

PROMOTING EQUALITY AND RESPECT: AN INTERFAITH COLLABORATION ON PREVENTING FAMILY VIOLENCE

Family violence is a significant issue in our society that affects many women and children.

Family violence is any behaviour that is physically, sexually, emotionally or psychologically abusive or threatens or controls a partner or family member. These behaviours are used to dominate a family member and make them fearful.

We can stop violence against women before it occurs. This is known as prevention. We must first understand why violence against women occurs. Research tells us that violence against women is caused by:

***Inequality between men and women:** Men most often have power and influence in public life compared with women. For example, men are more likely to occupy positions of leadership in politics, business and religion. They may also have greater power and influence in private life such as in their relationships and at home.

***Expectations of the roles of men and women:**

There are particular expectations about what it means to be a man and a woman in our society. These expectations often view women as passive and as responsible for domestic duties and child care, while often viewing men as strong, tough and responsible for other duties (such as gardening).

***Attitudes and behaviours that support violence:**

There are some attitudes in our society that support men's violence against women and do not regard it as unacceptable.

To prevent violence against women, we must address gender inequality.

Faith communities can play a part in promoting equality and respect as powerful role models who provide guidance to the community.



This resource has been developed as part of the CHALLENGE Family Violence project, a partnership between City of Casey, Cardinia Shire Council, City of Greater Dandenong and Monash Health. This project has been funded under the Reducing Violence against Women and their Children grants program, part of the Victorian Government's Community Crime Prevention Program – local solutions for local crime prevention issues.



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HOW CAN FAITH AND SPIRITUAL LEADERS PROMOTE EQUALITY AND RESPECT?

1. CREATE AWARENESS

Creating awareness about family violence, violence against women and its causes is important because it is an issue that is often not talked about in public. This can be done by putting fact sheets about the issue into community newsletters, displaying posters around your place of worship or giving out flyers.



2. HAVE DISCUSSIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

Faith and spiritual leaders can start conversations about equality and respect in the roles of women and men and in the relationships they have with each other. This could be done during a message or address to the community or in a more informal way with smaller groups of community members. Be sure to include women and men in some way in these discussions.



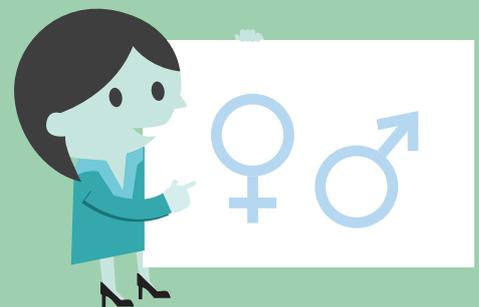
3. ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY AWARENESS

There are many community activities that are aimed at promoting respect between men and women such as White Ribbon Day on November 25 and Week Without Violence in October. Your community could participate in these or hold their own event.



4. TAKE ACTION IN THE COMMUNITY

Everyone can take action in faith communities to change their everyday practices by drawing up a community plan for equality between men and women; training new leaders about respectful relationships and educating young people.



5. BUILD PARTNERSHIPS AND ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE

Building partnerships with other faith communities and interfaith networks is a useful way to share ideas and actions about how to prevent family violence. Communities and networks could also come together to advocate for changing practices to peak faith bodies.

