

Walking Alongside the DFSV Sector

The Role of PHNs in Responding to DFSV

What are PHNs?

Primary Health Networks (PHNs) are not for profit organisations funded by the Commonwealth Government to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the primary health care system.

Capital Health Network – ACT Primary Health Network (ACT PHN)

We work with health care providers, consumers, and sector stakeholders across the Australian Capital Territory to deliver a range of primary health care services that improves health outcomes, especially for people at increased risk of poor health. We are unique in our ability to support primary health care professionals and design services that close service gaps and deliver lasting improvements for people living in the ACT.

We analyse and integrate information and data to support health planning, and commission and deliver health services to meet the identified needs, build a sustainable workforce, and ensure people receive the right health care, in the right place, at the right time.

ACT PHN Involvement in DFSV

Leveraging our trusted working relationship with health care providers, we are in a unique position to support our primary care workforce become part of a multidisciplinary and integrated response to addressing DFSV.

Recognising DFSV as a public health issue, we are piloting an integrated model of support that embeds DFSV specialists called 'Link Workers' into primary health care services to strengthen the sector's ability to recognise, respond to, and refer people experiencing DFSV.

ACT PHN has funded and partnered with local specialist DFSV services to deliver DFSV initiatives that empower primary health care providers, such as GPs, to foster an environment where victim-survivors feel heard, believed and supported throughout their care journey.

ACT PHN DFSV Initiatives

1. **Trauma-informed DFSV training for primary care** on recognising early signs of DFSV and responding appropriately to disclosures.
2. **Tailored DFSV resources for primary care** supporting facilitation of direct referrals from primary care providers.
3. **DFSV Link Worker Support Service** providing secondary consultations, debriefing, and referral advice/support to primary care providers and enhancing service navigation for victim-survivors through facilitation of warm referrals to support services.



A Story of Impact

A patient from a culturally and linguistically diverse background told her GP that she had been experiencing depression and suicidal ideation. The GP recognised the clinical signs of DFV and gently enquired how things were at home. The patient disclosed experiencing physical violence, verbal abuse, stalking and coercive control from her partner of three years. This was the patient's first disclosure of DFV.

The GP referred the patient to the DFV Link Worker who was able to assess her needs and concerns, organise a referral for a free counselling service, and enact a self-care plan around her mental health. The Link Worker connected the patient to their service's existing internal crisis support team which enabled the patient to safely leave the relationship and apply for a Family Violence Order (FVO).



To learn more, scan the QR code or visit <https://www.chnact.org.au/for-health-professionals/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence-pilot-program/>