# Client Safety Framework – quick guide

## Recognise

### Recognise the presence of safety risk indicators. Look and listen for the ABC

#### Safety risk indicator tables

| **Safety risk indicators** | **Family violence serious harm and lethality risk indicators** | **Suicide risk indicators** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Attitudes** | * entitlement * controlling behaviours **(elevated risk)** * obsession/jealousy **(elevated risk)** * no responsibility   **(All apply to perpetrators.)** | * no options/tunnel vision **(elevated risk)** * future ambivalence * resignation/hopelessness **(elevated risk)** * isolation |
| **Behaviours** | * harm: including threats **(elevated risk)** * to harm or kill **(elevated risk)** * choking **(elevated risk)** * sexual assault **(elevated risk)** * weapons (use/access) **(elevated risk)** * breaches of IO or other order * stalking **(elevated risk)** * past use of violence/family violence * suicide: threats attempts **(elevated risk)**   **(All apply to perpetrators.)** | * previous suicide attempts **(elevated risk)** * self-harm * drug or alcohol abuse or relapse * giving away prized possessions * stockpiling pills * acquiring a weapon * putting personal affairs in order, * saying goodbye to people * unexplained anger, aggression, * irritability * impulsive reckless behaviour |
| **Context** | * escalation **(elevated risk/applies to perpetrators)** * separation **(elevated risk/applies to victims and perpetrators)** * pregnancy/new birth **(elevated risk/applies to victims)** * unemployment **(elevated risk/apples to perpetrators)** * mental health **(applies to victims and perpetrators)** * substance abuse **(elevated risk/applies to victims and perpetrators)** * isolation **(applies to victims)** * openness to seeking help **(applies to victims and perpetrators)** | * loss – employment, school expulsion, * major relationship, cherished * support, bereavement * recent unwanted move – youth * and elderly * serious or terminal illness * fear of becoming a burden to others |

## Apply

### A conversation with a client to better understand safety risk indicators

Ask questions to clarify:

* nature of risk and to whom
* immediacy of risk
* impact on a client’s legal matter.

## Respond

### Take action to mitigate the safety risk with legal advice and referrals

Provide legal advice and referral that address safety risks and the client’s legal issues.

## Safety Aware Legal Practice Principles

The Safety Aware Legal Practice Principles inform how all client services are to be delivered. They are the foundation for safety-aware legal practice.

* **Be respectful:** DLHV volunteers should build trust with clients and communicate in a way that demonstrates empathy and is non-judgmental. Empower clients to make their own choices.
* **Ask the question:** If you think a client may be experiencing family violence or may be thinking of suicide, ask them directly.
* **Be alert to family violence:** Family violence is common and affects a diverse range of people. A client may present with a legal matter not directly related to family violence, but family violence may still be relevant to that client and their legal needs.
* **Understand cultural and diversity issues:** Family violence is not acceptable in any culture or group and any person experiencing violence should be given respect. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, CALD, LGBTI clients and clients with disabilities may have differing needs. Ensure your practice meets the client’s specific needs.
* **Acknowledge family violence is not acceptable:** Support people who are experiencing violence by acknowledging that violence in public or in private is not acceptable. Encourage people who acknowledge using violence to seek assistance, being mindful to not collude with violence supporting attitudes and behaviours.
* **Respond to safety risks:**
  + Be aware of your safety and the safety of your colleagues, and ensure the client’s safety is not compromised by your legal practice.
  + Discuss legal and non-legal services with your client and make referrals. Referrals may prevent the escalation of both safety and legal issues.
  + Safety risks can and do change over the course of a legal matter. Be alive to and respond to the client’s changing safety needs.

### Key Referrals

Safe Steps: **1800 015 188 24**

Men’s Referral Service: **1300 766 491**

Lifeline: **13 11 14**