Policy
- Member School's Student Engagement Policy
- Wodonga Federation of Government Schools Child Safe Code of Conduct

### **Victorian Department of Education and Training**

- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Building Respectful and Safe Schools
- Managing Diversity and Inclusive Workplaces
- Flexible Work in Victorian Government Schools

Endorsed by Wodonga Primary School Council and effective as of: 03/09/18