



# DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE POLICY

<b>Prepared by</b>	Safe Ministry Coordinator
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## INTRODUCTION

Orange Evangelical Church seeks to be a safe and loving church that strengthens healthy families, is free of domestic and family violence, and provides help, support and if possible, a way out for victims.

Domestic and family violence (DFV) is any behaviour in an intimate or family relationship which is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling, causing a person to live in fear. It includes physical, emotional/psychological, sexual, social, verbal, spiritual and economic abuse. Any behaviour which causes a child to hear, witness or be otherwise exposed to such abuse is also a form of DFV.

Regrettably, violence of this kind occurs not only in society but also in local churches. It often remains hidden, and many victims feel too afraid to ask for help. Churches are often ill-equipped to recognise or respond to instances of domestic and family violence in their communities.

## PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this Policy<sup>1</sup> is to protect and promote the safety and well-being of all members and regulars of Orange Evangelical Church. It expresses our condemnation of DFV in the church and the broader society, and it sets out the principles of how we will respond to incidents of DFV with sensitivity, justice and love.

## SCOPE

This Policy applies to all ministry staff, overseers, employees, members and regulars of Orange Evangelical Church. In circumstances where a DFV concern is raised about a minister or employee, this Policy should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct.

## AFFIRMATIONS AND COMMITMENTS

Because we are committed to living in godliness and holiness by the grace, joy and freedom that are in Christ Jesus, Orange Evangelical Church affirms and commits to the following:

- Every person who is part of Orange Evangelical Church has the right to expect to live in an environment of safety and care that is free of DFV.
- Family violence in all its forms is contrary to the biblical pattern of mutual love and care of each other in marriage and the home; it is never justifiable, and perpetrators must stop.
- Family violence is contrary to the standard of conduct required of disciples of the Lord Jesus, Orange Evangelical Church's values and our Code of Conduct; it is also a crime under NSW and Commonwealth laws.

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<sup>1</sup> This policy has been adapted from the FIEC template: <https://www.fiec.org.au/dv-resources>

- In our words and public statements, Orange Evangelical Church will teach that family violence is wrong and the Bible should never be used to justify or excuse any form of abuse.
- We will publish this Policy, the Code of Conduct and contact details for professional assistance regarding DFV, on our website.
- We will ensure that all ministers, overseers, employees and members who serve in leadership positions receive appropriate training in recognising and responding to DFV.
- Any minister, overseer, employee or member of Orange Evangelical Church that commits DFV is acting in breach of the Code of Conduct and may be subject to church discipline.

## CREATING A SAFE AND LOVING CHURCH

Orange Evangelical Church is committed to being a safe and loving church that:

- Recognises the inherent and equal dignity and worth of all people, including husbands, wives, and children in the family.
- Promotes a culture of healthy relationships of mutual responsibility and respect in marriages, families, and the church community.
- Strive to make all people feel welcomed, respected, and safe from violence in the home and the church.
- Strives to follow good practice in protecting those experiencing DFV.
- Refuses to condone, justify, tolerate, overlook or conceal any form of abuse.
- Enables concerns about DFV to be raised and responded to clearly, consistently and confidentially.

## RESPONDING TO FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Where Orange Evangelical Church becomes aware of an instance of DFV within our church community, the following principles will be followed:

- (a) The Senior Minister will be informed of all cases of DFV. He will work with the Congregational Minister and/or appropriate others to ensure care for the victim and action pastoral interventions for the perpetrator as outlined below.
- (b) The victim's experiences will be taken seriously, and they will be encouraged and supported to seek professional help. The victim will be also offered assistance through Christian care channels that exist within the church community.<sup>2</sup> Where the DFV constitutes criminal conduct, the victim will also be encouraged to report the matter to the police.
- (c) Only if it is deemed safe for the victim and only with the victim's consent, the person who has acted violently will be encouraged to meet with the congregational minister. Appropriate pastoral interventions will be undertaken with a focus on the well-being and safety of the victim and his or her family. Appropriate disciplinary actions will be undertaken if the person

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A and Domestic and Family Violence Guidelines

who has acted violently holds a leadership position. Any person acting violently will be encouraged to seek professional help and support as necessary.

In responding to allegations or instances of DFV, Orange Evangelical Church commits to:

- **Prioritise safety first:** ensure that victims of DFV can find safety and help as a first priority.
- **Take it seriously:** ensure that any disclosures of DFV are taken seriously and not dismissed.
- **Get help from outside authorities:** work with the appropriate statutory authorities during an investigation into DFV.
- **Keep it confidential:** respect the need for confidentiality within the bounds of Safe Ministry practice and mandatory reporting obligations.
- **Challenge with care:** carefully challenge inappropriate behaviour but only in a way that does not place any individual, especially a victim, at increased risk.

At all times, the safety of the victim is our primary concern. We will ensure that distance is kept between the victim and perpetrator and other than in mandatory reporting situations, must never take any action without the victim's consent.



## KEY CONTACTS

<p><b>1800 Respect National Helpline</b></p> <p>24-hour national number for sexual assault, DFV counselling and advice</p>	<p>1800 737 723</p> <p>1800respect.org.au</p>
<p><b>Daisy App</b></p> <p>Connects people who may experience DFV or abuse to support services in their local area</p>	<p>Free to download from iPhone App Store &amp; Android Google Play</p>
<p><b>Child Protection Helpline</b></p> <p>Contact this helpline if you think a child or young person is at risk of harm from abuse</p>	<p>NSW: 13 21 11</p>
<p><b>Lifeline</b></p> <p>24-hour telephone crisis line</p>	<p>131 114</p> <p>lifeline.org.au/get-help</p>
<p><b>No To Violence: Men's Referral Service</b></p> <p>Telephone counselling, information and referral service for men using violence in families, male victims, and for friends/relatives</p>	<p>1300 766 491</p> <p>ntv.org.au</p>
<p><b>Police</b></p> <p>24-hour emergency line where safety is at immediate risk</p>	<p>000</p>
<p><b>Safe Ministry Contacts (SMC)</b></p> <p>SMC who are non-staff members are responsible for receiving and considering complaints regarding the conduct of overseers and employees</p> <p>Contact details can be found:</p> <p><a href="https://www.oechurch.org.au/safe-ministry">https://www.oechurch.org.au/safe-ministry</a></p>	<p>Ed Springer Karina Blanch Chris Holding Kerryn Hanratty Baden Bogdanovs (non-staff)</p>

## POLICY REVIEW

The Safe Ministry Coordinator will monitor the effectiveness of this Policy annually and recommend any appropriate amendments to the Overseers.

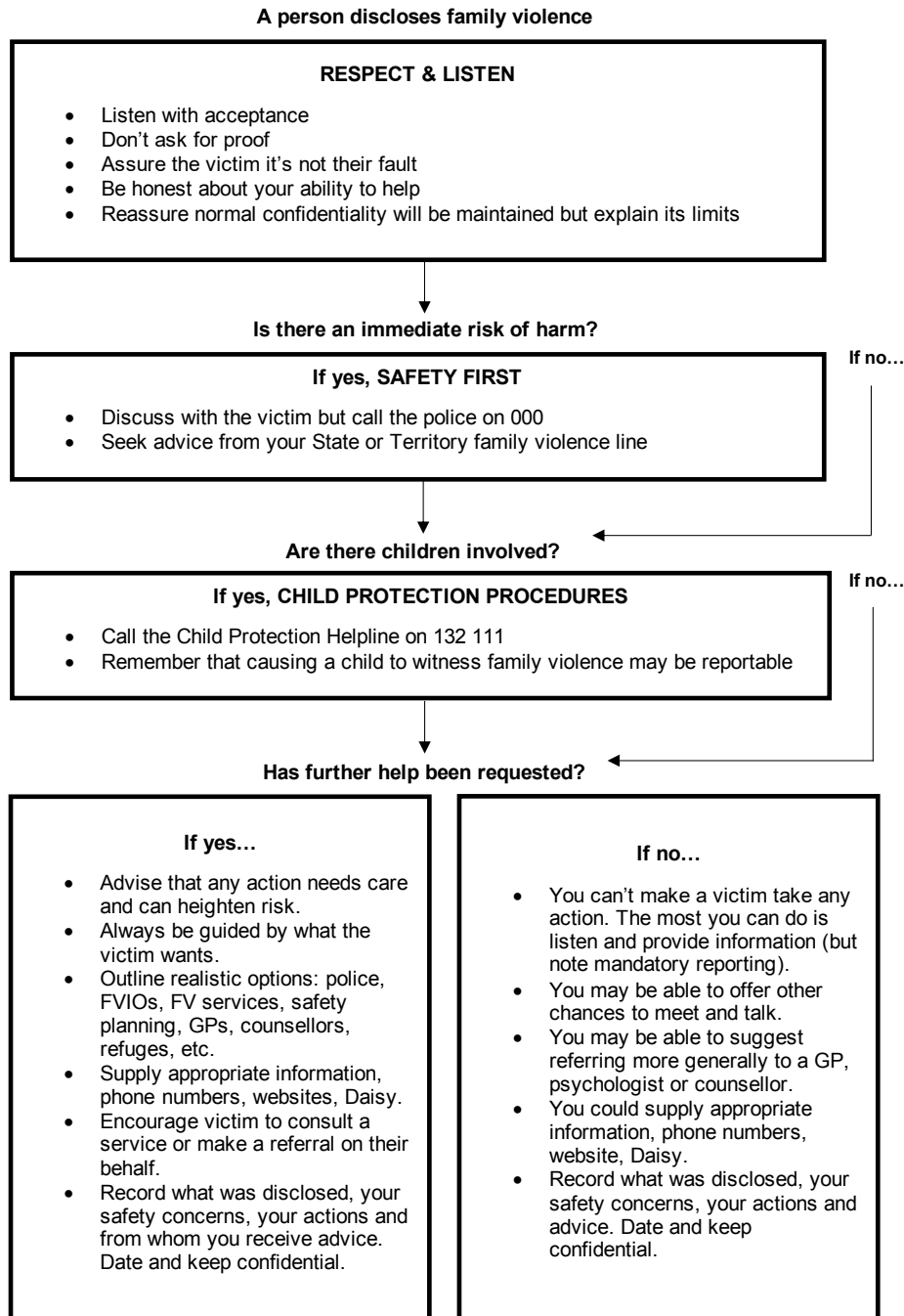
## POLICY DISTRIBUTION

All OEC staff are advised of policy updates when they are approved by the OEC Overseers.



## APPENDIX A

### Appendix A: Family Violence Reporting Flowchart





## VERSION HISTORY

Date approved	Changes
August 2024	Policy now consistent with FIEC update (with minor changes).  Policy and Guidelines separated to be distinct documents.