

Useful phrases when dealing with a patient/client who is in a Domestic/ Family Violence situation

***NB:** These responses are a guide only. Use when the situation is appropriate. It can be helpful to replace 'Why...' questions with 'How' questions. It is recommended that these responses be used in conjunction with a screening tool.*

Empathic, non-judgmental listening

- I've noticed..... can you tell more about how that happened?
- It can be very difficult to live with abuse.
- I can see it has taken courage for you to tell me this today.
- I am concerned for your safety (and the safety of your children).
- You have a right to live free from abuse.
- From what you are saying, it sounds like you are experiencing domestic/family violence.
- Sex is something that should be negotiated. No-one should be pressured into doing anything with which they are not comfortable.

Assess risk

- From what you have told me it sounds like you and your children are in a high risk situation.
- Do you feel you and your children will be safe when you leave here today?
- I am concerned about your safety, has your partner ever..... *(go thru the 'High Risk Indicators' list eg... threatened to kill you or children, tried to strangle you, do they have a weapon, do they know you are planning on leaving..... (as appropriate).*

Implement a safety plan

- Before you leave here, can we discuss a safety plan?
- Now that you have left *(decided to leave or made some decisions around your safety)* it's important to keep in mind that this can be a dangerous time. It is a time to take extra precautions.
- If you feel unsafe you have a choice whether you let him in or answer your phone. The **safety** of you and your children is the priority.
- What has worked to help keep you safe until now?
- How do you think you can keep yourself safe?
- Is there somewhere safe you can stay? *(If not, say "There are agencies which can provide emergency accommodation and can help you. They deal with these types of issues every day").*

- Who is supportive (or who can you tell) and could help you in this situation?
- Physical and sexual assault are crimes.
- If you feel unsafe please call the Police on 000.
- In some areas there are special DFV units or officers within the police who can help you with this. They are trained in responding to domestic violence.
- *(Check other 'Safety Planning' options on Risk Indicators handout.)*

Check safety of children

- Are there children involved? How safe do you think they feel?
- Children are affected by witnessing your partner's abuse (or living with domestic/family violence).
- Witnessing domestic violence is a form of child abuse.
- I am concerned for the safety of the children, how can we help keep them safe from the abuse?

Referrals

- There are services which are very experienced in dealing with these issues and they can offer support.
- Would you like some assistance/information about this?
- I have information on services which may be able to help you, would you like the numbers so that you can discuss your options with them?
- Can we make a time when you could come back and discuss how things are going?
- There is a domestic/family violence service near here, would you like to call them and see what options they can offer you?
- Can we make a time when you can come back and we can discuss this further or see what other support you would like?