

Family violence support

Information for Victorian energy and water customers

→ *Your energy and water companies must provide family violence assistance to customers.*

What is family violence?

Family violence is behaviour by a family member that creates fear to control or dominate another member of the family. It can take many forms, including physical violence, sexual violence, and economic and psychological abuse.

Why these changes?

The 2016 Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence drew attention to the nature of family violence and the way it affects the lives of victim-survivors.

The Essential Services Commission (ESC), the regulator for the energy and water sectors, worked with family

violence experts to find out the role companies can play in providing safe and effective support to customers experiencing family violence.

What's EWOV's approach?

The Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV) is committed to helping victim-survivors of family violence resolve disputes with their energy and water providers. Our staff are trained to listen to victim-survivors and will consider special circumstances, such as family violence, when finding a fair and reasonable outcome to a case.

Energy

WHAT DO ENERGY COMPANIES NEED TO DO?

Your energy company now needs to provide family violence assistance to customers. It has to have a family violence policy and meet minimum standards on:



Training

It must train employees and anyone acting on its behalf about family violence and how to communicate with affected customers.



Account security

It must not give access to confidential information about an affected customer to any other person unless the customer agrees.



Customer service

It must have a secure process so that affected customers don't have to repeatedly mention their experience of family violence.



Debt management

It must recognise family violence as a potential cause of payment difficulty and take into account the potential effect of debt recovery.



External support

It must offer information about support services in a way that's safe, respectful and appropriate.



Evidence

It can only seek evidence of family violence in specific cases of debt management and recovery or disconnection (stopping the supply of energy).

WHAT DO WATER COMPANIES NEED TO DO?

Your water company needs to provide family violence assistance to customers. It has to have a family violence policy and meet minimum standards on:



Training

It must give staff ongoing training so they can identify and deal with affected customers appropriately, and apply the company's family violence policy and procedures.



Account security

It must support customer safety by handling information securely and in a way that maintains confidentiality.



Customer service

It must have a process so that affected customers don't have to repeatedly mention their experience of family violence, and so the company can offer continuity of service.



Debt management

It must outline its approach to debt management and recovery for affected customers.



External support

It must offer a way to refer customers who may be affected by family violence to specialist family violence services.



Hardship

It must recognise family violence as a potential cause of payment difficulty and as a way to access the company's hardship policy.

There's lots of help out there

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre

1800 015 188
safesteps.org.au

Victorian 24/7 telephone counselling plus practical support including refuge referral, emergency accommodation, information and support.

WIRE Women's Information

1300 134 130
wire.org.au

Victorian information service for women requiring support and referrals. Walk-in centre: 372 Spencer Street, West Melbourne. Open: Mon–Fri, 9.30am–4.30pm

Women's Legal Service Victoria

1800 133 302
womenslegal.org.au

Free and confidential legal advice. Open: Monday 10am–1pm, Tuesday–Thursday 6.30pm–8.30pm and Wednesday 2pm–5pm.

Men's Referral Service

1300 766 491

An anonymous and confidential telephone service provided for men by men. Offering a central point of contact for men who want to stop violence or abusive behaviour towards their family members.

National Debt Helpline

1800 007 007
ndhl.org.au

Free, independent and confidential financial counselling service. Open: Mon–Fri, 9.30am–4.30pm

Lifeline

13 11 14
lifeline.org.au

Provides 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Online: ewov.com.au
Freecall: 1800 500 509
Email: ewovinfo@ewov.com.au

Post: GPO Box 469, Melbourne, Victoria 3001
Translating and Interpreting Service: 131 450
National Relay Service: 133 677