



# IMPRODOVA

## Factsheet

### Support services of the social sector

#### Crisis information

Rapid access to complete, accurate and clear information is essential during a crisis for any victim who has experienced or is experiencing physical, sexual or other forms of violence, regardless of where he or she is and of the time of day or night, to help him or her to reach safety. Information shall be provided on the rights, scope and nature of the support services available, in a non-blaming and condemnatory form. The information should be provided in such a way as to enable victims to consider the range and choices available to them and to make their own decisions. The following is crucial in supporting victims of domestic violence:

- Crisis information is clear, concise and accurate.
- Information will be provided to introduce and refer to existing support services for victims of domestic violence.
- This information is available everywhere and is easily accessible to the victim.
- A wide dissemination of culturally sensitive information through different relevant media in different places and environments throughout the county/country is ensured.

#### Crisis consulting

Crisis counselling is essential to help victims to obtain immediate security, understand their rights and reduce feelings of guilt and shame. As first responders, it is important to consider a number of points:

- Offer free crisis consulting.
- Make sure that victims are listened to and believed.

- Ensure that victims are offered a range of options:
  - Immediate access to safe and secure housing
  - Immediate access to emergency care and safe medical services such as hospitals
- The possibility of contacting the service facility again, even if victims decide not to take up any of the options offered.
  - Ensure that victims are supported so that they can make informed decisions.
  - Offer crisis counselling e.g. in person, by telephone, mobile phone or e-mail.
  - Ensure that this crisis counselling is offered in different places and in different environments.

#### Hotlines

Hotlines are an important link to information, counselling and support services for victims of domestic violence. These hotlines work independently of police investigations or other telephone emergency services. Good hotlines are characterised by several aspects:

- They are free or free of charge
- They are preferably available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or at least four hours a day, including weekends and public holidays.
- Those staffing the hotlines have appropriate knowledge and skills and are trained accordingly.
- The hotlines have protocols linking them to other social services and health and justice services to respond to the individual circumstances of victims.

- They provide necessary items that are part of the immediate individual basic needs of everyday life, including food and clothing, either directly or through local services.
- They work with the police or the judicial system when asked to do so by the victim or when necessary.

### Safe accommodation

Many victims have to leave their previous living conditions immediately to be safe. Immediate and safe accommodation are safe houses or refuges, shelters or other safe spaces. In addition, victims may need assistance, including the following to find safe accommodation in the medium to long term:

- A safe and secure emergency shelter until the immediate threat is eliminated.
- A secret location.
- Security personnel and security systems.
- An access protocol for people entering and leaving a safe house.
- A protocol for unaccompanied children, including a protocol for longer-term alternative care where necessary and appropriate. This should be adapted to existing national legislation and international standards.
- The shelters are accessible to victims with disabilities.
- An assessment of the immediate needs of the victim
- An individual support plan in consultation with the victim.

### Material and financial aid

In the immediate period of the crisis, it can be assumed that the victims have little or no access to material resources. Material and financial assistance includes the necessary support and resources to provide access to crisis information and advice, safe accommodation and food.

- Support for access to the immediate individual basic needs of each victim, including access to emergency transport,

food and safe shelter provided free of charge.

- Assistance that meets the needs of each person.
- Provision of material and other non-monetary relief items, such as personal and basic medical care.
- Providing victims with a variety of ways to gain safe access to material and financial assistance.

### Legal information on domestic violence

Many victims are likely to have limited knowledge about their rights and the options available to them. Accurate and timely information on matters such as divorce/marriage laws, child custody, guardianship, migration status and assistance with all stages of police investigations and court proceedings are important to ensure the safety of victims and are provided by social services in the following form:

- Free provision of information on law and rights in domestic violence proceedings.
- Provision of information in written form (and in a language the victim understands), orally and/or in a form the victim is familiar with.
- Precise and accurate information about:
  - Available security measures that can prevent further damage by the suspected perpetrator
  - Procedures and deadlines in the national legal framework
  - Support available when formal legal proceedings or appeals are initiated
- Documentation of all legal cases of domestic violence in order to help victims with any future action they might take.

## Services for children

The direct or indirect experience of violence can have devastating effects on children. Children have the right to access services that are appropriate for children. The following must be considered when working with children:

- Provide free services for children.
- Provide services that are appropriate for children and in accordance with international standards.
- Provide counselling and psycho-social support geared to children's rights.
- Facilitate access to legal representation for children, if necessary, e.g. by a (legal) guardian if the child is unaccompanied.
- Ensure timely referral and easier access to necessary services, e.g. child protection, to clarify questions regarding guardianship, health care and education.
- Ensure that staff are trained in child-appropriate and child-friendly procedures.

## Perpetrator programs

An essential element of successful work with offenders are cooperation networks with the police, public prosecutor's office, courts, victim protection organisations, probation services, youth welfare offices, the health sector and counselling centres. In the interest of victim protection, close cooperation with regional support services and the development of common procedures in cases of domestic violence are necessary and should be encouraged. The cooperation serves the purpose of mutual information on working concepts and binding agreements on cross-case and case-related cooperation.

Offender programmes against domestic violence pursue the following goals:

- No renewed use of force: The spiral of violence must be broken permanently
- Assumption of responsibility by the perpetrator for his or her actions

- Achievement of a better self-perception and self-control
- Learning of alternative conflict resolution strategies
- Promotion of an improved ability to relate.