



Building dental workforce capability to recognise and respond to domestic and sexual violence; a collaborative initiative between Social Work & Dentistry.

Quick Reference Guide

Educational Resource: Quick Reference Guide



Suggested scripts for communicating with patients who are victim-survivors of DSV

The following scripts can inform how you communicate with patients who are victim-survivors of DSV. These scripts are included in the suite of dentistry-specific educational resources, and are collated here for your quick reference:

- Screening
- Opening the conversation
- Risk assessment
- Confidentiality
- Potentially breaking confidentiality
- Documentation
- Trauma informed practice (following a disclosure of DSV)

Each of the following scripts are examples only, and you will need to adapt them so they sound more 'natural' to you. Each time you use these scripts with a patient, you need to consider:

- the patient's particular circumstances
- organisational policy and procedure
- State/Territory legislative requirements
- National legislative requirements
- requirements of your professional association

Example Script: Screening

"We know that many women experience violence in their relationships which can cause health, dental and other problems and ... so we ask about it routinely (or we ask all our new patient about it) ..."

"... Are you, or have you been in a relationship with someone that threatens to, or has hurt you in any way?"

Note: You could add an explanation of different types of DSV. "For example, this may mean feeling unsafe, feeling controlled, put down or it may be that you have been physically hurt."

Example Script: Opening The Conversation

"Sometimes we see this kind of injury as the result of ... Would you mind telling me a little about what happened?"

"I have noticed [outline clearly and specifically what you have observed] and I am concerned that someone may be hurting you..."

- Are you ever afraid of someone in your family or household? If so, who?
- Has someone in your family or household ever put you down, humiliated you or tried to control what you can or cannot do?
- Has someone in your family or household ever threatened to hurt you?
- Has someone in your family or household ever pushed, hit, kicked, punched or otherwise hurt you?
- Are you worried about your children or someone else in your family or your household?

Example Script: Risk Assessment

"Is this the first time something like this has happened?"

"Has the violence been increasing or happening more often?"

"Are you feeling safe enough to return home after your appointment?"

"Would you like help with any of this now?"

"Would you like me to keep a record of this for you..."

Example Script: Confidentiality And Patient Records Regarding DSV

"All information disclosed is confidential to this practice unless you tell me about current child abuse, childhood sexual abuse, or if I am concerned that you are at immediate and/or significant risk of harm to self, others or by others. Also, if you tell me any information about domestic and sexual violence, I will include this on your patient records. I know this a lot of information to go through at the beginning of an appointment. We can go over that information again, but do you have any questions at the moment?"

Example Script: Potentially Breaking Confidentiality To Report DSV Concerns To A Third Party

Note: this script will need to be adapted to reflect your state and national legislation.

"I'm really concerned about the immediate safety of you [and your children]. I know you said you will not accept a referral, and it is your right to do so. However, I will be seeking guidance from a DV service about my concerns for your safety. Based on their guidance, if the risk is assessed as high enough, I may break our confidentiality which can be done according to the legislation and provide your details and my concerns to an appropriate service so that they can intervene if necessary to try and offer you with additional support and protection. If you like I can tell you if this occurs so you know that you and your partner might be contacted by specialty services."

Example Script: Discussion On Documentation

"I will take notes about your dental health, the dental injury, and the dental procedures I do today. I can write down that information about your experiences of domestic and sexual violence. I don't have to include the details of our conversation on your file, but I do need to note that we've spoken about this today. It can be useful to keep full details for the next dentist and if you ever decide to go to the police or apply for victim support. Do you want me to include these details?"

Example Script: Trauma-Informed Practice (Following A Disclosure Of DSV)

"I'm sorry to hear that. I am glad you were able to tell me about this...

Do you feel ok to continue working with me or, if we can, do you want us to arrange for a dentist of the gender you feel more comfortable with?"

"We know there are many forms of abuse, and sometimes people find being at the dentist triggering. But first I want to check if you know of any services you can speak with for support?"
[provide referral for supports if needed]

"For the dental procedures today, I will ask you a few questions about what you know might trigger your trauma and we'll work out how we can adapt the dental procedures. There are a few adaptations we can make in our dental practices to assist in making it as comfortable as possible. I've got some suggestions to your concerns, but I would like to hear your suggestions first about what you think will help you?"

