



What is Family Violence ?

Family violence is a pattern of abusive behaviours in a relationship in which tactics are used to gain or maintain power and control, which creates an environment of fear. There are different types of abuse such as: emotional, coercion, financial, spiritual, cultural, immigration, physical, and sexual.

Key Points:

- Health care professionals are important to reducing isolation, providing safe spaces, connection, and care to patients.
- Health care professionals have an important role in providing information and supporting patients.

Recognizing Signs

These indicators are opportunities to connect with patients, it does not always mean a person is experiencing abuse.

- Missing appointments, does not attend regularly
- Unexplained injuries, soreness, or bruising that are not consistent with the explanation
- Frequent illness, or stress-related issues
- Receives harassing phone calls, emails, or texts from partner during appointment
- They might minimize their partner's actions
- Their partner may not allow the patient to be alone during the appointment
- Their partner may be disruptive in the clinic
- They may be hesitant to make appointments without checking in with their partner

Starting a Conversation

To ensure safety and privacy, ensure no one else can hear the conversation.

- Start the conversation with "I've noticed ____ and I'm concerned. Would you like to talk?"
- If a patient says no or does not respond, respect their choice and privacy. Do not force them to engage in conversation.
- If they share they are experiencing violence, listen and believe them. Say "I believe you."
- Avoid judgement, do not jump to conclusions, or insist they immediately leave the relationship.
- **Be calm. Listen. Empathize.** Give them a chance to share without interruption or offering solutions.
- Offer resources if they are interested. "What kind of support are you looking for?"

Things to Remember

- You are not alone
- There are supports available for you and colleagues
- Patients may not be ready to act or it may be dangerous to do so
- Your job is to listen, be empathetic, NOT to solve their problems
- Listening and empathy are powerful tools to support someone on their healing journey

Documentation

- Document objectively – observations, incidents, and conversations, not opinions.
- Sufficient detail in the record to allow the client to be managed by another health professional.
- Be familiar with documentation policies and procedures specific to your profession and related standards of practice. If in doubt, contact your regulator to understand requirements and expectations.

Duty to Report

Alberta Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-387-5437

If you know or suspect a child is being maltreated, in danger, or living in a home with family violence, under the Child, Youth, and Family Enhancement Act, **you are under a legal obligation to report**. Every person who receives a disclosure or suspects harm must legally report. If you are unsure, consult with Children's Services.

Who Can I Consult With?

You are not alone. Consult, or refer a patient to with someone who has expertise:

The Today Centre - www.thetodaycentre.ca
780-455-6880

Family Violence Prevention Centre - www.johnhoward.org
780-423-1685

24 Hour help lines:

- **Family Violence Information Line**
310-1818
- **Mental Health / Information and Referral**
211