A community free from family violence

Peninsula Health’s Integrated Approach to Family Violence across the Life Span Strategy 2018—2021
Acknowledgement of Country

Peninsula Health acknowledges and pays respect to the traditional people of this region, known as the Myone Buluk of the Boon Wurrung language group of the greater Kulin Nation – and bestows the same courtesy to all other First Peoples, past and present, who now reside in the region. The Boon Wurrung people are the proud custodians and protectors of the lands on which Peninsula Health stands today.
Definitions

At Peninsula Health, we recognise family violence, abuse and neglect in all its forms, including, but not limited to, the following definitions:

**Family violence** is defined in the Family Violence Protection Act, 2008 as behaviour that is:
- Physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically or economically abusive, threatening, coercive or in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of themselves or another family member; or
- Behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of the behaviour.

**Violence against women** is defined by the United Nations as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life”.

**Intimate partner violence** is defined by the World Health Organisation as “behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours”.

**Elder abuse** is defined by the World Health Organisation as “a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person (aged 60 years and older). It includes physical, sexual, psychological/emotional abuse; financial and material abuse; abandonment; neglect; and serious loss of dignity and respect.”

**Sexual violence** is defined by the World Health Organisation as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting.”

**Family member** is broad and may involve: spouse/de facto partners (including cisgender*, same sex and non-binary), ex-partners, children, siblings, parents, caregivers (paid or unpaid), relatives, kinship structures.

**Gender equity** is defined by the World Health Organisation as “fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men. It often requires women-specific programs and policies to end existing inequalities. The root causes of violence against women are; the unequal distribution of power between men and women, rigid gender roles and attitudes, norms, behaviours and practices that support violence.”

* Cisgender denotes or relates to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex.
Introduction

Family violence is a complex and serious community issue, most commonly (but not exclusively) experienced by women and children. It occurs to people of all ages, including older people (elder abuse).

It has a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of many of our patients, their families, our staff and community, pervading across social and cultural divides.

Recommendation 95 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence (2016) outlines that the Victorian Government resource public hospitals to implement a whole-of-hospital model for responding to family violence, drawing on evaluated approaches. Peninsula Health is an organisation that provides a comprehensive range of health services to almost 300,000 people living in our community.

As a health service that responds to high rates of population ageing, chronic disease, paediatric and maternity admissions, we are uniquely and powerfully positioned to utilise an integrated approach to family violence across the life span.

Our vision is a community free from violence in which all members can feel safe, and where healthy and respectful relationships are the norm. Achieving this vision calls for a holistic strategy, in which our health service employs an integrated approach through education, training and cultural change, early identification, sensitive enquiry and making referrals to specialist family violence services to support recovery.

At Peninsula Health our strategic focus is to provide an integrated model to the delivery of family violence services across the lifespan; from antenatal through to geriatric care.

Our goal is to progressively roll out and embed a sustainable, whole-of-network approach focussed on family violence across the life span over the next three years. The following four strategic directions are aimed to align our efforts to our broader position:

1. Support a cultural shift, whereby we prioritise the safety and wellbeing of all members of our community who are exposed to family violence professionally or personally.

2. Deliver staff training and education to enhance our Health Service’s capability, capacity and confidence in sensitively enquiring about family violence across the life span.

3. Form and strengthen partnerships with our community’s family violence sector.

4. Conduct research to enhance our knowledge and contribute to the evidence base of family violence across the life span.

We are proud that our Board and Executive are fully committed to enhancing the safety and wellbeing of our patients, staff and volunteers.

This Strategy supports our commitment to an integrated approach to family violence across the life span. We are dedicated to creating a community free from family violence.

Felicity Topp
Chief Executive
Executive Summary

The impact of family violence on our community is significant. Violence against women is the single greatest risk factor for preventable death and disease for Victorian women aged 18-44 years. Elder abuse is widely underreported but is estimated by the World Health Organisation to affect up to 10 per cent of older people.

It is a violation of human rights and a pervasive issue in our community. There are immediate and long-term health, social, and economic consequences for women, children and men who experience family violence.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence identified the role of hospitals in mitigating these impacts through primary prevention, and early identification and response to family violence. Recommendation 95 outlines that the Victorian Government resources public hospitals to implement a whole-of-hospital model for responding to family violence, drawing on evaluated approaches.

Peninsula Health’s Integrated Approach to Family Violence Across the Life Span Strategy 2018—2021 provides a framework to unite and strengthen the current activities across the health service and guide our future efforts by:

- Enhancing capacity and capability in the health workforce through education, research, first line support and secondary consultations to identify and respond to family violence experienced by patients and staff.

- Contributing to the evidence base for effective interventions in health settings, including identifying health promotion activities, the sensitive inquiry model and routine and targeted family violence screening.

- Providing leadership, governance and strategic direction to reinforce the position of Peninsula Health — that family violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

A collaborative approach to family violence is central to ensuring the health and safety of our patients and our people.

Peninsula Health’s Integrated Approach to Family Violence Across the Life Span Strategy 2018—2021 will be implemented during the Victorian Government’s 10-year plan to end family violence.

“We are dedicated to creating a future free from family violence.”
Government policy context:
Family Violence Across the Life Span

Given the demographics of our patients and staff, Peninsula Health includes family violence across the life span as a primary focus. The Victorian Government has identified family violence as a priority area for the State, placing this Strategy at a time of significant policy and sector reform.

The Victorian Government’s commitment to Family Violence at a glance:

- June 2009: Victorian Government released With Respect to Age, providing guidelines for health services and community agencies for the prevention of elder abuse.
- February 2015: Launched Australia’s first Royal Commission into Family Violence (RCFV).
- March 2016: RCFV recommendations made to Parliament and committed to implementation by the Victorian Government.
- April 2016: Released Roadmaps for Reform: strong families, safe children.
- The Victorian Budget 2016/17: $572 million committed to addressing family violence.
- November 2016: Released Ending Family Violence: Victoria’s Plan for Change (the 10 Year Plan).
- December 2016: Released Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equity Strategy, Australia’s first gender equity strategy.
- The Victorian Budget 2017/18:
  - $1.91 billion committed to addressing family violence.
  - $38.4 billion committed to the Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence initiative.
**Alignment with other strategies**

**Peninsula Health’s Integrated Approach to Family Violence Across the Life Span Strategy 2018—2021** is closely aligned with other key Peninsula Health strategies:

- **Peninsula Health’s Strategic Plan 2013—2018**
  Outlines the vision and goals for the health service, in order to deliver responsive and best-quality healthcare for our community.

- **Statement of Priorities 2017—18**
  An agreement between the State Minister for Health and Peninsula Health, this prioritises the commitment that all Emergency Department and Women’s Health staff will receive Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence training, including building skills and capacity to screen, respond and refer appropriately.

- **Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Action Plan 2017—2020**
  Provides a framework to ensure that our services meet the needs of all people, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The focus on access, engagement and diversity awareness can be applied when working with CALD consumers experiencing family violence.

- **Reconciliation Action Plan (2nd) 2016—2018**
  The five principles developed for this action plan include Respect, Understanding, Communication, Engagement and Equity. These underpin the key deliverables that Peninsula Health has committed to build relationships and develop and implement programs with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
The strategy for an integrated approach to family violence across the life span

Our vision

A community free from family violence in which healthy, respectful relationships are the norm and individuals have the ability to live to their full potential without fear or threats from others. We want to see a shared community approach with the common view that violence, abuse and neglect in all its forms is not acceptable. Particular care and consideration will be shown to more vulnerable groups, such as people living with a disability, older persons, indigenous populations, migrant and refugee communities and vulnerable children.

Achieving this vision requires a holistic strategy for health care that promotes collaboration through education and cultural change, early identification and intervention, first line and crisis responses, therapeutic programs that support recovery, and to contribute to changing the ingrained cultures and community attitudes.

The framework

Peninsula Health’s *Integrated Approach to Family Violence Across the Life Span Strategy 2018—2021* provides a framework to unite our existing and extensive activities and guide our future work. At Peninsula Health, the identification and response to violence will be integrated into all our services, using evidence-based practices that enhance the capacity and safety of our staff. Peninsula Health currently provides health promotion and family violence services across inpatient and community settings.

Resourcing and support for our staff will be provided to respond to changes to routine practice and the increased number of identified family violence cases. This may translate to temporary changes in service delivery while the identification and response to violence is embedded into first line clinical practice.

Strategic directions

Our goal is to implement a sustainable, integrated response to family violence across the life span over the next three years. We will achieve this by aligning and prioritising our efforts under four strategic directions. The outcomes of these directions will be enhanced safety and wellbeing of our patients and staff, with improved services and support for those experiencing violence.

- We will prioritise the safety and wellbeing of staff exposed to family violence professionally or personally.
- We will educate and support staff to enhance their capacity, capability and comfort in sensitively inquiring about violence.
- We will promote a culture of equity for our patients and our people in which women are safe, respected and valued members of the community.
- We will conduct innovative research to enhance our knowledge, inform our specialist services and contribute to the evidence base of family violence and elder abuse as a health issue.
Review and monitoring

This strategy will be monitored internally by the Safer Communities Steering Committee, which is chaired by the Chief Operating Officer, Peninsula Health.

Key clinical, research and professional directors are represented on this committee, along with consumers. A detailed implementation plan will be developed and progress against priorities will be reviewed and reported annually.

Next steps...

Safety and wellbeing of our people

Conduct innovative research

A Community Free from Family Violence Strategy

Promote a culture of safety and equity

Educate and support our people

An implementation plan for this Strategy is being developed collaboratively by key programs across the Health Service.

It will outline roles, responsibilities, communications, governance, resourcing and a measurement framework.

“We want to see a shared community approach which holds that violence, abuse and neglect in all its forms in not acceptable.”

“Achieving this vision requires a holistic strategy for health care that incorporates prevention through education and cultural change, early identification and intervention.”
Commencing in 2018, the following priorities have been identified for implementation or continuation under the guidance of the strategic directions:

**Strategic Direction 1:**
Safety and Wellbeing of staff

- Implement the Family Violence Workforce Support program across clinical and non-clinical areas.
- Develop a platform for staff support to address the complex causes and impacts of vicarious trauma of staff.

**Strategic Direction 2:**
Educate and support staff

- Implement the Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence project, ensuring that staff receive the appropriate level of education for their role and scope of practice.
- A Family Violence Clinical Champion Network will be developed and nurtured within the health service.

**Strategic Direction 3:**
Promote a culture of safety and equity

- Develop and implement an organisation-wide approach to address the impact of gender equity on the prevention of violence against women, aiming to contribute to a gender equitable culture.
- Improve the recognition and response of family violence and elder abuse by all employees, volunteers and programs within Peninsula Health.

**Strategic Direction 4:**
Conduct innovative research

- Explore opportunities for research and collaborate with service leaders in family violence.
Conclusion

Peninsula Health’s *Integrated Approach to Family Violence Across the Life Span Strategy 2018—2021* provides a framework to unite our existing activities and guide our future efforts. It provides direction and focus over the coming years and supports our commitment to addressing inequities in health and health care by those who experience violence. The Strategy will be implemented during the Victorian Government’s 10-year plan to end family violence.

Our Health Service is in a unique position to contribute to the elimination of family violence in our communities. This is especially so, given the wide breadth of services that we provide, our partnerships and community connectedness and the characteristics of our environment; which highlight significantly high levels of family violence and rapidly increasing health service demand.

The outcomes of this Strategy will be the enhanced safety and wellbeing of our patients and staff, with improved services and support for people experiencing family violence, with a focus on perpetrator accountability. This Strategy supports the commitment of Peninsula Health to be a leading network in utilising an integrated approach to family violence across the life span.

Collaboratively, the Health Service will further enhance its supportive work environment, which includes the safety and support for staff members who may be impacted by family violence themselves.

Acknowledgements

Peninsula Health staff and programs who contributed to the development of this Strategy are acknowledged.

The leadership and intelligence generously shared with Peninsula Health by The Royal Women’s Hospital, Melbourne was pivotal in the establishment of this Strategy.

Further, The Royal Women’s Hospital, along with Bendigo Health and The Victorian Government are kindly acknowledged for their roles in providing resources to enable collaborative and innovative models for the enhancement of our systems and policies.

These resources will support the Health Service to achieve its objective - for a community free from family violence.

Further information

For further information please contact:

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Click here to add your logo as a hi-res JPEG, PNG, TIF or EPS file.