

Recognising and Responding to Family Violence against Male Military Members

A Guide for Male Military Personnel in NZDF

Understanding Family Violence

Family violence is a serious issue that affects individuals regardless of gender, background, or profession. For male military members, recognising and addressing family violence can be particularly challenging due to social and cultural stigma, the nature of military life, and the perception that men should embody physical and emotional strength. It has a negative impact on the mana of a person.

This resource aims to draw attention to when males are on the receiving end of family violence, what this might appear as, signs you may see, and how male experiences may be different to those of females and other gender identities.

Forms of Family Violence

Family violence can happen in different ways which may be talked about through the language of domestic abuse. Here are some key types of family violence that male military members may encounter:

- **Physical Abuse:** This includes hitting, slapping, pushing, or any other form of physical harm. Although severe physical abuse is often more recognised, milder forms can be equally damaging over time.
- **Emotional and Psychological Abuse:** This involves manipulation, degradation, and control tactics that undermine an individual's self-worth and mental health. Examples include constant criticism, name-calling, threats as well as harassment and degradation through harmful digital communication.
- **Coercive Control:** A pattern of behaviour that seeks to dominate and dictate various aspects of life, ranging from finances to personal relationships. It can include isolating the person experiencing family violence from friends and family, monitoring their movements, controlling their access to money and resources.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Any non-consensual sexual act or behaviour, such as forced or coerced sexual activities.
- **Financial Abuse:** This occurs when one partner controls all the financial resources, making the other partner financially dependent and restricting their financial freedom.

Signs of Family Violence

Recognising the signs of family violence is the first step towards seeking help. This could be for you or someone you work alongside. Here are some signs that male military members might be experiencing family violence:

- **Physical Injuries:** Unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches or other injuries that a person seems reluctant to explain.
- **Behavioural Changes:** Sudden changes in behaviour, such as withdrawal from social activities, increased worry/anxiety, or low mood/ depression.
- **Isolation:** A person may become increasingly isolated from friends, family, and colleagues, often due to their partner's controlling behaviour.
- **Low Self-Esteem:** A person may show signs of low self-esteem or self-worth, often as a result of constant criticism and belittlement.
- **Financial Dependence:** Difficulty accessing personal finances or having to ask for permission to spend money.

Unique Aspects for Male Military Members experiencing family violence

While family violence impacts both men, women, and other gender identities, the experience can differ significantly for males. Here are some unique aspects that male military members might face:

- **Social Stigma:** Men may be less likely to report abuse due to fear of not being believed or being perceived as weak, and their mana being diminished. The military culture often emphasises strength and resilience, making it harder for men to admit they are experiencing family violence.
- **Reluctance to Seek Help:** Men may fear repercussions on their military career if they seek help or report abuse. There may be concerns about being judged by peers or superiors.
- **Misunderstanding of Abuse Dynamics:** There is a common misconception that men cannot be victims of domestic abuse, especially if the partner is physically smaller or weaker. This can lead to a lack of support and resources for male victims.
- **Legal and Custody Issues:** Men may face challenges in legal proceedings, particularly in cases involving custody of children. There may be biases that favour women as primary caregivers.

Steps to Take if You Are Experiencing Family Violence

If you or someone you know is experiencing family violence, it is important to take steps to protect yourself and seek help. Here are some steps you can take:

- **Recognise the Signs:** Acknowledge that you are a victim of family violence and that it is not your fault.
- **Seek Support:** Reach out to trusted friends, family members, or colleagues. Consider speaking with a social worker, military chaplain, health professional, counsellor, or advocate who can provide confidential support.
- **Record the Abuse:** Keep a record of incidents of abuse, including dates, times, and descriptions. This can be helpful if you decide to take legal action.
- **Know Your Resources:** Familiarise yourself with resources available to you, such as military support services, civilian domestic violence services for men, and community legal aid organisations.
- **Create a Safety Plan:** Develop a plan for leaving the abusive situation safely. This may include identifying a safe place to stay, arranging transportation, and securing important documents and belongings.
- **Report the Abuse:** If you feel safe doing so, report the abuse to military authorities or civilian law enforcement. They can help you take legal action and access protective measures.

NZDF and Community Resources and Support

There are various resources available to help male military members experiencing family violence. Here are some organisations and services that can provide assistance:

- **Military Support Staff:** They offer counselling, advocacy, and support services for military families experiencing domestic violence. The staff include Social Workers, health professionals (for military members), Chaplains, and Human Resources personnel.
- **Domestic Violence Helplines:** National and local help lines provide confidential support and information for victims of domestic abuse.
- **Legal Aid Services:** Legal aid organisations can help with legal proceedings, including restraining orders and custody issues.
- **Emergency accommodation:** Agencies who provide safe housing and support services for victims of domestic abuse.
- **Mental Health Services:** Counselling and therapy can help people experiencing family violence to cope with the emotional and psychological effects of abuse.

Conclusion

Family violence is a critical issue that requires attention and action. For male military members, recognising the signs of abuse and seeking help is vital. Remember, you are not alone, and there are resources and support available to help you navigate

and overcome this challenging situation. Your safety and well-being are of utmost importance, and taking steps to address family violence is a courageous and necessary action. Together, we can work towards a safer and more supportive environment for all military members.

In New Zealand, several organisations offer support services tailored for men experiencing family violence. Here are some key resources:

Support Services:

For men specifically

Tautoko Tāne Male Survivors Aotearoa

- Enabling all male survivors of sexual abuse to access a sustainable national network of appropriate high quality support services. Male Survivors Aotearoa website for services tailored for males in regional areas
- Website: <https://tautokotane.nz>

For people of any gender identity

Safe to Talk

- free phone 0800 044 334
- Text 4334
- Email: support@safetotalk.nz

Shine

- Providing confidential family violence support, information and advice to the community
- Call [0508 744 633](tel:0508744633) (free from any phone in New Zealand)

Family Violence Information Line

- Call 0800 456 450 (0900 to 2300 all week) for information as well as services in your own region for support around domestic violence.

1737 - Need to talk

- The 1737 team provides brief counselling support, identifying key issues, helping plan some steps to take and, in many cases, connecting with more comprehensive support services available.
- Free call or free text 1737 any time, 24 hours a day

Are you ok

- Information and links to support for people experiencing family violence and their whānau. Has links to support services and information for a range of different communities e.g. rainbow, ethnic
- Website: <https://areyouok.org.nz>