

## **INQUIRY INTO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRENDS AND ISSUES IN NSW**

**Organisation:** Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District  
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## ILLAWARRA SHOALHAVEN LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT

Submission to the NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues' inquiry into domestic violence trends and issues in NSW

### EARLY INTERVENTION STRATEGIES TO PREVENT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- **Successful implementation of the NSW Health Routine Screening for Domestic Violence (RSDV) strategy**

- *Routine screening for domestic violence* is an important early intervention strategy: by routinely screening for domestic violence, ISLHD staff are able to assist women in naming violence and linking them with support services if required. RSDV has proved to be an effective tool in letting women know that domestic violence is common, that it is a health issues and that health workers can help.

It is mandatory for clinicians to routinely screen women for domestic violence in Antenatal and Early Childhood Health Services, and for women over the age of 16 attending Alcohol/Other Drug Services and Mental Health Services.

Every November a snapshot is taken to ascertain level of screening and outcomes. Since November 2006 to November 2010, a consistent upward trend has been maintained in complying with the routine screening standards. Additionally, the November Snapshot data (2006 – 2010), shows that the disclosure rate has been maintained between 4.5% - 5.5%.

- **Domestic Violence Training in ISLHD:**

- *Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV)*, the NSW Health state-wide training centre, provides the mandated training for specialist child protection, sexual assault and Aboriginal family health workers, as well as targeted training to mental health and drug and alcohol workers. During 2011, ISLHD have supported a number of ECAV training programs to be delivered within the ISLHD geographical area, and have committed to supporting six ECAV training workshops during 2012.
- *ISLHD Domestic Violence Training: Women's Health and Community Partnerships* is committed to providing on-going training to ISLHD staff throughout the district, particularly those services that are mandated to routinely screen. ISLHD will target training to those services where those people experiencing domestic violence related injuries are more likely to access (including physical, psychological and emotional).

- **Domestic Violence Counselling:**

- *The Domestic Violence and Community Counselling Team (DVACCT)* provides services throughout the ISLHD over 11 locations. This service has designated domestic and family counselling services, as well as providing generalist counselling.
- Health funded NGOs also provide counselling services to those experiencing domestic and family violence (Shoalhaven Women's Health Centre, Illawarra Women's Health Centre, Waminda, and ACON).

- *Domestic and Family Violence Follow-up*: Emergency Departments have follow-up protocol in place, and have on-call social work services to follow-up crisis cases.
- Service gaps in responding to domestic violence have been identified in the ISLHD, particularly services for children and young people.
- Better integrated case management and improved collaboration between services has been identified as an area to explore and review current practices.
- **Participation In Whole of Government and Interagency Responses to Domestic Violence**
  - The Women's Health Community Partnerships (WHCP) Unit provided recommendations to the Office for Women *Stop the Violence, End the Silence - NSW Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan* (June 2010) after consultation with relevant ISLHD services. The WHCP Unit will continue to consult with relevant services to ensure appropriate input to the NSW Health response to the *NSW DVF Action Plan* and associated regional plans.
  - ISLHD provide representation on *local interagency Domestic Violence committees*, which allows for a local understanding of the community issues around domestic violence, and assist in problem solving and interagency collaboration in targeting responses. The Shoalhaven Interagency committee have been very proactive in facilitating education forums for workers in the local area.
  - *Nowra Domestic and Family Violence Managers Group* is attended by ISLHD representatives. This group aims to bring together a range of Government and non-Government managers to coordinate local service responses in the interest of providing better quality services and achieving better outcomes for people affected by domestic and family violence.
- **ISLHD Family and Domestic Violence Working Group**
  - *The ISLHD Family and Domestic Violence Working Group* support the local implementation of the *NSW Health Policy and Procedures for Identifying and Responding to Domestic Violence* across the ISLHD; facilitates and supports the development and implementation of local protocols and procedures that promotes a local and systemic response to domestic violence. The FDVWG also raises the awareness of the issues around domestic violence in the community and is currently working on strategies to coincide with the 16 days of activism against gender violence as a timely opportunity to promote awareness.
- **NSW Health Policies:**
  - ISLHD are guided by the NSW Health policy directives to meet legislative requirement in relation to responding to domestic violence related concerns [including NSW Charter of Victims Right (Victims Right Act 1996)].
  - ISLHD has successfully implemented the *NSW Health Policy and Procedures for Identifying and Responding to Domestic Violence (2006)*. The policy aims to:
    - Reduce the incidence of domestic violence through primary and secondary prevention approaches.
    - Minimise the trauma that people living with domestic violence experience, through tertiary prevention approaches; ongoing treatment and follow-up counselling.

- ISLHD has a local policy directive outlining the responsibilities of staff in situations where a patient (or the carer of a child who is a patient) is protected by an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) but, whilst admitted to a health facility, seeks contact with the defendant upon whom the AVO has been served.
- In recognition of the prevalence of domestic violence within the community, a recent document has been released by the Department of Health relating to 'Family Violence Provision' which allows NSW Health employees leave entitlements to attend to matters arising from family violence situations.