

Preventing domestic and family violence (DFV) in families:

What can schools and child care centres do?



Preventing domestic and family violence means stopping the violence before it starts. How can we do this? By addressing the underlying reasons that violence exists in the community including negative attitudes and beliefs.

Responsibility for preventing family violence sits with everyone. This tip sheet outlines some key actions that can be taken in schools and child care centres to prevent violence in families.

1. Promote inclusion, respect and equality

Let the school/centre community and visitors know that you welcome diversity. Display LGBTIQ+ posters, fly flags from different countries, celebrate International day of people with disability, and more!

Ensure inclusivity of the language used in classrooms (e.g avoid splitting activities by gender, teach 'family' in an inclusive way including: foster families, gay dads, single parents, step brothers and sisters).

Encourage the leadership and involvement of girls, gender diverse young people and young people with disabilities in all activities, and listen to their ideas and views.

Foster kind and supportive male peer relations which do not support aggression or discrimination.

2. Challenge discrimination including: racism, sexism and homophobia

Respond to staff and children who use discriminatory language, modelling positive ways to approach this, and have classroom discussions about inclusion.

If you overhear racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory things, model bringing it up respectfully and encourage young people to bring it up with you.

Challenge yourself, your colleagues and students to learn more about others so that you can overcome any incorrect assumptions, stereotypes or beliefs you hold about others, and share learnings with family and friends.

3. Celebrate and educate about people from a diverse range of backgrounds

Invite guest speakers from a diverse range of backgrounds and deliver workshops on different cultures, religions, abilities and more.

Celebrate histories, people and events from different backgrounds, such as by participating in Chinese New Year or Ramadan Festivities, supporting LGBTIQ+ community leaders, enjoying the Paralympics, celebrating grandparents day and sharing your favourite traditional or cultural recipes.

Read books and watch shows that educate and include a diversity of groups.

Acknowledge that everyone is different and that's something to celebrate!

4. Normalise respectful relationships

Actively model respectful interactions between yourself, students and other staff.

Lead activities on body safety and respectful relationships.

Read books about body safety and discuss with your students.

5. Educate about and embrace all gender expressions, and support gender diverse children and young people to be themselves

Research shows that breaking down traditional gender stereotypes can reduce the level of violence in the community. Encourage children of any gender to do the same activities regardless of their gender (e.g. kids of all genders express their emotions respectfully, play football or cook and care for others).

Talk with children about the language they use to understand themselves and others, their bodies, sex, gender, sexuality and relationship (in line with HPE in the Australian Curriculum).

Ensure forms and paperwork are inclusive of students and parents/carers who are intersex, sexuality and/or gender diverse (e.g. offer "gender non-binary" and "other" as options) and allow uniform options which meet student's gender identity.

6. Create a school/centre culture which says no to violence

Build support and funding for a whole-of-community approach to respectful relationships education; research shows this is most successful.

Download the resources from strongsafefamilies.online to use with your students.

Be aware that promoting respectful relationships may lead to disclosures of family violence. Establish clear referral pathways and ensure staff are adequately trained to respond. Young children may not disclose domestic and family violence, be aware of the signs.

