

## Fact sheet 2 Indicators of family and domestic violence

Service providers play a pivotal role in identifying and responding to family and domestic violence.

The lists of possible indicators of family and domestic violence (Tables 1 and 2) are provided in relation to adult and child victims for the purpose of forming professional judgements about when to undertake family and domestic violence screening.

Indicators can often be attributed to causes other than violence, be overlooked or disregarded. However, it is essential that service providers initiate a conversation about family and domestic violence if a number of indicators or a pattern of recurring indicators are present. This process should be guided by the screening tool or other similar prompting questions.

**Table 1: Indicators of family and domestic violence in adult victims**

Form	Indicators of family and domestic violence in adult victims	
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bruising</li> <li>• fractures</li> <li>• chronic pain (neck, back)</li> <li>• fresh scars or minor cuts</li> <li>• terminations of pregnancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• complications during pregnancy</li> <li>• gastrointestinal disorders</li> <li>• sexually transmitted diseases</li> <li>• strangulation</li> </ul>
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• depression</li> <li>• anxiety</li> <li>• self-harming behaviour</li> <li>• eating disorders</li> <li>• phobias</li> <li>• somatic disorders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sleep problems</li> <li>• impaired concentration</li> <li>• harmful alcohol use</li> <li>• licit and illicit drug use</li> <li>• physical exhaustion</li> <li>• suicide attempts</li> </ul>
Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fear</li> <li>• shame</li> <li>• anger</li> <li>• no support networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness</li> <li>• feeling disassociated and emotionally numb</li> </ul>
Social/ financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• homelessness</li> <li>• unemployment</li> <li>• financial debt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no friends or family support</li> <li>• isolation</li> <li>• parenting difficulties</li> </ul>
Demeanour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unconvincing explanations of any injuries</li> <li>• describe a partner as controlling or prone to anger</li> <li>• be accompanied by their partner, who does most of the talking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• anxiety in the presence of a partner</li> <li>• recent separation or divorce</li> <li>• needing to be back home by a certain time and becoming stressed about this</li> <li>• reluctance to follow advice</li> </ul>

Exposure to family and domestic violence can affect all aspects of a child's health and wellbeing including their physical health and safety, emotional, behavioural and social wellbeing. These impacts directly relate to what may be observed as an indicator. A list of possible indicators is provided in the following table.

**Table 2: Indicators of family and domestic violence in child victims**

Age of child	Indicators of family and domestic violence in children	
Unborn children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• premature birth</li> <li>• miscarriage</li> <li>• low birth weight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• foetal injury</li> <li>• foetal death</li> </ul>
Babies and toddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• frequent crying and signs of irritability and anxiety</li> <li>• underweight for age</li> <li>• physical injury</li> <li>• neglect</li> <li>• sexual abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• very demanding or very passive</li> <li>• wary of new people and startle easily</li> <li>• feeding or sleep difficulties</li> <li>• delayed mobility</li> </ul>
Pre-schoolers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eating and sleeping difficulties</li> <li>• concentration problems</li> <li>• inability to play constructively</li> <li>• clinginess</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fearfulness</li> <li>• numbing</li> <li>• increased arousal</li> <li>• adjustment problems</li> <li>• developmental delay</li> <li>• physical complaints</li> </ul>
School age/ pre-adolescent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• defiant behaviour</li> <li>• rebelliousness</li> <li>• temper tantrums</li> <li>• cruelty to pets</li> <li>• physical abuse of others</li> <li>• avoidance of peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• overly compliant behaviour</li> <li>• withdrawal</li> <li>• loss of interest in social activities</li> <li>• self-harm</li> <li>• poor school performance</li> </ul>
Adolescents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dropping out of school</li> <li>• academic failure</li> <li>• delinquency/offending</li> <li>• eating disorders</li> <li>• substance misuse</li> <li>• depression</li> <li>• suicide ideation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use of controlling behaviours</li> <li>• distrust of adults</li> <li>• violent behaviours</li> <li>• violence toward a parent (particularly their mother)</li> <li>• early pregnancy</li> </ul>