

# Safe at Home

## Family violence in same-sex relationships

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### Family violence in Australia

Family Violence can take many forms and is not limited to relationships defined by specific sexual, cultural or economic characteristics. It typically involves a wide range of controlling or other behaviours, commonly of a physical, sexual and/or psychological nature, which involves fear, harm, intimidation, emotional abuse or economic deprivation.

Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay people may experience family violence with same-sex or opposite sex partners. Transgender and Intersex people may also experience family violence in same sex or opposite sex relationships.

To date, there is limited Australian research that records the level of family violence in same-sex relationships. However, a number of overseas studies suggest that the general patterns and levels of family violence in same-sex relationships are similar to the rates for heterosexual relationships. These studies demonstrate that once the violence starts the severity is likely to escalate.<sup>1</sup>

All types of family violence are a misuse of power or of control. Some, like physical violence, sexual assault, economic abuse, psychological abuse, emotional abuse and stalking are criminal offences, under the *Tasmanian Family Violence Act 2004*.

Family violence is defined as a form of child abuse and is a crime in Tasmania under the *Children Young Persons and their Families Act 1997*.

### Signs of Family Violence

There are a number of things you can look out for if you think a family member or friend is experiencing family violence. They may be:

- Unusually nervous, depressed or withdrawn;
- Overly anxious about their partner or their partner's moods;
- Increasingly isolated from friends or family; or
- May have unexplained physical injuries such as cuts, bruises or sprains.
- Or you may feel that their partner:
  - Puts them down a lot in front of you or others;
  - Gives orders or seems to make all the decisions; or
  - Controls all the money or social activities or contact with friends.

### Family Violence Behaviours Unique to Same-Sex Relationships

- Threatening to, or 'outing' their partner to friends, family, employer, church or the wider community.
- Telling a partner that no one will help because the police and the justice system are homophobic.
- Telling a partner they 'deserve it' because they identify as gay, lesbian, intersex, transgender or bisexual. This type of abuse is indicative of internalised homophobia by the abuser.
- Relying on gendered stereotypes to hide abuse and increase power and control over their partner by portraying the violence as mutual or consensual acts.
- Telling a male partner that the behaviour is not family violence, but an expression of masculinity.

Organisation/Name	Services	Contact details or sites
<b>EMERGENCY</b>	<b>Ask for police</b>	<b>000</b>
<b>Safe at Home</b>	Information sheets	<a href="http://www.safeathome.tas.gov.au">www.safeathome.tas.gov.au</a>
<b>Safe at Home</b>	Family Violence Response & Referral Line	Ph: 1800 633 937
<b>Safe at Home</b>	Family Violence Counselling and Support Service offers professional and specialised services to assist adults identified as victims of family violence and their children who have been affected by family violence	Ph: 1800 608 122
<b>1800 RESPECT</b>	for counselling and support 24 hours a day 7 days a week	Ph: 1800 737 732
<b>Switchboard</b>	Switchboard is a volunteer organisation which provides a free, confidential and anonymous telephone counselling, referral and information service for the Victorian and Tasmanian lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTI) communities and their supporters	Ph: 1800 184 527
<b>TasCAHRD</b>	Tasmanian Council on Aids, Hepatitis & Related Diseases	Ph: 6234 1242
<b>Tasmania Police</b> network of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Liaison Officers	to enquire about the contact details for your local LGBTI Liaison Officer	Ph: 6230 2111
<b>Working It Out</b>	Tasmania's gender, sexuality and intersex status support and education service	Email: <a href="mailto:info@workingitout.org.au">info@workingitout.org.au</a> Ph: 6231 1200
<b>Another Closet</b>	Advice	<a href="http://www.anothercloset.com.au">www.anothercloset.com.au</a>
<b>Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria</b>	Advice	<a href="http://www.dvrcv.org.au/help-advice/abuse-in-lesbian-relationships">www.dvrcv.org.au/help-advice/abuse-in-lesbian-relationships</a>

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