

Webinar 3 – Effective family violence safety planning with Indigenous families.



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Family Violence Webinar Series

Webinar 1 - 9th April, 2:30-4:30 (NSW time) - Set the Context - Indigenous Australians' experiences of family violence (available on catch up)

Webinar 2 - 1st May, 2.30-4.30pm (NSW time): Effective family violence risk assessment with Indigenous families.

Case management fundamentals for working with Indigenous families in the context of family violence Part 1: risk assessment - how to assess risk. With a focus on how VACCA does this.

Webinar 3 – 6th June, 2.30-4.30pm (NSW time): Effective family violence safety planning with Indigenous families.

Case management fundamentals for working with Indigenous families in the context of family violence Part 2: safety planning - how to develop, implement and monitor safety plans. With a focus on how VACCA does this.

Today's Webinar Topics

1. Setting the scene – Family Violence Risk Management

2. Knowledge needed to complete safety plans

3. Completing safety plans with Indigenous clients



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1. Setting the scene – Family Violence Risk Management



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Family Violence Risk Management

Family violence risk management plans should address key features of risk assessments.

- By completing a risk assessment you are able to use that information to assess the likelihood and severity of future violence and implement a risk management plan.
- Potential risk to victims and children can change rapidly, risk assessments must be monitored and reviewed regularly. The information that you gather will continue to inform risk management strategies moving forward. As the risk assessment changes this needs to be reflected in the risk management plan.
- Risk management strategies for victims of family violence include the development of risk management plans and also processes that help implement the plans to keep victims safe or help them access supports. It is important to consider that a strategy used to maximise the effectiveness of the risk management plans often includes supporting the engagement of a victim or family members with referral services and working to get a collaborative approach by all services involved.



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Family Violence Risk Management & your organisation

Like risk assessments, risk management planning is also part of an organisational and practice framework. To ensure safety of victims and manage risk effectively, it is critical that there is an alignment between professionals undertaking this work especially within the organisation but hopefully with other external professionals. Things for your organisation to consider include;

- The purpose for conducting a risk assessment and the procedures to manage identifiable risks.
- the amount of time that is reasonable to spend doing an assessment and any follow up work for referrals

Family Violence Risk Management & your organisation

Organizational contexts matter in assessing and responding to family violence, for example:

- how will immediate safety issues be addressed in the risk management plan? What are the procedures within your organisation? For both adults and children.
- Is there a process for the team leader to contact workers if they have not returned to the work place at a scheduled time? This is most relevant where there are known risks to the client and or workers.
- How will you manage differing opinions of safety between families and professionals?
- What are the current laws in your state or territory and what are you legally required to do and by when? Is your organization clear about these requirements?

Family Violence Risk Management & your organisation

Examples of broader organisational considerations

- What support and supervision process are in place to both guide staff and ensure that there is senior oversight of risk management processes.
- What are the expectations regarding case recording for risk management procedures?
- What process does the organisation and practitioner have in place to monitor risk and safety?
- Is there any legislation that the organisation needs to follow ?

What is safety?

- The main areas of safety that VACCA looks at:
 - Victim Safety –this includes looking at the victims and other vulnerable members of the family physical and emotional safety
 - Risks posed by the perpetrator-this means that to address a victims safety you need to specifically look at these risks
 - Cultural Safety-this means for Aboriginal people the way assessments and plans are developed need to reflect an understanding of cultural safety. Also, it means ensuring a victims cultural needs are considered



Safety Considerations

- Safety can mean different things for different people. It can also mean different things to victims within the same family unit.
- As professionals, we have a role to support the victims and the families we work with to avoid and/or reduce the likelihood of future family violence.
- We also have a responsibility to hold perpetrators accountable and provide them with resources and options for support.
- We also have a responsibility to work with victims and families to increase the safety of their children and reduce the likelihood of exposure of family violence.
- It is important to remember that children who live in fear and are in a constant state of alert have reduced capacity to develop well.

Client Safety

Key components of increasing the safety for the victims and families include creating a safety plan, assessing the safety risks to the victim, child, parent or others, look at the protective factors and address the gaps.

You might also plan with the victim and their family about how to access services safely. This includes where and when contact can occur, if it is safe to leave voice messages or send text messages. You might even need to support the family to make up a cover story in case they are seen with a counsellor etc..

It is important to consult with the victim about what resources or activities that would make them feel safe. For example they might suggest security cameras, sensor lights etc..



Risks posed by the perpetrator

To develop a safety plan for victims, you need to consider what are risks posed by perpetrators.

For example:

Does the perpetrator have a weapon such as a gun? Have they threatened the victim with household items that could be used as a weapon such as a hammer?

Has there been an escalation in severity and/or frequency of violence by the perpetrator?

Does the perpetrator have a pattern of past violent relationships?



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Risks posed by the perpetrator

Has the perpetrator ever harmed or threatened to harm the victim or other family members?

Has the perpetrator sexually assaulted the victim?

Does the perpetrator threaten to harm pets?

Does the perpetrator have signs of mental illness, misuse of drugs or alcohol or is unemployed?

Does the perpetrator have a history of breaching Court Orders?



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Cultural Safety

Our identity, belonging, stability and protection create meaning and connection for Aboriginal peoples,- 'cultural safety'.

Cultural safety is when respect and recognition of Aboriginal culture creates a sense of meaning and purpose for Aboriginal peoples.

For all peoples culture is essential for spiritual, emotional and social growth and maintenance.

For the Aboriginal peoples, culture is our spear and shield; our resistance and their resilience.

If we feel safe in our culture and identity in your organisations and workplaces we will flourish rather than shrink in on ourselves.

Cultural safety is required for both victims to be safe and heal and for workers to feel able to provide appropriate supports and help address vicarious trauma



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Worker wellbeing

At VACCA we understand that

- working in the family violence field can be both rewarding and challenging.
- Self care is important for the practitioner
- There may be risk to practitioners own safety and wellbeing, especially if you are working with known perpetrators of violence
- ideas to increase safety (but not limited to):
 - Senior knowledge & oversight of home visits
 - Plan for manager to call.
 - Discuss code word in case further assistance is required.
 - Two workers at home visits.
 - Don't park in driveways, if it's a risky home visit
 - Duress alarms can be installed in meeting rooms



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Worker wellbeing

Examples of self care in the work place include;

- Access debriefing
- Use supervision to plan visits and interviews if they are challenging
- Access formal services such as EAP if they are available
- Use supervision as a means of self reflection
- Utilising leave frequently



What is a safety plan?

- Safety planning is about preparing for all the ‘what if...’ scenarios that are unique to individuals. Sometimes one safety plan is appropriate for the whole family but more often than not, each family member will need their own safety plan. It is important especially that children are considered separately from the adults in safety planning.
- We also need to be mindful of the fact that sometimes young people can be both victims and perpetrators at the same time. In this case the parent/caregiver may require two separate safety plans. This would depend on the risks of each relationship. It is important to keep in mind the developmental stages of the young person.

Creating a safety plan?

- Safety plans are used to identify and document the steps that are required to reduce risk and provide a sense of safety to all victims of family violence.
- Safety plans are used to avoid serious injury, manage crisis and to ensure the safety of children.
- Safety plans should consider the physical, social, emotional, financial, cultural and psychological aspects of the victims life.



Creating a safety plan?

- Adult victims must be involved in creating safety plans and in some cases may want to create their own.
- Safety plans need to be individually tailored to victims needs.
- Safety plans should look at the safety needs of all family members, including each individual child.
- Safety plans need to be realistic and meaningful to the family.
- Safety plans need to consider online and social media safety.



Safety plans should include:

- As safety plans are created based on individual needs, each plan may look different depending on the type of violence they are experiencing.
- As a minimum, safety plans should include:
 - Contact numbers:
 - For family violence support services
 - For emergencies and/or after hours services
 - Identify a “safe place” for the victim to go if there is a crisis or they are in danger.



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Safety plans should include:

- An identified family member, friend or neighbour who can support the victim in an emergency. Staff should take note of their contact details. Plan for what kind of support would be required and able to be provided from this person and encourage the victim to discuss this with them as soon as possible.
- Plan for the victim to have access to money in an emergency. For example you might identify that the victim can save \$20 in a secret pocket somewhere in the car for emergency fuel.



Safety plans should include:

- An identified place to store important documents and valuables. This might include a storage space, a friends house etc..
- Explore the broader kinship network within the whole of community context and identify ways to reduce any potential risk and increase safety.
- A safety plan must address any barriers to the victim to implementing their safety plan. Such as arrangement for pets if they have to leave, addressing any mobility or communication difficulties etc..



Safety plans for unborn children:

- As pregnancy is a high risk time, all pregnant women should plan for the safety of their unborn baby.
- Things to address with women include:
 - strategies to enable them access to antenatal appointment
 - strategies for the physical protection of being pushed and falling and blows to the abdominal area



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Safety plans for children:

- Children may require their own safety plan. Depending on the situation, this plan might need to be shared with the child's protective parent or carer, their teachers or any others who are involved in their care.
- VACCA would only give a copy of the safety plan to the child if it was safe to do so and meaningful to the child.
- The safety plan may need to be created in a format that the child can understand and relate to.



Safety plans for children:

- Things to consider when planning for children's safety:
 - safe keeping of security toys
 - availability of bottles, dummies, nappies etc.
 - copies of Family Court Orders
 - prevention of abduction



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Safety plans for children must include at a minimum:

- A safe place to go to when they feel unsafe. If the children are older talk about how they might get there and when they will go there. Have conversations about what they might need in this space and when they will know it is safe enough to leave.
- Help the child identify a trusted person to go to for help. Record their name and contact details for future reference. Ask the child what they expect the support person to do to help them.
- The child might like to develop a code word. Something they can tell a trusted person without the perpetrator's knowledge.



VACCA's Safety Plan



Safety Plan for Parents & Child/Children (Currently under review)

Name: _____ Name of children or others included in the plan: _____
Address : _____ Car make and model: _____ Rego number: _____
Phone Number: _____ Any current Court Orders: _____
Date of Safety Plan: _____
Date for review: _____



What do you do to keep yourself / children safe?

Things to consider:

What is already in place and working well?

Will/do you call Police for assistance?

Have you notified the school, childcare or kinder :

Have you provided copies of Court Order to relevant services?

What do you do when you notice a change in the perpetrators behaviour?

What will you do if he takes your car keys?

Have you told your neighbours and let them know you want them to call police etc.....

Do you have a code word to privately alert a trusted person that you are in danger?

Safety around your home

Is it safe to stay at your home?

Check environment around the house (do windows/doors lock etc)

Do you have lockable security doors (do you need locks changed?)

Think about security cameras, sensor lights etc

Ask neighbours to take notice of anything suspicious

Let people know if/when you go away

Think about an evacuation plan if needed.

VACCA's Safety Plan

Supporting people and services

Include all current support services and schools.

Include emergency, local and 24 hr state/national wide contact numbers/webchat info

For example:

- Emergency services 000
- Life Line ph. 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636
- 1800 RESPECT 1800737732
- Men's Line 1300 78 99 78

Do you have a trusted person you can talk to when you don't feel safe?

What is their address and contact number?

Can you leave personal documents with them? (eg birth certificates etc)

Name 3 people that the children feel safe with and they can go to for help

1)Name:

Address:

Contact Number:

2)Name:

Address:

Contact Number:

3)Name:

Address:

Contact Number:

If appropriate, teach children how to call emergency services and provide their address

What will you do if you have to leave your home in an emergency?

Do you have a place to go when you don't feel safe?

Where is it?

How will you get there?

Does the perpetrator know where this place is?

Have they followed you there before?

What will you do if they turn up?

Do you have a bag ready in case?

What will you do with your pets?

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Workplace safety
<p>Have you notified a trusted manager about your situation?</p> <p>Do you need to change email address, direct phone lines etc.</p> <p>Are there safety concerns between the car park and your office?</p> <p>What can other staff do to support you if the perpetrator shows up?</p>
Do you have a computer, smart phone, online activities and/or social media?
<p>Has the phone or computer been at risk of spyware?</p> <p>Talk about changing passwords to all online accounts (Centrelink, school apps etc)</p> <p>Are the kids using online games and apps?</p> <p>Deactivate accounts or check privacy settings on social media accounts (don't check in to places, make sure location settings are turned off etc)</p>
Safety at community and cultural events
<p>- things like NAIDOC, local community gatherings</p>
What could go wrong with the safety plan?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Talk about the limitations and options to the victim - Advise and plan what the victim should do if something does go wrong.
Are there any other concerns you have?
How can your worker support you with this safety plan?
Other notes

Links to Safety Plan examples

<https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/CrisisAndEmergency/FDV/Documents/2015/PracticeTool4Personalsafetyplantemplate.pdf>

https://whwest.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Safety_Plan2.pdf

<http://womenssafetyservices.com.au/index.php/safety/safety-planning-for-leaving>



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REFLECTIVE POINT

Comments and Questions



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2. Knowledge needed to complete safety plans



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What you need to know to complete safety plans with your clients

Prior to safety planning, VACCA understands that:

- Usually victims have had some form of interpersonal relationship with the perpetrator. The connection to this relationship can vary and change at any point rapidly.
- Victims will have ideas and concepts about their own safety
- Victims have usually implemented a number of tools and strategies to increase safety prior to supports from professionals. It is important to honour this and build on it if possible.



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What you need to know to complete safety plans with your clients

Key information needed for safety planning will be gathered through the risk assessment process and will include;

- Who is the perpetrator?
- What is their pattern of behaviour?
- Where are they at the present time?
- Who is the relationship between? Is there any form of dependence?



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What you need to know to complete safety plans with your clients

Key information needed for safety planning will be gathered through the risk assessment process and will include;

- What is the history of family violence
- Who are the victims and perpetrators mob and/or community connections
- How will these connections impact on the family to access services. Will it compromise safety?
- What resources are available to the victim and their family? Are the support people based in rural or regional areas and quickly accessible?



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What you need to know to complete safety plans with your clients

Key information needed for safety planning will be gathered through the risk assessment process and will include;

- Are there any Court Orders in place for the Children? Are there any contact arrangements?
- Are there siblings with different safety concerns? For example planning for the future sibling 1 might not have a relationship with the perpetrator meanwhile it might be a parent to sibling 2
- You would also want to know what impact the violence is having on access to things such as education, cultural activities and community participation/events – can these issues be addressed?

Protective Factors

It is important to understand each Victim and their families risk, in context of their individual circumstances. An important part of this can be achieved by identifying any protective factors that might mitigate current or future risk of further FV.

Protective factors are skills, strengths, resources, supports or coping strategies in individuals, families, communities or the wider society that help people deal more effectively with stressful events



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Applying Protective Factors

Workers should take each protective factor into account when conducting risk assessment/management tasks.

Workers can help victims find ways to continue to engage with their protective factors.

VACCA acknowledge that Culture and Kinship are protective factors for Aboriginal families. If a victim is required to relocate we need to explore the loss of these supports and find alternative protective factors.



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Limitations of safety planning

At VACCA we understand that the perpetrator's use of family violence is directly located in the history and impacts of colonisation, structural inequalities and gendered power relationships.

We understand that the perpetrator will not simply cease using violence because the victims have accessed supports and there is a safety plan.



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Limitations of safety planning

At VACCA we understand that

- family violence is directly related to the impacts of colonisation, structural inequalities and gendered power relationships.
- Perpetrators will not cease using violence because the victims have accessed supports and there is a safety plan.
- leaving an intimate partner relationship places victims at higher risk of life threatening family violence.
- Effective safety planning can only occur when done with the victim and is constantly reviewed.

REFLECTIVE POINT

How would you rate your knowledge of risk management & safety planning? How will you build your knowledge in this space?



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3. Completing safety plans with Indigenous clients



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What caseworkers need to consider important in safety planning

- That the safety of each individual family member has been considered and planned for.
- The safety plan has been shared with relevant services if applicable. For example children's teachers, child care providers, employers etc.
- That the plan is appropriate and relevant for the family. For example, all contact numbers are current and connected.

Cultural considerations needed when safety planning

- The victims and perpetrators connection to country
- The fear of deaths in custody
- The fear of child protection
- The fear of lateral violence
- The fear of community backlash
- If families are relocating, the need for some agencies requirement to have 'proof of Aboriginality'.



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Cultural considerations needed when safety planning

- Safety planning needs to include cultural and community events.
- The emotional and psychological barriers for those considering crisis services.
- When planning for children, how to keep them safe and connected to their family, culture and community. In particular for those that will not be living with Aboriginal care providers.
- Do not embarrass/shame the family by the question or the situation if a safety plan failed.
- Be aware that literacy levels will vary from client to client
- Not all clients are auditory based and sometimes visual or other methods or tools will need to be used



Case Study

Case Study

Kim is an Aboriginal woman who has been attending an organisation for food vouchers for years and has built an ongoing relationship with the worker. On one visit Kim asks if someone can help her with housing because she wants to get away from her partner. The worker asks further questions to identify if it is because of family violence and refers her to the family violence program.

Helen is assigned the case and organises a meeting with Kim at the mainstream office, on this day Kim has her 3 children with her as she has little family supports. At the first meeting Helen pulls out her common risk assessment tool and begins to interview Kim. She asks her very intrusive questions up front, Kim is struggling to answer them because the kids are in the room and are being quite disruptive. Through the checklist style interview Kim reveals that her partner is taking ice and there is physical violence. This is Helen's first Aboriginal client so she is also unsure of how to explore the cultural considerations for Kim so just asked the standard risk assessment questions.

After this conversation Kim went back home and Helen said she would get back to her but got overwhelmed with her case load and weeks passed by. When Helen next arranged to meet with Kim this time she appeared extremely anxious and overwhelmed with stress. Over the weekend her partner had come back to the property and threatened to kill her in front of the kids by putting a knife to her neck after she called the relationship off. To calm him down she reneged and said the relationship was back on. Kim did report it to the police but was worried about her kids being taken away from her as she was removed herself as a child and her mum is a member of the Stolen Generation.

Kim moved in with a friend and her family but the house is extremely overcrowded. Over this time Kim was also getting calls every 5 minutes from her partner and most of them threats to her and her kids lives and Kim fears he could come and take them from childcare and school so she has stopped sending them. Kim was making statements that this is the worst it has ever been but was still putting herself and kids at great risk by going back to the property knowing that he still had a key.

Questions:

- How many risk indicators did you identify in the case study?
- What did you think the worker could have done differently in the risk assessment with the Aboriginal client?



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CASE STUDY

- What safety concerns do you think Kim would be more worried about?
- If you were the worker, what areas would you think are important to cover in a safety plan?



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CASE STUDY – VACCA's approach

From a VACCA perspective, during the first session we would:

- Met Kim in a space that was comfortable for her both culturally and physically.
- Arranged for another worker to engage with the children outside of the interview (with Kim's consent).
- We would not have completed an interview type risk assessment
- We would have told Kim why we were asking her sensitive questions and acknowledged that it must be difficult for her to discuss.
- We would of spoken to Kim about the risk of further family violence
- We would of discussed risk management options (legal, counselling and other referrals) and planned for Kim's and the children's safety.
- Followed up with Kim at an agreed time.



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CASE STUDY – VACCA's approach

From a VACCA perspective, during the second session we would:

- Met Kim in a space that was comfortable for her both culturally and physically.
- Review the risk assessment from the previous session as new information had potentially altered risk.
- We would explain to Kim why we were re-assessing their risk.
- We would of spoken to Kim about the risk of further family violence
- We would discuss risk management options (legal, counselling and other referrals) and planned for Kim's and the children's safety.



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CASE STUDY – VACCA's approach

Considerations for safety planning:

- Explore how often Kim's ex-partner comes around to the house and his pattern of behaviour.
- Explore the perpetrator's weapon use. Did he already have a knife or did he reach for it because it was convenient?
- Is the friends house secure? Does he know where it is? Has he turned up there before?
- We would want to know what the Police were doing about the report.
- By Kim stating that this is the worse it has ever been, we would want to know how is it different.
- We would want to know what safety measures are in place at the childcare and school.
- Speak with Kim about the risks to her and the children if she was to return home.

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency Co-Operative Limited

*For more information about VACCA please
visit our website:*

WWW.VACCA.ORG



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