

The Department want to talk to me about my children



FAMILY VIOLENCE LAW HELP

www.familyviolencelaw.gov.au



If the Department want to talk to you about your children, it means they have received a report that your children may be at risk of harm.

The Department:

- may send a caseworker to your house to talk to you or they may ask you to go to their office
- may get a caseworker to talk to your children at school. They don't need your permission to speak with your children
- can also get information about your family from your doctor, hospital, police, teachers or family members - they don't need your permission to do this.



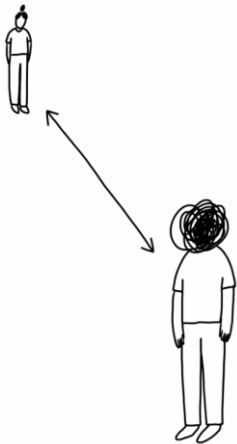
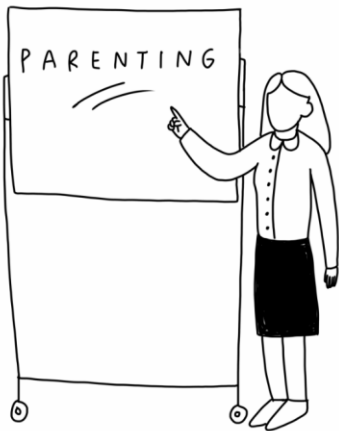
The Department won't automatically remove your children from your care because there is domestic and family violence. Children are only usually removed as a last option.

After the Department investigates a report, they may decide everything is okay. Sometimes they may want to work with your family so your children stay in your care while steps are taken to improve their safety.



It's important to try to work with the Department, even if you don't agree with the reasons they are getting involved with your family.

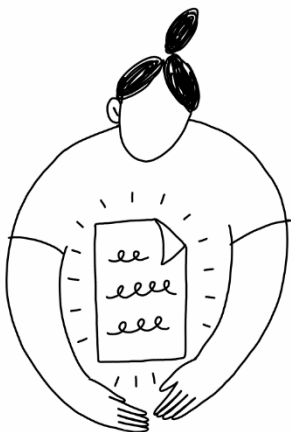
Below are some things the Department may ask you to do, depending on your situation. Every family is different. What the Department may ask you to do will depend on your case.



I've used domestic and family violence – what can the Department ask me to do?

- Do a Men's Behaviour Change Program or counselling.
- Work with a support service or do a parenting program. The Department can't force you to do this, but these services can help make things better for you and your children.
- Participate in meetings, conferences or assessments. These are different in each State and Territory, so you should get legal advice about what is involved.
- Stay away from the other person, and from your children. The Department may also ask the person who has experienced domestic and family violence to stay away from you, and to keep your children away. This could mean living separately or separating if you were in a relationship. It's important to put your children's safety first.
- Make a written agreement with the Department about your children. An agreement is different to Care Orders, which are made by a court. There are different types of agreements. They may:
 - set out things for you to do to keep your children safe
 - be for your children to live somewhere else while you complete the steps you have to take
 - only last for a set period of time.

If the Department want to enter into an agreement with you, you should get legal advice. It is important to understand what your agreement means and to make sure you can do everything you have agreed to do. If you don't want to or can't follow an agreement, you should get legal advice.



The Department may also ask the person who has experienced domestic and family violence to get a Domestic Violence Order or Parenting Order to limit your children's involvement with you and the risk of them being exposed to violence.

This may mean that your children are able to stay in the other parent's care even if you are not able to live with them. You can get legal advice about this.

If you have used violence, it can be hard to face up to how your behaviour affects your family. It takes strength to admit you need help.



If you are serious about being involved in your children's lives, you should work with the Department, get legal advice and get help.