

# How to recognise and respond to family violence safely

**Family violence** is abuse and can include dangerous behaviours that can occur among married and de facto couples, couples who are dating, young people and adults, homosexual, heterosexual, and people from all racial, cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds.

**Family violence** is a whole-of-community issue that requires the combined and coordinated efforts of local, state, and federal governments, communities, and corporate sectors to respond in ways that can both support victim-survivors' recovery, keep perpetrators of family violence in view and accountable, and to prevent further abuses wherever possible.

## **Family violence can take the following forms:**

- **Psychological and emotional abuse:** intimidation, belittling, humiliation, and the effects of financial, social, and other non-physical forms of abuse.
- **Coercive control:** isolating victims from their friends/family/support networks, monitoring movements and communication, restricting access to information/assistance.
- **Physical violence:** slaps, hits, punches, being pushed from a height, held down, strangulation, use of weapons and willful property damage.
- **Financial and economic abuse:** restricting access to money, accumulating debt, withholding money, or resources, preventing from participating in employment or study.
- **Sexual violence:** rape, sexual abuse, unwanted sexual advances harassment and intimidation.

If a rental agreement is affected by family violence, renters, rental providers, and property managers have specific rights and obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.

- A renter who is a 'protected person' under a family violence safety notice, family violence intervention order or personal safety intervention order can change the locks without the landlord's or property manager's consent.
- As a property manager, if the locks have been changed, you must not give keys to a renter who you know has been excluded from the rental property under a family violence safety notice, family violence intervention order or personal safety intervention order.
- If a person is experiencing family violence, they can apply to VCAT to end the rental agreement early or start a new agreement in the same property that does not include the person being violent (the respondent). This can also be done without a safety notice or intervention. Evidence such as letters, recordings, photos or statements from others can be used to show they are experiencing family violence. (Residential Tenancies Act 1997.)