



Domestic and family violence position statement

1. Purpose

This position statement outlines the support systems the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) considers should be in place to support community members, nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing who are exposed to domestic and family violence.¹ It should be read with the ANMF position statement: *Preventing workplace violence and aggression*.

2. Definitions

Domestic and family violence is criminal conduct that includes:

- physical violence
- sexual assault
- verbal or emotional abuse
- controlling behaviour such as limiting contact with family, friends or finances
- stalking
- technology facilitated abuse
- financial abuse
- demeaning and humiliating behaviour
- threats of injury or death.²

It may happen in any type of relationship and after the relationship has ended.

3. Context

Domestic and family violence concerns the ANMF and its members because:

- it damages the physical and psychological health, wellbeing and future opportunities of people exposed to it
- it is a workplace hazard because it extends beyond the homes and lives of people exposed to it and into the workplaces of nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing
- nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing may also experience domestic or family violence themselves.³

In most jurisdictions, nurses and midwives have mandatory reporting obligations when they believe domestic or family violence is occurring.⁴

¹ Assistants in nursing includes all care workers however titled.

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2018. *Domestic violence*. Available at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/behaviours-risk-factors/domestic-violence/about>.

³ McLindon, E; Humphreys, C; Hegarty, K. 2018. *It happens to clinicians too: an Australian prevalence study of intimate partner and family violence against health professionals*. BMC Women's Health, 18: 113. Available at <https://bmcwomenshealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12905-018-0588-y>.

⁴ Australian Institute of Family Studies. 2017. *Mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect*. Available at <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>.



4. Position

Caring for people exposed to domestic or family violence

Support systems

It is the position of the ANMF that:

1. Violent behaviour is the responsibility of the perpetrator. Trigger factors such as alcohol and other drug use, stress, emotional trauma or provocation do not justify violent behaviour.
2. While funding research into domestic and family violence and perpetrator programs is important, this funding should be in addition to that provided for interventions for people exposed to domestic and family violence.
3. Interventions should provide an empowering support system that works to:
 - prevent domestic and family violence
 - protect the safety of those exposed to it
 - empower them to build safe lives by addressing medical, legal, social, cultural, financial and safety issues.

Role of nurses and midwives

It is the position of the ANMF that:

4. Nurses and midwives play an important role in screening for and identifying people who are exposed to domestic and family violence and facilitating their access to help and support.⁵
5. Nurses and midwives must receive education about domestic and family violence during their undergraduate education programs and continuing education should be available for all nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing.
6. Nurses and midwives should be involved in developing and implementing organisational policies and protocols to underpin the workplace strategy for screening and identifying people exposed to domestic and family violence and facilitating their access to help and support.
7. All health services must ensure they have appropriate safety and security policies, procedures and measures in place to protect the health and safety of nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing and to manage and mitigate the risks associated with:
 - patients or visitors being exposed to domestic and family violence in the health service
 - nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing being exposed to domestic and family violence perpetrators intent on behaving violently in the health facility – this includes community nurses and midwives who attend homes where domestic and family violence is known to occur.

⁵ Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. 2012. Best practice guideline: *Woman abuse: Screening, identification and initial response*. Available at <https://rnao.ca/bpg/guidelines/woman-abuse-screening-identification-and-initial-response>.



Caring for employees exposed to domestic or family violence

Guidelines and protocols

It is the position of the ANMF that:

8. Health and aged care facilities and other organisations employing nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing must:
 - develop supportive and non-judgmental environments in which employees feel safe to discuss any domestic and family violence issues they may be facing
 - develop guidelines and protocols detailing the action to be taken when an employee reports domestic and family violence
 - educate, train and instruct all staff in these guidelines and protocols
 - provide comprehensive training to managers and human resource advisers on how to implement the protocols and guidelines and ensure confidentiality is maintained

Flexibility and leave

It is the position of the ANMF that:

9. Health and aged care facilities and other organisations employing nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing must:
 - provide 20 days of paid family and domestic violence leave per year in addition to all other leave to any nurse, midwife or assistant in nursing who discloses they are exposed to domestic and family violence
 - allow a nurse, midwife or assistant in nursing who is supporting a colleague exposed to domestic and family violence to access paid domestic and family violence leave to accompany their colleague to legal, court and healthcare appointments and to help with relocation, other safety arrangements, and childcare
 - approve where possible, any reasonable request from an employee exposed to domestic and family violence to:⁶
 - change their span of hours, shift patterns, or duties
 - relocate to other suitable employment in the workplace
 - change their telephone number or email address and access to their contact details
 - access any other appropriate measure including those available under existing family friendly and flexible work arrangements
 - institute additional proportionate security measures to prevent harassment or intrusion coming into the workplace.

5. Position statement management

Document type: Position statement	Review process: Federal Executive every three years
Title: Domestic and family violence	Last reviewed: November 2023
Endorsed: September 1994	Next review: November 2025

⁶ Australian Council of Trade Unions. ACTU Model family and domestic violence leave clause. Available at <https://www.actu.org.au/media/886613/actu-model-family-and-domestic-violence-leave-clause-revised-18-march-2.pdf>.