

Supporting a child or young person bereaved by domestic violence homicide

Tips for professionals

This resource provides tips for any NSW professional who is in contact (brief or ongoing) with a child or young person victim-survivor whose family member was killed by a person using domestic or family violence. It was developed in partnership with child and family victim-survivors of domestic violence homicide with a genuine hope to improve the way every child or young person victim-survivor is treated and understood by responders across the NSW service system.

Thank you to Lily Greer, Kyeesha Jones, Tabitha Acret, Tatum Moore, Kylie Druett and sector colleagues for their expert input.

Culture is ever-present. It does not sit in isolation. It runs through every part of a child or young person's identity and experience. We acknowledge that systems have harmed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their communities and honour that healing is grounded in community-led care and cultural authority.



7 principles to guide how you respond

What I need is quite simple... but it's often missed.

Respect me



- Recognise me as a victim in my own right. I'm not just collateral damage
- Treat me as a rights-holder
- Notice my capability
- Never blame my family member for the perpetrator's violence.

Be curious about me



- Be interested in who I am, my hopes, my fears and what my life has been like before now
- Look beyond the loss of my family member to view my whole world - past, present and future
- Explore if I am safe and feel safe
- Don't make assumptions!

Listen to me



- Notice me, listen to me- not just the adults around me
- Give me options and a say
- Include me in conversations about my safety
- Work out my ways of sharing
- Don't be afraid to talk to me about hard things. I may be waiting for you to 'go there'.

See my culture as a part of me



- My culture and community are a part of how I grieve, heal and make sense of what's happened. Please don't treat it as optional
- Help me access cultural mourning practices in the ways that feel right for me and my family
- Work with my family and kin. Connect me with cultural supports.

Step up for me



- Be an adult I can trust - build rapport and keep your word
- Show me compassion
- Advocate for me and my family - make sure I don't fall through gaps
- Don't deny me help because I seem 'complex'. Get the advice or consultation you need to help me.

Stick with me



- Remember that I will feel this loss in different ways as I continue to grow
- Help me find a sense of purpose
- Give me reassurance about, and options for, my future
- Look beyond my behaviour.

Share with me



- Share information (with my consent) so I don't have to repeat my story
- Keep me updated. If you're updating adults, check I am being informed too
- Share power by giving me choices as much as possible
- Share with me in ways that are accessible and include me.

Assumption check

Do not assume:

- what is most important or painful to me
- that I am now safe
- that everyone in my family shares the same understanding of what happened
- that others are helping me or talking to me
- that another service will help us
- that I feel safe with the person who is caring for me
- what grief looks like and how I cope
- that my culture isn't relevant to how you help me
- how I feel about the person who killed my family member
- that the person who killed my family member no longer uses control and violence towards me
- that the person I lost is the only important thing that I have lost
- that I am okay because I am well behaved or seem fine on the outside
- that I don't want to talk about hard stuff because I am not raising it or responding on your terms
- that it gets easier.



Times that may be harder for me



- Returning to school
- If there's media attention
- If there's an arrest, hearing, inquest or inquiry
- When the perpetrator is released
- Life milestones like birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, awards, graduation, puberty.

My rights



My rights as a child or young person victim-survivor in NSW include those set out in the:

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- [NSW Charter of Victims Rights](#)

Please be familiar with these. I have the right to make a complaint if I believe my rights as a victim have not been upheld by a NSW government or government-funded organisation.

Common experiences



Sometimes, but not always, these may be my experiences -but stay curious about me. I may:

- have been subjected to their use of violence for a long time before they killed my family member
- have had to leave behind belongings, my home, my school and my friends
- have been abused or neglected in the past, and this may be continuing
- be scared of, confused and betrayed by, angry at and, maybe also feel love for, the perpetrator
- be a part of a complex family system, with difficult dynamics for me to navigate
- be living with the stigma around the homicide of my family member
- experience other forms of discrimination like racism, sexism, classism or homophobia too
- feel mixed loyalties and that I have to hold it together because others are hurting too
- have lost trust in adults, institutions and organisations for failing us
- feel guilt and responsibility about the death of my family member.

Please advocate for me



Criminal investigation

Advocate for me to be seen as a victim too. To be given proper preparation and support if I need to give a statement, to be given the opportunity to make a second statement, to receive witness support, and for my safety and criminal acts against me to be explored too.

Care and safety

Advocate for me if there are worries about my safety or care. Use your professional influence, use your Child Wellbeing Unit or MRG and reach out to family services e.g. Community and Family Support program. Check in on my safety with me, often.

Victim support

Advocate for me to get the assistance I am entitled to under the NSW Victim Support Scheme. Navigate any barriers that arise in this process by reaching out to the Victims Access Line or their Aboriginal contact line.

Culturally safe responses

Advocate for me to get a relevant cultural worker or support, interpreter and referrals across each service. But also respect my wishes if I don't want to receive support from a particular service.

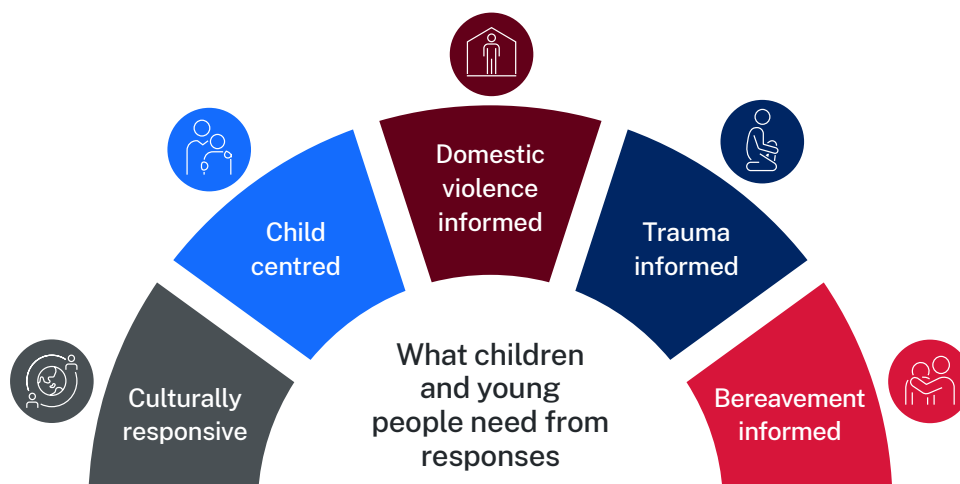
Legal assistance

Advocate for me (or my adults) to get legal advice and representation about my care and permanency. Provide information about options such as the Law Access Line or Aboriginal Legal Service.

Specialised supports

Advocate for me to access specialised supports such as Grace's Place, the Forensic Medicine Social Work Service, the National Centre of Childhood Grief or SHINE for Kids.

If you or your service don't have all the specialised skills or knowledge that I need, that's okay. Collaborate with others who do and work as a team around me.



More about my safety



- Please don't assume I am safe now that my family member has died.
- The person who used violence may still pose a risk to me, my family or others, especially before arrest or during court processes.
- Check in with me about whether I feel safe, not just whether others think I am safe.
- Think about who I am living with, who has access to me, and what is happening across both sides of my family.
- Understand that fear, threats or control may continue even if the person is not physically present.
- Work with other services to actively assess and respond to ongoing risk, don't leave this to someone else.
- Keep checking my safety over time. Things can change quickly.

If you are worried you can:

- contact your Child Wellbeing Unit if you work for NSW Police, Education or Health
- use the Mandatory Reporter Guide to consider your worries and options
- contact your local Community and Family Support service or Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
- contact the Child Protection Helpline on 13 21 11.



If the person who killed my family member is also a family member....

- I may have mixed feelings: love, anger, betrayal, fear or confusion
- Don't assume how I feel or how I should feel
- I may not be safe from them, even if they are in custody: control can continue through calls, letters or other people
- Prioritise my emotional and physical safety
- Help me make sense of it
- Be honest in ways I can understand
- Don't minimise their violence
- Help me make sense of who they are to me, over time
- I may not be able to see or speak to them straight away and if there is an ADVO protecting me I might not be able to visit them - help me understand why
- If contact happens, prepare and support me before and after
- If I don't want contact, respect this. Check in about this.

To seek advice or support for a child whose parent is in custody reach out to SHINE for Kids or Corrective Services NSW Child Protection Coordination and Support Unit.

Make information accessible to me

- Don't assume my ability
- Use clear, simple language
- Offer Easy Read or visual formats
- Use an interpreter if needed
- Give me time and check understanding
- Support how I communicate (AAC, visuals, devices)
- Include me in decisions about me.



Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children

See my culture as a part of me



- Understand that grief in my culture may look different. It might be shared, spiritual, collective and ongoing. Be aware that there may be cultural obligations my family needs to meet after a death.
- Explore with us the ways we practice Sorry Business and mourning and support me in the ways that feel right for me and my family.
- Seek supports to keep me connected to culture and navigate the ways domestic violence can fracture family and community.
- Ask who should guide decisions about mourning, ceremonies and what happens next.
- Understand that the way my family member died may have cultural impacts for me and my community.
- Be sensitive to how information is shared, including names, images or details about the person who died.
- Work with my family and community about what is appropriate to say, record or share.
- If you don't know something - just ask me and my family.

If you need advice reach out to your local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation.

Violence is not my culture. Violence is a part of colonisation.

The grief of my family member may be layered by grief of all types of other losses, over time, over generations.

'We grieve in ways that are collective, cultural, and spiritual. Through story, ceremony, yarning, art, gathering, and time on Country - we find ways to honour those we've lost and strengthen each other.'

- Walking with Grief, Yamurrah

Sorry Business



'Sorry Business' is a term used in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to describe what happens after someone passes away. It is a time for coming together, grieving, supporting each other, and honouring the person who has died. The way 'Sorry Business' is practised can vary between communities and may include different cultural rituals and responsibilities.

This conception of self is grounded within a collectivist perspective that views the self as inseparable from, and embedded within, family and community.



SEWB Diagram adapted from Gee et al, (2014). Gee, G., Dudgeon, P., Schultz, C., Hart, A., Kelly, K.. (2014). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing. In Dudgeon, P. Milroy, H. Walker, R. (Ed.), *Working together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice* Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.



Kids Helpline
1800 55 1800

NSW Domestic Violence Line
1800 65 64 63

Homicide and grief services

Grace's Place

A trauma service that supports healing for children and young people affected by homicide.
gracesplace.org.au
1800 191 777

Homicide Victims' Support Group

Supports for family and friends of homicide victims.
hvswnsw.org.au
1800 191 777

National Centre for Childhood Grief

Specialist bereavement care services for people 3 years+.
childhoodgrief.org.au
1300 654 556

NSW Forensic Medicine Social Work Service

Supports for people affected by a death reported to the Coroner.
coroners.nsw.gov.au

NSW Victim Support Scheme

Advice, counselling and financial assistance for eligible family members of homicide victims.
Victims Access Line 1800 633 063, or
Aboriginal Contact Line on 1800 019 123,
available from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday,
or email vs@dcj.nsw.gov.au

NSW Health bereavement counselling services

Please look up services available in your local health district.

Spotlight on: Child-centred practice after fatal family violence

Resources for working with children impacted by fatal family violence.
outcomes.org.au/knowledge-hub/child-centred-practice-after-fatal-family-violence/

Financial assistance

NSW Victim Support Scheme

Financial assistance, including immediate financial aid, for eligible family members of homicide victims.
Victims Access Line 1800 633 063, or
Aboriginal Contact Line on 1800 019 123,
available from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday,
or email vs@dcj.nsw.gov.au

Services Australia

Family assistance and crisis payments for eligible children, young people and caregivers.
136 150

NSW Department of Communities and Justice

Carer allowance for children and young people in OOHC and After Care assistance for young people who were in OOHC in the 12 months before they turned 18 years.

Financial assistance lines

Mob Strong Debt Help
1800 808 488

National debt Helpline
1800 007 007

Salvos Phone Assistance Line
02 8775 7988

Child safety and wellbeing

NSW Child Protection Helpline
13 21 11

If you are a mandatory reporter, please first use the MRG or contact your Child Wellbeing Unit.

Community and Family Support

CAFS links families and young people with free community-based services.
nsw.gov.au/community-services

Supports and resources



Aboriginal supports

13Yarn

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 24/7 crisis support line.
13 92 76

Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations

Find your local ACCHO by searching at
www.ahmrc.org.au/locate-a-member/

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations

Find your local child and family ACCO by searching at
www.absec.org.au

Aboriginal Funeral Transport 'Sorry Business' initiative

Transport assistance for NSW Aboriginal communities to attend funerals within NSW.
1300 361 787

Brother to brother

24/7 crisis support line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men.
1800 435 799

WellMob

Online resources about social and emotional wellbeing.
www.wellmob.org.au

Yamurrah

Booklets on navigating grief and loss, including walking alongside children.
www.yamurrah.com.au

Multicultural supports

Transcultural Mental Health Centre

works with health professionals and communities to support positive mental health for CALD people.
www.dhi.health.nsw.gov.au
1800 648 911

Multicultural NSW

Translation and interpreter services.
multicultural.nsw.gov.au

Funeral assistance

Aboriginal Funeral Transport 'Sorry Business' initiative

Transport assistance for NSW Aboriginal communities to attend funerals within NSW.
1300 361 787

NSW Victim Support Scheme

Financial assistance for funeral expenses for eligible family members of homicide victims.
Victims Access Line 1800 633 063, or
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available from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday,
or email vs@dcj.nsw.gov.au

NSW Office of the Women's Safety Commissioner

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