



ACT
Government

ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy

Consultation draft

January 2024



Introduction

The ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy provides the ACT Government and its partners with the necessary strategic direction to prevent, address and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence in the Canberra community.

The ACT Government is committed to working in partnership with the community to prevent domestic, family and sexual violence, to hold perpetrators to account, and to ensure people impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence are effectively supported to stay safe and to heal.

The ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy (the Strategy) outlines the focus areas and the ACT Government priorities in addressing domestic, family and sexual violence over the next 10 years. The Strategy should be considered alongside the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032 (the National Plan), which provides a shared understanding of the prevalence, drivers and impacts of gender-based violence in Australia. The Strategy supports the ACT's commitment to the National Plan.

The principles outlined in the Strategy are intended to underpin the design of all actions and activities across the focus areas of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing. They provide a framework for decision-making when considering new and existing initiatives to address domestic, family and sexual violence.

Outcomes

The Strategy identifies outcomes for each of the focus areas and these outcomes directly align with the 10-year outcomes set out in the Outcomes Framework under the National Plan. The outcomes identified for each focus area provide the link between what we are doing at the local level, what we seek to do in the future, and the desired result of those actions.

Next steps



The next step is to work with the ACT community to identify actions that align with the Strategy and will deliver on the outcomes which support our commitment to addressing domestic, family and sexual violence.

This will inform the development of targeted and strategic actions to implement reform in line with identified priorities. The strategic actions will require a collective effort and be driven by close government and community sector partnerships to achieve a more effective domestic, family and sexual violence service system.

The ACT Government is committed to continued collaboration with victim-survivors, frontline service workers and others with expertise, community organisations, and the broader ACT community throughout the implementation of the Strategy.

Vision

All Canberrans live free from domestic, family and sexual violence and feel safe in their relationships, homes and communities.

When Canberrans do experience domestic, family and sexual violence, they are supported by an integrated, connected and contemporary system.



Principles

The following set of principles provide guidance to how we do our work to address domestic, family and sexual violence, and were developed in acknowledgement that addressing violence requires commitment and action from all levels of society. They provide a framework for decision-making when considering new and existing initiatives to address domestic, family and sexual violence.

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination

We work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and centre their perspectives to address matters that are important to them.

2. Gender equality

Policies, programs and initiatives are designed to address gender inequality.

3. Intersectionality and inclusion

Policies, programs and initiatives are designed with, and tailored for, people from diverse population groups and people with intersecting needs and experiences including people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTIQ+ people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and children and young people.

4. Collaboration and integration

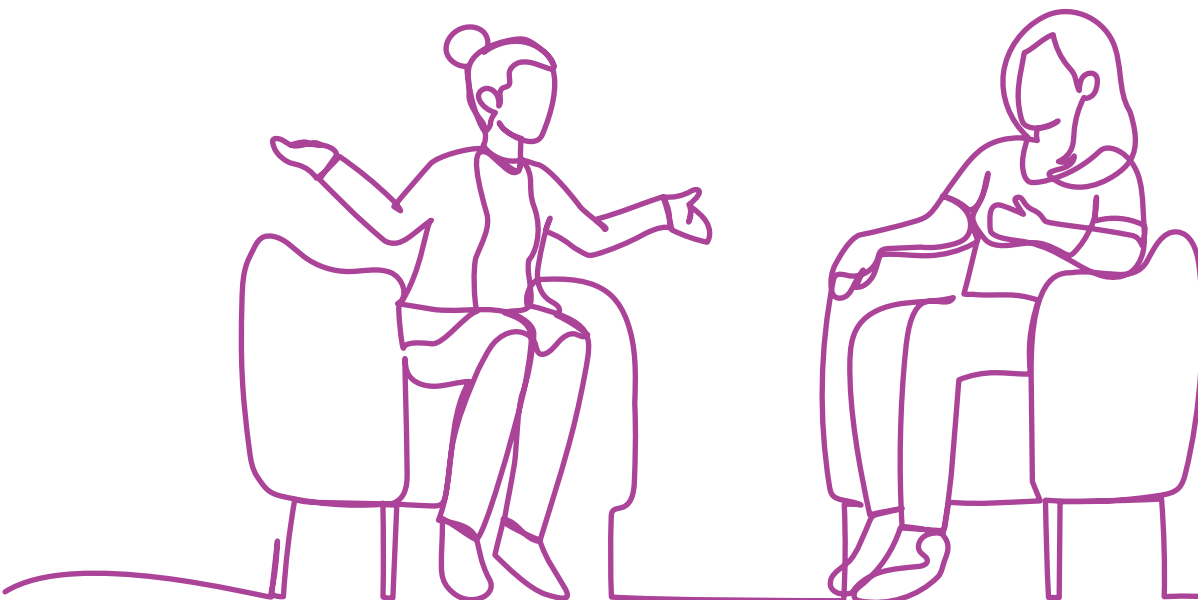
Systems, agencies and services collaborate to prevent violence, streamline service responses, keep perpetrators visible and enhance the safety of victim-survivors.

5. Victim-survivor lived experience is at the centre

The diverse voices of victim-survivors are central to the development and design of policies, programs and initiatives.

6. Perpetrator accountability

Systems, agencies and services work together to identify perpetrators, ensure perpetrators are kept visible and provide appropriate interventions to people how choose to use violence.



Focus Areas

The Focus Areas presented in this Strategy reflect the domains in the [National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032](#). The focus areas represent priority areas for action and are evidence based, spanning the continuum of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing.

1. Prevention

Prevention involves stopping domestic, family and sexual violence from occurring by addressing the drivers of violence and the structures, systems and norms which condone it. Prevention efforts can sit along a continuum and can involve primary prevention, secondary prevention or tertiary prevention initiatives.

Prevention is a whole of community responsibility requiring action from all parts of the community, including government, specialist services, business, sporting clubs, religious institutions, schools and other groups.

2. Early intervention

Early intervention aims to identify and support people at risk of, or in the early stages of experiencing or perpetrating domestic, family and sexual violence in order to stop violence from escalating, protect victim-survivors from harm and prevent violence from reoccurring. Early intervention is also referred to as secondary prevention.



3. Response

Response refers to efforts and programs used to address existing domestic, family and sexual violence. Response should be person-centred, hold perpetrators to account and support victim-survivors in a trauma-informed way. Response includes supports for victim-survivors and interventions for perpetrators. The response system captures a range of services including crisis intervention, safety planning, medical care, police responses, the criminal justice and family law systems, housing, child protection and perpetrator behaviour change programs. Responses which prevent the recurrence of violence are also referred to as tertiary prevention. To ensure it is appropriately person-centred, response efforts need to be integrated and coordinated.





4. Recovery and healing

Recovery is an ongoing process that enables victim-survivors to be safe, healthy and resilient. Recovery includes understanding, acknowledging and addressing the short-term, long-term and lifelong impacts for victim-survivors. Recovery and healing focus on rebuilding a victim-survivor's life, processing experiences of trauma and achieving long-term health and wellbeing. For some victim-survivors this could look like re-building relationships, achieving economic independence, happiness and/or community connections and integration. It must be acknowledged that victim-survivors recover and heal in different ways, that recovery and healing is not a linear process and can occur alongside of early intervention and response interventions.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, healing is a holistic process, which addresses mental, physical, emotional and spiritual needs and involves connections to culture, family and Country. Healing works best when solutions are culturally strong, developed and driven at the local level, and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Strategy on a page

Vision: All Canberrans live free from domestic, family and sexual violence and feel safe in their relationships, homes and communities

| Focus Area | Objective | Future Priority Actions |
|--|---|--|
| Prevention  | <p>Prevention involves stopping domestic, family and sexual violence from occurring by addressing the drivers of violence and the structures, systems and norms which condone it. Prevention efforts can sit along a continuum and can involve primary prevention, secondary prevention or tertiary prevention initiatives.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a whole of ACT domestic, family and sexual violence prevention plan which builds and improves the ACT's prevention infrastructure. • Continuing to build the knowledge and skills of children and young people on safe, respectful and healthy relationships. • Building knowledge and awareness in the community about the characteristics of coercive control. • Implementing community education programs tailored to diverse communities and groups. |
| Early Intervention  | <p>Early intervention aims to identify and support people at risk of, or in the early stages of experiencing or perpetrating domestic, family and sexual violence in order to stop violence from escalating, protect victim-survivors from harm and prevent violence from reoccurring.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to build the capability and capacity of the ACT workforce to identify and respond to risk of domestic, family and sexual violence. • Delivering targeted interventions to address domestic, family and sexual violence risk factors in high-risk groups. • Enhancing mechanisms to identify and respond to people at risk of perpetrating domestic, family and sexual violence. |
| Response  | <p>Response refers to efforts and programs used to address existing domestic, family and sexual violence. Response should be person-centred, hold perpetrators to account and support victim-survivors in a trauma-informed way. The response system captures a range of services including medical care, police responses, the criminal justice and family law systems, housing, child protection and men's behaviour change programs.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring perpetrators are kept in view and perpetrator responses are targeted, prioritise victim-survivor safety and prevent further violence. • Fostering a strong, sustainable and capable domestic, family and sexual violence specialist sector. • Continuing to develop and implement integrated and innovative responses, such as the Multi-Disciplinary Centre, to bring services together so victim-survivors experience responsive, coordinated, seamless supports which are inclusive of people with diverse identities, experiences and backgrounds. • Ensuring justice responses are domestic, family and sexual violence informed, and there are alternative pathways outside the criminal justice system. |
| Recovery and healing  | <p>Recovery is an ongoing process that enables victim-survivors to be safe, healthy and resilient. Recovery includes understanding, acknowledging and addressing the short-term, long-term and lifelong impacts for victim survivors.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedding recovery and healing services in the Multi-Disciplinary Centre to provide dedicated pathways for victim-survivors, focusing on long-term recovery. • Developing community-led recovery and healing supports which meet the needs of different communities, including people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTIQ+ people and children and young people. |

Prevention

Prevention involves stopping domestic, family and sexual violence from occurring by addressing the drivers of violence and the structures, systems and norms which condone it. Prevention efforts can sit along a continuum and can involve primary prevention, secondary prevention or tertiary prevention initiatives.

What we're already doing

- > Implementing the ACT Women's Plan 2016-2026 to advance gender equality in the ACT.
- > Implementing the Capital of Equality strategy to deliver equitable outcomes for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ+) people.
- > Developing an ACT Public Service Gender Equity Strategy to prevent and respond to workplace sexual harassment.
- > Enacting Information Sharing legislative changes to improve how agencies communicate with each other.
- > Establishing an ACT Domestic and Family Violence Review (Death Review) which reviews domestic and family violence deaths or incidents of serious harm, to understand how they happened and to identify system level improvements.
- > Delivering a government-led community consent education campaign and community-led consent education initiatives to improve understanding of consent and promote a safer, more socially connected community.
- > Collaborating with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency to develop ACT reporting on gender wage gaps and workforce gender equality approaches.
- > Investing in programs delivered by community partners which educate people about domestic, family and sexual violence, to raise awareness and provide counselling and social work services, particularly for at risk communities such as LGBTIQ+ people, culturally and linguistically diverse people and people with a disability.
- > Building the capacity of community-based organisations to deliver prevention of sexual violence activities.
- > Establishing intersectional mechanisms to consult adult victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence to improve service and system responses.

Future priority actions

- > Developing a whole of ACT domestic, family and sexual violence prevention plan which builds and improves the ACT's prevention infrastructure.
- > Continuing to build the knowledge and skills of children and young people on safe, respectful and healthy relationships.
- > Building knowledge and awareness in the community about the characteristics of coercive control.
- > Implementing community education programs tailored to diverse communities and groups.

Outcomes

- > Workplaces are safe from all forms of gender-based violence and are actively preventing sexual harassment and discrimination.
- > Adults, children and young people recognise the behaviours that constitute gender-based violence and understand the long-term consequences.
- > People actively challenge damaging misconceptions about gender-based violence, such as victim-blaming and a lack of understanding of the meaning of consent.
- > People actively challenge attitudes and behaviours that enable violence including gendered stereotypes and norms, cisgenderism and heteronormativity.
- > Gender equality, positive relationships, and positive masculinities are promoted across the community.
- > Evidence informed, age appropriate, intersectional, and tailored prevention initiatives are embedded across key settings and digital spaces.
- > Agencies have built the evidence-base for all diverse population groups and forms of violence and abuse, including sharing data appropriately to drive effective policy and investment.

Early Intervention

Early intervention aims to identify and support people at risk of or in the early stages of experiencing or perpetrating domestic, family and sexual violence in order to stop violence from escalating, protect victim-survivors from harm and prevent violence from reoccurring.

What we're already doing

- > Training and upskilling community sector and frontline service staff to identify and respond to early indicators of domestic, family and sexual violence.
- > Implementing a Risk Assessment and Management Framework which assists professionals and services to assess an individual's risk of victimisation, harm lethality and escalation of violence and likelihood of perpetration, reoffending or escalation.
- > Supporting early intervention for expecting parents and new families at risk of domestic and family violence to receive free legal support in health and family service settings.
- > Enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focused early intervention through funding family-centred healing activities and yarning programs, which provide early intervention support.
- > Establishing intensive support and accommodation programs for women and children who are under restrictive visas and at risk of experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence.
- > Supporting targeted intervention programs for children and young people who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence or have used violence themselves.

Future priority actions

- > Continuing to build the capacity of the ACT workforce to identify and respond to risk of domestic, family and sexual violence.
- > Delivering targeted interventions to address domestic, family and sexual violence risk factors in high-risk groups.
- > Enhancing mechanisms to identify and respond to people at risk of perpetrating domestic, family and sexual violence.

Outcomes

- > People at risk of using violence are identified early and supported to access programs and services to change their behaviour.
- > People using violence or at risk of using violence recognise their own harmful behaviours and are supported to change through effective, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed and evidence-based interventions.
- > Adults, children and young people know how to respond or seek support when they, or someone they know, experience or witness domestic, family or sexual violence.
- > Workforces access training and information to enable the effective delivery of timely, evidence-based, culturally safe and trauma-informed services.
- > Workforce capability across systems and institutions is developed to recognise the drivers and signs of gender-based violence and to respond and refer appropriately.
- > Sector and community capacity is developed to identify and support all people impacted by violence or at risk of violence.

Response

Response refers to efforts and programs used to address existing domestic, family and sexual violence. Response should be person-centred, hold perpetrators to account and support victim-survivors in a trauma-informed way. The response system captures a range of services including medical care, police responses, the criminal justice and family law systems, housing, child protection and perpetrator behaviour change programs.

What we're already doing

- > Establishing an ACT Domestic and Family Violence Review and Sexual Assault (Police) Review, to identify system level improvements.
- > Continuing investment in the Room4Change program which supports men to reduce their use of violence.
- > Establishing a Multi-Disciplinary Centre to provide responsive, coordinated and seamless support options for victim-survivors of sexual violence.
- > Establishing the role of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors who will assist victim-survivors to navigate their support options.
- > Providing emergency accommodation, crisis support, rental subsidies and wrap-around support services for people experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence.
- > Developing the response capability and capacity of frontline services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations through increased resources.
- > Providing culturally appropriate responses to support people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, children and young people at risk of and subject to domestic, family and sexual violence, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- > Supporting male-identifying victim survivors through investment in the Service Assisting Male Survivors of Sexual Assault and establishing a Men's Sexual Assault Forum.

Future priority actions

- > Ensuring perpetrators are kept in view and perpetrator responses are targeted, prioritise victim-survivor safety and prevent further violence.
- > Fostering a strong, sustainable and capable domestic, family and sexual violence specialist sector.
- > Developing integrated and innovative responses which are inclusive of people with diverse identities, experiences and backgrounds.
- > Ensuring justice responses are domestic, family and sexual violence informed, and there are alternative pathways outside the criminal justice system.

Outcomes

- > Services work together to provide integrated and tailored responses for all people impacted by violence, including people who choose to use violence.
- > The justice system correctly identifies people who use violence and ensures they face appropriate consequences and provides opportunities for rehabilitation where appropriate.
- > People who choose to use violence are held to account through the police and justice system, with services and justice systems working together to actively identify and manage risk.
- > People impacted by violence have positive experiences and outcomes through the services and systems that respond to gender-based violence, particularly the justice system and family law.
- > Alternative approaches to justice are victim-survivor-led, culturally appropriate and prioritise the safety of survivors first

Recovery and Healing

Recovery is an ongoing process that enables victim-survivors to be safe, healthy and resilient. Recovery includes understanding, acknowledging and addressing the short-term, long-term and lifelong health impacts for victim survivors. Recovery and healing focuses on rebuilding a victim survivor's life, processing experiences of trauma and achieving long term health and wellbeing. For some victim-survivors this could look like re-building relationships, achieving economic independence, happiness and/or community connections and integration.

What we're already doing

- > Centring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by supporting initiatives which assist in the process to heal trauma and improve access of programs and safety to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.
- > Increasing access to therapeutic interventions and trauma counselling for children by investing in mobile services.
- > Investing in community building initiatives which reconnect victim-survivors to their communities, provide access to counselling and support recovery.
- > Establishing a pilot program to provide recovery and reconnection support for children and their mothers who have experienced domestic and family violence.
- > Building community outreach programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who were formerly detainees of the Alexander Maconochie Centre who have experienced domestic and family violence.

Future priority actions

- > Embedding recovery and healing services in the Multi-Disciplinary Centre to provide dedicated pathways for victim-survivors, focusing on long-term recovery.
- > Developing community-led recovery supports which meet the needs of different communities, including people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTIQI+ people and children and young people.

Outcomes

- > Within and across systems and institutions, integrated support is embedded to provide people impacted by violence with coordinated care and ongoing support to facilitate recovery and healing.
- > People impacted by violence and abuse have access to timely and ongoing supports, services, resources, and opportunities to support their long-term recovery and healing.
- > People impacted by violence have economic security and their social, cultural and economic needs are met, including being supported to access affordable, accessible and safe housing, from crisis accommodation to transitional and long-term housing.
- > Primary care-givers impacted by violence have access to supports for their own well-being, in turn supporting them to nurture the child.

