

# RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE POLICY

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## 1 Purpose and Objective

This policy explains how Housing Plus responds when an applicant, tenant, or household member (customer) discloses or is identified as experiencing domestic and family violence.

## 2 Scope

- a. This policy applies to all Housing Plus and its subsidiaries employees, management and other stakeholders including Volunteers.
- b. This policy applies to all Housing Plus customers.
- c. This policy describes the organisation's objectives and policies regarding responding to domestic and family violence.

## 3 References

### 3.1 Legislation

- Housing Act 2001
- Residential Tenancies Act 2010
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1988

### 3.2 Policies and Guidelines

- Housing Plus Sustaining Tenancies Policy
- Housing Plus Ending a Tenancy Policy
- Housing Plus Feedback, Appeals and Complaints
- Housing Plus Transfer Policy
- Housing Plus Children and Young People at Risk Policy
- Homelessness NSW Good Practice Guidelines for the Specialist Domestic and Family Violence Sector in NSW

## 4 Definitions

**Term:** Company

**Definition:** Housing Plus, ABN 83 147 459 461, and all of its related and associated entities

**Term:** Employee

**Definition:** An individual who is directly engaged and paid by the Company as an Employee

**Term:** Manager

**Definition:** An Employee who has direct reports (includes Executive, Senior Management and Team Leaders). In situations involving volunteers, 'Manager' refers to the Volunteer Supervisor

**Term:** Executive

**Definition:** A member of the Executive team

**Term:** Volunteer or Other Stakeholders

**Definition:** Collectively refers to any individual(s) who is not an Employee but who carries out work (whether paid or unpaid) for the Company, including (but not limited to) work as a volunteer, contractor, secondee, consultant or subcontractor, labour hire company, an apprentice or trainee, and a student gaining work experience.

**Term:** Work Environment

**Definition:** Includes but is not limited to:

- During and outside normal working hours.
- All functions, events and places which are work related (e.g. Including working from home under the flexible work policy, work lunches, conferences, Christmas parties and client functions).
- During the recruitment process; any environment which has sufficient connection to employment; decisions about promotions and other career opportunities, or in the termination of employment.
- In the course of providing goods and services.

**Term:** Domestic Violence

**Definition:** Violence or abuse by an intimate partner or ex-partner. It can include a variety of forms of abuse including (but not limited to) physical, sexual, psychological, financial abuse, stalking and intimidation. Domestic violence extends beyond physical violence and often involves the exploitation of power imbalances and patterns of abuse. Domestic Violence disproportionately affects women and children in their care.

**Term:** Family Violence

**Definition:** Violence or abuse by a family member, carer, guardian, child or kinship carer. It can include a variety of forms of abuse including (but not limited to) physical, sexual, psychological, financial abuse, stalking and intimidation. Family violence extends beyond physical violence and often involves the exploitation of power imbalances and patterns of abuse.

**Term:** Victim-survivor

**Definition:** Housing Plus has used the term victim-survivor to refer to customers who have experienced domestic and family violence and sexual violence in line with the Homelessness

NSW Good Practice Guidelines. This term is also inclusive of children who have experienced, witnessed or been exposed to the effects of domestic and family violence.

**Term:** Trauma informed

**Definition:** Trauma-informed care and practice recognises the prevalence of trauma and its impacts on the emotional, psychological and social wellbeing of people and communities. Trauma-informed practice means integrating an understanding of past and current experiences of violence and trauma in all aspects of service delivery. The goal of trauma-informed systems is to avoid re-traumatising individuals and support safety, choice and control to promote healing.

## 5 Responsibilities

### 5.1 Executive

- a. Ensure adequate resources are provided to implement and support this policy.
- b. Manage the implementation of and adherence to this policy.
- c. Model appropriate standards of behaviour.

### 5.2 Management

- a. Ensure that all Employees and Other Stakeholders are aware this policy and understand their obligations.
- b. Ensure effective implementation of and adherence to this policy.
- c. Provide opportunities for supportive consultation processes with appropriate worker(s) for best practice to be intended.
- d. Ensure the staff can engage with appropriate debriefing, Supervision/EAP when staff are exposed to Domestic and Family Violence.
- e. Model appropriate standards of behaviour.

### 5.3 Employees, Volunteers and other Stakeholders

- a. Understand and comply with this policy.
- b. Model appropriate standards of behaviour.

## 6 Policy

Housing Plus operates from a principle of safety first. When a customer discloses that they are experiencing domestic and family violence they can expect to be respected and believed, have their safety prioritised, and have Housing Plus employees work from a trauma-informed approach.

## 6.1 Responding to domestic and family violence

When responding to customers who are or who have experienced domestic and family violence, Housing Plus will:

- Respect an individual's right to privacy and confidentiality and make lawful decisions about the disclosure of personal information.
- Consider the safety and wellbeing of the victim-survivor (and any children and young people that may be part of the household – see the *Children and Young People at Risk Policy*) when assessing requests for assistance.
- Provide reliable and complete information to the victim-survivor about their entitlements and options under the *NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010* and Housing Plus policies.

Housing Plus may consult and or debrief with Director/Manager/worker from the domestic and Violence Services to provide guidance and support in the anticipated approach with the client who has experienced Domestic and Family Violence.

With consent, Housing Plus can provide warm referrals to appropriate local service providers for domestic or family violence support. This can include referrals for court advocacy, case management, and support to secure homes.

## 6.2 Tenancy Support and Assistance

Housing Plus will provide tenancy support and assistance to customers who are or who have experienced domestic and family violence. This may include:

- Supporting the victim-survivor to report any criminal activity to the NSW Police.
- Meeting with the victim-survivor in an environment where they feel safe.
- Offering the opportunity to speak to an employee of the same sex where possible.
- Providing information about how the victim-survivor can end a tenancy without penalty (see *Ending a Tenancy Policy*).
- Explaining the range of housing options available and implications for their tenancy
- Providing information to third parties only with the consent of the victim-survivor or as required by law.

If there is an immediate threat to safety, Housing Plus will:

- Provide referrals and information on short and medium-term housing options.
- Provide advice and assistance with the Housing Pathways transfer process should the victim-survivor request to move.
- Ensure the property is secure by undertaking necessary repairs or taking reasonable steps to enhance its security.
- Act in accordance with the *Children and Young People at Risk Policy* if there is a child at risk of harm.

Housing Plus complies with 13A of the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 which supports the information sharing framework intended to improve safety outcomes for victim-survivors of domestic violence. [13A Crimes Act 2007](#).

### 6.3 Evidence Requirements

Housing Plus may ask for evidence to confirm that a customer is experiencing domestic or family violence. As each situation and response to domestic and family violence may be different, evidence that Housing Plus may ask for can include current copies of:

- Police reports
- Apprehended Violence Order (AVO)
- Domestic Violence Order
- Reports or letters from Community Services
- Reports or letters from Corrective Services NSW
- Reports or letters from a social worker
- Reports or letters from a community support agency, such as a Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, Staying Home Leaving Violence or other case management service, refuge, community centre or neighbourhood centre worker,
- Reports or an assessment from a medical practitioner or health professional (including a mental health case manager)
- Reports or letters from a school principal or school counsellor

## 7 Appeals and Review of Decisions

Decisions made under this policy can be reviewed or appealed. Refer to the Customer *Feedback, Appeals and Complaints Policy* for more information.

## 8 Document Control

### 8.1 Document History

Action	Responsible Person	Date
Created draft	Lena Jenson Chris Maybin Harmony Meath Therese Short	May 2024
Reviewed by	Liz Stamatelos Maria Woods	December 2024 January 2025
Approved by	Justin Cantelo	February 2025