

## Providing domestic violence support

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### Purpose

Utilities Disputes Limited (UDL) is committed to doing all it reasonably can to support safety and wellbeing for people who are impacted by domestic violence, and to responding to people impacted by domestic violence with empathy, in a way that is safe, respectful, and non-judgmental.

### Definition of domestic violence and economic harm

In New Zealand both the terms “family violence” and “domestic violence” are commonly used. For this Policy we are using the term “domestic violence”. Domestic violence is about behaviours used within a domestic or family relationship, which includes intimate partners (or ex-partners), any family relationship, people who share a household (e.g. flatmates) and any two people with a close, personal relationship. Domestic violence takes many forms, including physical violence, and emotional, psychological or financial abuse.

It is most often a pattern of behaviours that has the effect of controlling someone, and/or making them feel afraid, threatened, or intimidated, even when specific behaviours would not be perceived as abusive on their own. This pattern of abusive behaviour targets the impacted person to limit their freedom and choices and attack their dignity. Over time, abusive behaviours have a cumulative impact.

This definition of ‘domestic violence’ aligns with the legal definition of ‘family violence’ under the Family Violence Act 2018.

Economic harm is a specific form of domestic violence that controls, restricts or removes someone’s access to money, economic resources or participation in financial decisions, and which may impact on someone’s ability to access essential services such as utilities.

### Privacy and confidentiality

Any disclosures about domestic violence will be treated as private and confidential unless we believe there is a serious threat to someone’s physical safety, particularly if we believe that threat is imminent. In these situations, we will call the Police immediately on 111 to address the immediate threat to someone’s safety. We will not record or share any information relating to a disclosure about domestic

violence without explicit consent from the person making the disclosure. This process is underpinned by our [privacy statement](#).

## Response to domestic violence (non-emergency)

We will look for signs that someone may be experiencing domestic violence, which may relate to physical injuries, but also may relate to someone being coercively controlled and entrapped, for example:

- Needing agreement or approval from their partner on any financial or other decisions
- Sounding nervous
- Someone talking/shouting over them in the background or name calling
- Only being able to call in certain hours
- Anything indicating fear of, or being controlled by, their partner
- Feelings of helplessness and desperation

When we see signs that someone may be experiencing domestic violence, we will follow these steps to ask questions and offer support, if safe to do so:

### 1. Safe communication - do no harm

If we are talking to someone who may be experiencing domestic violence, we will only ask questions about the abuse if it is safe to do so, i.e. in a private setting.

We will make sure the person knows that we will not share anything they tell us about their situation unless they want us to, or unless it is an emergency situation, and someone is being hurt – or is at risk of being hurt - at that moment.

### 2. If we suspect abuse but are not sure

If we suspect that someone is experiencing domestic abuse but are not sure, we will ask questions and give the person space to talk:

**We will start with general questions.** If the answers are vague **then we will ask questions to clarify what they mean, and make questions more specific.** **If we are still not sure about what is happening, we may ask direct questions about whether they are afraid or being controlled, hurt or hit.**

If the person does not want to answer questions or tell us what's going on, that is their decision and that's okay. We will respect the person's right to make their own decisions, at their own pace.

### 3. If the answer is yes – we will respond with empathy

We will be supportive and listen without judgement. It is not our job to fix the person's situation. We will, however, **respond with empathy and offer support as is appropriate.**

### 4. Check for current safety

If the person's safety is at risk in the near future, we will offer to support them to make contact with a specialist domestic violence service. If anyone is in immediate danger, call the Police on 111.

## 5. Offer referral to specialist help

We will offer information about the following services that can provide specialist support, information and advocacy, and which also suggest or provide information about local services such as women's refuges, domestic violence advocates, and safety or non-violence programmes.

### Shine

0508 744 633

[2shine.org.nz](http://2shine.org.nz)

### Safe to Talk (sexual harm)

0800 044 334

[safetotalk.nz](http://safetotalk.nz)

### Women's Refuge

0800 733 843

[womensrefuge.org.nz](http://womensrefuge.org.nz)

### Good Shepherd (financial abuse)

0800 466 370

[www.goodshepherd.org.nz](http://www.goodshepherd.org.nz)

### Are You OK

0800 456 450

[areyouok.org.nz](http://areyouok.org.nz)

### Victims Information (Court Victim Advisers)

0800 650 654

[victimsinfo.govt.nz](http://victimsinfo.govt.nz)

Approved:



Commissioner

Effective date: 13 August 2021