

Family and Domestic Violence Policy

Version 2.2

This policy has been adopted by:

Name of Company	Adoption Date
Community Housing Ltd (CHL)	June 2023
Community Housing (Vic.) Ltd (CHVL)	June 2023
Community Housing (TAS) Ltd (CHTL)	June 2023
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Community Housing (Cairns) Ltd (CHCL)	June 2023
Community Housing (Pathways) Ltd (CHPL)	June 2023

And any other entities within CHL which adopt this policy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Community Housing Ltd Group of Companies (CHL) recognises that domestic and family violence can happen to anyone, regardless of social background, disability, age, gender, religion, sexuality or ethnicity. We also recognise that domestic and family violence affects both males and females, including those in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer relationships. We are committed to supporting those impacted by domestic and family violence regardless of gender or sexuality.

CHL takes domestic and family violence seriously and is committed to providing a sensitive and confidential response to anyone approaching us for assistance in cases of domestic and family violence.

2. AIM

CHL is committed to building our skills, capacity and practice to identify indicators of domestic and family violence and to work with customers at risk of or experiencing domestic and family violence to assist them to manage their housing and support situation.

CHL acknowledges the right of people to live in safety and free from violence and will take appropriate action that balances the rights and wishes of the customer with the rights of the landlord/rental provider to protect the property and the safety and wellbeing of other household members and neighbours.

Community Housing providers are a key component of the integrated response to improve policy and service delivery to those impacted by domestic and family violence. This policy aims to support customers who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing family and domestic violence.

3. PRINCIPLES OF CHL'S FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY

3.1. Definitions

CHL draws on the definitions of Family and Domestic Violence provided through a range of frameworks throughout Australia, particularly those issued through The State of Victoria (Family Safety Victoria), 2017

Responding to Family Violence Capability Framework and the NSW Government's Domestic and Family Violence Framework for Reform, 2014 – It Stops Here.

Domestic and family violence includes any behaviour, in an intimate or family relationship, which is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling, causing a person to live in fear. It is usually manifested as part of a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour. An intimate relationship refers to people who are (or have been) in an intimate partnership whether or not the relationship involves or has involved a sexual relationship, i.e. married or engaged to be married, separated, divorced, de facto partners (whether of the same or different sex), couples promised to each other under cultural or religious tradition, or who are dating.

A family relationship has a broader definition and includes people who are related to one another through blood, marriage or de facto partnerships, adoption and fostering relationships, sibling and extended family relationships. It includes the full range of kinship ties in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) communities, extended family relationships, and constructs of family within lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and/or queer (LGBTIQ+) communities. People living in the same house, people living in the same residential care facility and people reliant on care may also be considered to be in a domestic relationship if their relationship exhibits dynamics which may foster coercive and abusive behaviours.

3.2. Behaviours that may constitute domestic and family violence

The following is a list of behaviours that may be representative of family and domestic violence. This list is in no way conclusive but may serve to provide some examples of what types of behaviours people in family and domestic violence situations may be subjected to and/or experiencing.

- Economic abuse; for example, denying a person reasonable financial autonomy or financial support
- Stalking; for example, harassment, intimidation or coercion of the other person's family in order to cause fear or ongoing harassment, including through the use of electronic communication or social media
- Kidnapping or deprivation of liberty, as well as unreasonably preventing the other person from making or keeping connections with her or his family or kin, friends, faith or culture
- Damage to property irrespective of whether the victim owns the property
- Causing injury or death to an animal irrespective of whether the victim owns the animal
- Physical violence including physical assault or abuse
- Sexual assault and other sexually abusive or coercive behaviour
- Emotional or psychological abuse including verbal abuse and threats of violence
- Behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness or otherwise be exposed to the effects of any behaviour referred to the above

3.3. Understanding the impacts of diverse experiences and identities

CHL is aware that our customers are diverse in identities and experiences. Intersectionality is a term used to describe an approach where the various identities held by an individual intersect, rather than just looking at one part of their identity. This may include considering things like a person's gender, sexuality, ethnicity and/or cultural background, religion, linguistics and/or ability, all together rather than separately when engaging with them and assessing their needs.

As outlined in the Victorian Government Diversity and Intersectionality Framework (2017);

“Taking an intersectional approach means looking beyond a person’s individual identities and focusing on the points on intersection that their multiple identities create. These points of intersection will alter the way family violence is experienced by individuals, and in many instances will increase risk and amplify barriers to disclosure and service access.”

Contributing factors that may compound the risk to those with diverse experiences and identities include, but are not limited to:

- Prejudice
- Sexism
- Racism
- Ableism
- Ageism - ranging from children to the elderly
- Sexuality including homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia
- Colonization and dispossession
- Discrimination
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Mental health
- Socio and economic status and backgrounds

The impacts of diverse experiences and identities can also increase the risk of violence against women including:

- increased risk of experiencing ongoing family violence
- services not equipped to respond to unique needs
- dependency on the perpetrator
- negative stereo types
- economic disadvantage
- ineligibility for services to meet certain needs
- social isolation/exclusion
- trauma, distrust or fear of mainstream services including child protection and police

CHL understands that an intersectional approach in the delivery of its services helps to ensure a respectful and appropriate response to the needs of its customers with diverse experiences and identities.

3.4. Working with perpetrators of family violence

CHL acknowledges there are many professionals who may already have a role in working with perpetrators of family violence who may be customers of CHL. This may be through their existing service engagement. The customer may be accessing other services for a primary purpose of receiving assistance with drug or alcohol misuse or abuse, mental health issues or illness, or a range of other health and wellbeing needs. This may also be due to statutory service provision, such as relating to Child Protection matters.

CHL will conduct practice in a way that provides consistent information and messaging to indicate violence will not be tolerated or accepted in any form by our organisation and can be a valid reason for cessation of service provision by CHL.

This is a principle guiding practice rather than influencing direct conversation with perpetrators about violence.

CHL understands that the identification of perpetrators can be complex. Distinction should be made between adult perpetrators and adolescents who use violence, and adolescents should receive a response that considers their age, developmental stage, therapeutic needs, and overall circumstances, including that they may also be family and domestic violence survivors. CHL will provide referral to appropriate professional support services for any customers requiring additional support.

3.5. Practice and procedure

CHL have developed specific guidelines and framework information procedures including the CHL Family and Domestic Violence Information Guide to support its staff in working with customers who are or are at risk of experiencing family and domestic violence.

CHL employs various family and domestic violence frameworks and resources from across its operating areas and incorporates these into its procedural and identification practices to provide safety and access to support for its customers. CHL is committed to ensuring help and support is available, including alternative accommodation if needed.

CHL will also work with support services and other partners to assist customers impacted by family and domestic violence and deal with perpetrators as CHL recognises that domestic and family violence cases require a multi-agency approach.

4. CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND APPEAL OF DECISIONS

CHL has effective and appropriate policies and procedures in place to deal with complaints that ensures accurate information and records of investigations are maintained. CHL will ensure that privacy and natural justice principles are followed at all times and customer confidentiality is maintained throughout the feedback management process. CHL encourages its customers and those affected by CHL services to use its customer feedback system to report and resolve any issues they may be experiencing.

CHL welcomes its customers to query any decisions it makes and/or ask questions about our work practices. If a customer wishes to provide feedback to CHL and/or believes a decision made by CHL is incorrect, they can lodge customer feedback and/or an appeal using the CHL Customer Feedback Policy or the CHL Appeals Policy.

5. RELATED RESOURCES

5.1. CHL Group References

CHL Duty of Care Policy
CHL Child Safety Policy
CHL Sustaining Tenancies Policy
CHL Linking Customers to Support Policy
CHL Customer Promise
CHL Family and Domestic Violence Information Guide

5.2. External References

Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (VIC)
Family Violence Protection Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2017 (VIC)
Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework, 2018 (VIC)
Responding to Family Violence Capability Framework, Family Safety Victoria, 2017 (VIC)
Dhelk Dja Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families, 2018 (VIC)
Everybody Matters: Inclusion and Equity Statement, 2018 (VIC)
MARAM Practice Guides July 2019 (VIC)
Child information sharing scheme guidelines (VIC)
Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 (NSW)
Safer Pathway (NSW)
Staying Home Leaving Violence (NSW)
Start Safely (NSW)
Family Violence Act 2004, Family Violence Amendment Act 2015, Family Violence Reforms Act 2017 (TAS)
Family Violence Action Plan 2015-2020 (TAS)
Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 (QLD)
Family Violence Legislation Reform Bill 2019 (WA)
Statutes Amendments (Domestic Violence) Bill 2018 (SA)
Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007 (NT)
Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028 (NT)
Family Violence Referral Pathways in Eastern Melbourne Metropolitan Region (EDVOS), 2019
Changing the picture: preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, 2018

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy is maintained and managed by the CHL Group's Chief Operations Officer.

This document should be reviewed and revised periodically and/or as required. The period between reviews must not exceed two years. This document remains valid until such time that a new version is published

Review History

Document reference	Date Approved	Version	Reason for review	Review frequency	Owner	Approver(s)
POLHOUAUSNATFDV202402	March 2024	2.2	Reformat	Existing	Chief Operations Officer	Executive
POLHOUAUSNATFDV202202	June 2023	2.1	NT Inclusion	Existing	National Manager Operations	Managing Director National Manager Operations
POLHOUAUSNATFDV202202	November 2022	2.0	Scheduled review	Every two years	National Manager Operations	Managing Director National Manager Operations
POLHOUAUSNATFDV202101	June 2021	1.1	Regulation review*	Every two years	National Manager Operations	Managing Director National Manager Operations
POLHOUAUSNATFDV202001	October 2020	1.0	New policy	Every two years	National Manager Operations	Managing Director National Manager Operations

* amendments made to meet RTA reform requirements in Victoria