Can I ask…?
An alcohol and other drug clinician’s guide to addressing family and domestic violence

CHILD AWARE APPROACHES CONFERENCE
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A new resource – designed for the AOD sector

Explores the relationship between Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) and Family and Domestic Violence (FDV)

Identifies how the AOD sector can better support its clients, address family violence, and minimise harm to children
Need for a comprehensive approach to addressing family and domestic violence (FDV) across the broader welfare system

Reflected in National Policies and by some in the AOD sector

Evidence suggests many AOD clients have a history of intimate partner violence & child abuse

Impact of FDV and AOD on children well documented

Current practice suggests FDV is rarely addressed in the AOD sector
The AOD sector has been well aware of the association between FDV and AOD.

Staff & organisations not confident to address FDV – both those who experience and those who use violence.

Growing awareness that FDV:
- is a major cause of preventable harm to women and children
- may impede treatment progress with AOD issues

Addressing FDV is also part of broader goal for AOD services to be more child and family sensitive, and to contribute to the wellbeing of clients’ children.
The Resource

- Literature Review – published separately by NCETA – “Breaking the Silence”

- This Resource -
  - initial reference document
  - for use in training and development
  - assists **Workers** and **Organisations** to consider how to address practice, policy and procedures in relation to FDV
Structure of the Resource

- **Part A** - brief introduction to the relationship between AOD and FDV. More detail in the literature review
  - Breaking the Silence (Nicholas, White, Roche, Gruenert, & Lee, 2012)

- **Part B** – practical information to support AOD workers to ask about and respond to FDV

- **Part C** - policy and organisational responses
Structure of the Resource

- **Part D** - further information, context and key issues for specific client groups

- **Appendices**
  - safety checklist
  - tools
  - draft referral form
  - template for mapping local FDV services
  - links to further information and resources

- **CD-ROM** – active hyperlinks, literature review, other related resources
How was it developed?

- Literature Review
- Key Informants / Steering Group
- Focus groups with
  - people who have experienced and used family and domestic violence (Men and Women – clients of Odyssey House Victoria)
  - AOD staff
- Feedback on drafts sought from:
  - AOD staff
  - FDV staff
  - Peak bodies and researchers
Key Issues / Challenges

- Keeping it brief
- Sensitive outlining various manifestations of FDV and how AOD staff might respond
- Client choice
- The relationship between AOD and FDV:
  - causality issues not universally accepted
  - practice frameworks, ‘world views’
Key Issues / Challenges

- Implementing screening for all female clients
  - Research suggests 40-80% of female AOD clients have experienced intimate partner violence

- Screening all male clients?
  - 65% of AOD clients are men. Uncertain proportion who have used or experienced violence
  - Opportunity for intervention to identify and addressing violence used by men in their relationships
  - What expertise is required to avoid collusion, jeopardising safety?

- Asking about children?
Meeting with each program to determine appropriate level of response and training needs

Overview of the resource at a staff retreat

Identifying more skilled staff

Reviewing our policies and assessments

Training opportunities in-house & external
FDV responsible for more ill-health and premature death in Victorian women under 45 years than any other preventable risk factor.

Addressing FDV and impact on children contributes to further preventable AOD and mental health issues.

Culture change required across service system.

“Can I Ask?” is a good starting point for AOD services.

- Evidence, resources and an organisational big picture approach
- Well received to date
- Planned dissemination utilising AOD peaks, conferences, mail outs
Thanks