



**Information Paper**

**Conceptual Framework  
for Family and Domestic  
Violence**

**Australia**

**2009**



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AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

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**PREFACE** .....

A central role of the ABS, as Australia's national statistical agency, is to provide information to support decisions made by governments, community groups and private organisations. In doing so, the ABS not only publishes data that describe the wellbeing of individuals and of society as a whole, but also develops tools such as conceptual and statistical frameworks and information development plans to support the further integration and development of data in particular areas of social statistics.

In 2005 the ABS released its *National Information Development Plan for Crime and Justice Statistics (NIDP) (cat. no. 4520.0)*, developed in collaboration with key stakeholders in criminal justice. One of the agreed Priorities of the NIDP was to develop an evidence base that would assist the criminal justice system to respond more effectively to family and domestic violence (FDV), and also inform prevention and intervention strategies to decrease its incidence and prevalence.

An NIDP Steering Committee, set-up to progress the Priorities of the Plan, recommended the establishment of a Family and Domestic Violence Working Group. The Working Group endorsed the development of a conceptual framework.

Given the definitional issues and the multi-disciplinary nature of FDV, a conceptual framework was seen as a tool to enable the consideration of information needs and indicators by placing agreed parameters around elements of the field of family and domestic violence. The Conceptual Framework aims to provide a basic common language to use when organising data items, indicators and information needs, to assist discussion of data requirements and existing resources.

Future statistical development work in this area will stem from this initial view of family and domestic violence concepts. As this is an evolving area of statistical development, suggestions and comments on this Paper are welcomed. Comments should be directed to: <crime.justice@abs.gov.au>.

Brian Pink  
Australian Statistician





INTRODUCTION

The term ‘Family and Domestic Violence’ (FDV) covers a wide range of abusive behaviours committed within intimate relationships such as those involving family members, children, partners, ex-partners, or caregivers. It can include many types of behaviour or threats, including: physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, verbal abuse and intimidation, economic and social deprivation, damage of personal property and abuse of power. Family and domestic violence occurs across all socioeconomic and cultural groups. However, FDV may become a more complex problem in population groups where it compounds existing social disadvantage and a lack of support.

Family and domestic violence may result in social, psychological, health and financial consequences that can have profound impacts on a victim’s quality of life. It can have a direct effect not only upon victims, their children, their families and friends, employers and co-workers, but may also have significant flow-on effects for the local and broader community. The impact of violence may include economic costs of a direct or indirect nature, such as the costs to the community of bringing perpetrators to justice, the costs of medical treatment or support services for victims, and losses in business productivity. As a substantial proportion of domestic violence incidents go unreported, however, it is difficult to measure the true extent of these impacts.

POLICY CONTEXT

Family and domestic violence is a multi-disciplinary problem, reflecting the impact these forms of violence can have on numerous aspects of both a person’s and a community’s health and wellbeing. The diversity of stakeholders and disciplines with an interest in the issue includes policy and research development and service delivery across health, welfare, community and justice services. Family and domestic violence is also an area which can overlap and interact with a range of other social issues, such as:

- social dislocation;
- socioeconomic status;
- the status of women in society;
- outcomes for children;
- the complexities facing populations such as some Indigenous communities, migrant communities, people with disabilities and older people;
- mental health issues;
- substance abuse;
- homelessness; and
- family conflict and breakdown.

In order to inform public comment and debate about FDV, and relevant policy initiatives including where best to focus activities along a continuum of prevention to intervention, both qualitative and quantitative data are required.

Each jurisdiction has its own laws and policies for responding to domestic violence, whilst the Australian Government takes a lead in developing national approaches to

## POLICY CONTEXT

*continued*

policy. It also sponsors interagency, and inter-state/territory cooperation in the development and implementation of best practice models for addressing and preventing domestic violence.

The Australian, state/territory and local governments all undertake policy and research development in relation to FDV in Australia. The states and territories are primarily responsible for the planning of crime prevention programs; law enforcement responsibilities in relation to policing and prosecuting domestic violence incidents; and direct service provision, such as specific services against domestic violence, child protection services, and planning and delivery of health, disability, and medical services. Local councils also play a lead role in reducing and preventing crime in their local communities, through programmes aimed to reduce the fear of crime and improve public awareness of crime prevention, and may include women's safety initiatives, education programmes, and Community Safety Centres. Funding for these functions is received and distributed through arrangements with both State and Federal Governments.

THE CONCEPTUAL  
FRAMEWORK FOR FAMILY  
AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*Aims of the Framework*

Due to its multi-dimensional nature, a common definition of FDV and accurate data to support the development of policy, services and responses for victims and offenders is lacking.

This Information Paper presents a Conceptual Framework for Family and Domestic Violence that will:

- identify the complexities in developing definitions of family and domestic violence, and describe the components of different definitions;
- provide a Framework and elements through which to view family and domestic violence; and
- identify the research and policy questions around family and domestic violence.

The Framework is expected to contribute to policy development and the planning and delivery of services in relation to family and domestic violence, and become a tool for further policy and program development.

*Structure of the  
Framework*

The Conceptual Framework begins with this Overview Chapter, which introduces the topic of family and domestic violence and the policy context; and presents the aims and outline of the Framework. The following Chapter outlines issues in defining and scoping FDV, and presents definitions of FDV and the associated behaviours.

Chapter 3 presents the Conceptual Framework in diagram form, and establishes the structure for the remaining Chapters. Each subsequent Chapter then further defines and explains the elements of the Framework in turn: Context; Risk; Incident; Responses; Impacts/Outcomes; and Programs, Research and Evaluation; and discusses the associated data needs and research/policy questions.

## CHAPTER 2

# ISSUES IN DEFINING FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE .....

### INTRODUCTION

One of the key challenges in measuring family and domestic violence lies in the complexity of the behavioural acts, relationships and situations that can be considered within the bounds of FDV. This chapter provides descriptions of the terminology used in relation to FDV, considers the difficulties in defining FDV, outlines the potential scope of measurement, and discusses the related statistical challenges.

### ISSUES IN DEFINING FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

#### *Issues in defining family and domestic violence*

There is no single nationally or internationally agreed definition as to what constitutes 'family violence', 'domestic violence' or any similar, related term. The broad term 'Family and Domestic Violence' is a combination of the terms 'Family Violence' and 'Domestic Violence'. These terms can be defined with reference to various contextual elements such as relationships, location of offences, and/or domestic arrangements; and may be interpreted differently depending on the particular legal, policy, service provision, or research view being taken. The use of the term 'Family and Domestic Violence' throughout this paper is therefore a reflection of the mixed use of definitions in this field.

In the criminal justice system, the legislation of each state and territory defines FDV in different ways, including or excluding various elements. The variations across jurisdictions in what constitutes FDV according to the criminal law include:

- the required relationship between victim and offender; and
- the perpetrator behaviour(s) that is recognised as FDV.

Definitions of the relationship required between victim and offender across FDV legislation can be further spilt into 'family' (i.e. based on interpersonal relationships) and 'domestic' (i.e. based on living arrangements). For example, 'family' may include such elements as:

- relatives and family members, as connected by blood or marriage, including current and past spousal relationships;
- relatives through kinship, cultural or religious grounds; and
- situations where people's lives have become enmeshed through the passage of time, trust and commitment; a level of intimacy, whether sexual or not; frequency of contact; or a level of dependency, such as in informal care arrangements between people with disabilities and their caregivers.

These relationships do not necessarily require that the victim and offender cohabit.

Conversely, 'domestic' relationships generally include those situations where two or more people live together. They may be living as a couple of the same or different sex, or in a partnership on a domestic basis such as through a family or parent-child relationship, or as friends, housemates, or other cohabitants.

*Issues in defining family  
and domestic violence  
continued*

Whilst these terms and definitions include different elements, they are generally used interchangeably across the relevant laws in each state and territory. For example, the legislation covering family violence in Victoria also includes definitions of domesticity, and South Australian domestic violence legislation additionally specifies types of family relationships. Finally, different agencies involved in service provision, policy development and research may use either term or the combination of these definitions depending on their perspective and approach to the issue, or may even use their own locally defined and relevant FDV 'language'.

Finally, the legal, service and research definitions as to what constitutes FDV - that are inherently likely to be different to one another - do not necessarily align with community understandings of FDV. Nor will they necessarily align with the perspective that victims or offenders have regarding the behaviours that may be classed as being FDV-related.

These alternative definitions contribute to a field of data in which terms can mean slightly different things to different sectors and can lead to measurements of slightly different behaviours. This produces varying understandings of prevalence and incidence rates, and other such indicators.

It is therefore clear that a number of contexts exist within which family and domestic violence may be constituted and measured, and that different definitions will likely apply across each of these. This plurality of definitions – which may be valid in their specific contexts – creates complexities in talking about, and defining, FDV.

For this reason, a Conceptual Framework for FDV needs to encompass the cross-jurisdictional differences in the relevant legislation, as well as the broader conceptual definitions that may be embraced by different services and different parts of the community. It may also need to accommodate the differences between:

- subjective definitions created by individuals, that is where those involved in the incident 'decide' to interpret what they have experienced as violence or not; and
- objective definitions, where certain classes of behaviour are defined as FDV for the purpose of crime recording and eligibility for services.

A Conceptual Framework for FDV should ultimately provide a basis for the development of a nationally agreed definition for the promotion of a consistent and comparable set of national data to inform statistics on prevalence, incidence and victimisations.

*Family and domestic  
violence definitions*

As outlined above, there are a range of ways of defining family and domestic violence, depending on the context of the inquiry. These definitions can have a broad or narrow scope, and may be focussed on legislative requirements, particular behaviours, or impacts upon victims and the community. A range of definitions are presented below.

One of the more concise definitions of family violence came from the Australian Medical Association (1998, p.1), when it made the general statement that:

"Domestic violence is an abuse of power. It is the domination, coercion, intimidation and victimisation of one person by another by physical, sexual or emotional means within intimate relationships".

A further, and more detailed, definition of family violence has been supplied by the Victorian Community Council Against Violence (2005, p.1):

*Family and domestic violence definitions continued*

"Family violence is coercive and controlling behaviour by a family member that causes physical, sexual and/or emotional damage to others in the family, including causing them to live in fear and threatening to harm people, pets or property. Family violence is most commonly perpetrated by one partner towards another (when it is sometimes called 'domestic violence' or 'intimate partner abuse') and/or by an adult towards a child or children. Other forms include elder abuse or sibling abuse. Whether the violence is physical, sexual or emotional, it may have long term detrimental effects."

A definition used by Access Economics (2004, p.3) in a study on the impacts of domestic violence stresses the continuum of violence, and the timeframes that can be included:

"Domestic violence occurs when one partner attempts by physical or psychological means to dominate and control the other. Domestic violence takes a number of forms. The most commonly acknowledged forms of domestic violence are: physical and sexual violence; threats and intimidation; emotional and social abuse; and financial deprivation. Domestic violence can involve a continuum of controlling behaviour and violence, which can occur over a number of years, before and after separation."

The definitions of FDV utilised tend to vary depending on the perspective and interests of the organisations that have created them. For example, health workers or social service/support workers will tend to take a more holistic approach to FDV to inform the planning and delivery of supports to people who have experienced FDV in any form. More specific definitions are generated within the criminal or civil justice systems to define offences in law. These may be more narrow in scope, and vary according to the legislation of a particular state or territory. Some behaviours within a domestic relationship, such as physical or sexual assault, are clearly defined as criminal offences that are family and domestic violence-related. The disclosure and reporting of these behaviours would lead to a legal or service provision response in most instances. Other behaviours, for example economic or emotional abuse of a partner, may be forms of abuse that are defined in the legislation of some jurisdictions (such as Tasmania), yet not in others. While incidents of these types may not result in a justice system response, they may be of significant interest in a service provision setting, or in conducting a risk assessment within the police sector. Finally, other behaviours, such as conflict in a relationship, would not necessarily be classed as a family and domestic violence behaviour, yet may be an indicator of other forms of abuse within that relationship.

These few definitions, whilst containing a number of similar themes and inclusions, highlight just some of the disparate descriptions of family or domestic violence. There are many other definitions in use across criminal law, health and welfare, service provisions, and research. Each sector has defined domestic violence according to their own specific context, frames of reference and line of enquiry. Accordingly, these definitions go some way to illustrating the complexities involved in creating a standard definition for family and domestic violence. The following section goes into some of these complexities in more detail.

*Operationalising Family and Domestic Violence*

The many ways in which family and domestic violence can occur and be perceived make it a difficult issue to measure and define. For example, a perpetrator and victim may be involved in isolated or infrequent incidents. These incidents may or may not:

- be classified as criminal by the legislation in their state/territory,

*Operationalising Family  
and Domestic Violence  
continued*

- be reported to or detected by the criminal or civil justice system,
- be addressed by services, or
- be perceived as violence by the victim and/or perpetrator.

Alternatively a perpetrator and victim may have a long history of incidents and events (which may incorporate any number of ‘types’ of FDV), any one of which may or may not be classified as criminal, be detected by the criminal or civil justice system or handled through a service agency.

Whilst an ongoing series of incidents may occur in a relationship, a criminal justice system response may be triggered by a single incident of assault. One incident may then be flagged as a family or domestic violence incident and be processed and prosecuted in isolation. In the service provider context however, the pattern of incidents, escalation and other behaviours over a period of time may be more important in determining the most appropriate response.

The scope of this Framework is not restricted to that which is criminal, becomes known to the criminal or civil justice system, or is addressed by formal services. The Framework is designed to accommodate any forms of FDV which occur – whether incidents occur on a single occasion in a relationship, or reoccur over a long period of time.

The ongoing classification of FDV incidents is made all the more difficult by the constant evolution in legislation and community perceptions as to what constitutes family and domestic violence. For example, changes to Tasmania’s Family Violence Act 2004 resulted in a widening of the range of behaviours that constituted a family violence incident in that jurisdiction. Changes to the legislation of other jurisdictions are also occurring, widening the range of behaviours that were recognised in the criminal law as a family violence incident. Legislative arrangements may influence, or have been influenced by, evolutions in community perceptions and/or changes to the range of behaviours or incidents that present to and are addressed by services.

A behaviour-based definition helps to bridge the gap between objective and subjective definitions of FDV. It can also provide a basis for comparability by allowing definitions to be based on combinations of elements that are derived from behavioural descriptions, rather than legal definitions that can vary across states and territories.

*Definitional Elements*

The following represent a more extensive set of behaviours than any one jurisdiction, sector or service provider currently recognises in local operational definitions. The elements may also need to be modified depending on the uses to which the definition may be applied or used. Regardless of the particular FDV definitions to be used, there are a number of aspects of the FDV incident that need to be specified in order to arrive at a meaningful operational definition. The two key aspects to be considered are the specific behaviours to be included, and the relationships of interest. These may vary in breadth or specificity according to the purpose of the FDV measure, and may also lead to the incorporation of other relevant elements, such as the physical location of violence. This Framework outlines these primary elements below. Through establishing a range of elements to be identified, it becomes possible for different definitions in different contexts to be established and measured using these elements.

*Definitional Elements*  
*continued*

#### BEHAVIOURAL ELEMENTS

The behavioural elements outlined below are based on a definition developed by the Australian Public Health Association (1990), and incorporate aspects defined in the FDV-related legislation of the states and territories. They reflect the more common aspects of this legislation, and may be used in attempts to measure levels of FDV and rates of incidence and prevalence.

The behaviour of perpetrators may be located on a continuum ranging from relatively minor incidents to much more serious activities over time, and can include any of the following direct or indirect behaviours:

- *Physical abuse* – actual or threatened, causing pain and injury; denial of sleep, warmth or nutrition; denial of needed medical or personal care; disablement; murder;
- *Sexual abuse* – actual or threatened, including sexual assault or sexual abuse of children; non-consensual sexual acts; forcing a person to have unsafe sex; forcing a person to take their clothes off or remain naked against their will; making a person pose for pornography; or forcing a person to watch pornography or sexual activities;
- *Psychological or emotional abuse* – actual or threatened, involving manipulative behaviour; unfairly blaming a person for adverse events or making them feel they are a problem; or constant comparisons with other people, which work to lower confidence and self-worth;
- *Verbal abuse* – actual or threatened, in private or in public, designed to humiliate, degrade, demean, intimidate, or subjugate, including the threat of physical violence;
- *Economic abuse* – actual or threatened, including deprivation of basic necessities; seizure of income or assets; withholding or controlling against a person's will their access to money, food, clothes and personal items such as car keys or bankbook; unreasonable denial of the means necessary for participation in social life; and coercion;
- *Social abuse* – actual or threatened, through forced isolation from family or friends; control of all social activity; deprivation of liberty; and deliberate creation of unreasonable dependence;
- *Property damage* – actual or threatened, including damage to a person's personal property and violence towards pets;
- *Harassment or stalking* – actual or threatened, such as constant phone calls to a workplace or home, or repeated visits to a workplace or home; and cyber-stalking.

#### RELATIONSHIP ELEMENTS

When considering the various meanings of the terminology used when discussing family and domestic violence, the relationships that can be relevant can be either broadly or narrowly defined, depending on the legal, policy or research area of interest.

Relationships that could be included in a definition are:

- Marriage;
- Defacto relationships;
- Intimate relationships, whether of a sexual nature or not;
- Parent-child relationships;
- Sibling relationships;
- Domestic relationships;

*Definitional Elements  
continued*

RELATIONSHIP ELEMENTS *continued*

- Relatives through blood, marriage, or cultural, ethnic or religious beliefs (including kinship relationships); and
- Relationships of dependency, or involving personal or financial commitment.

Abuse may also continue after a relationship break-up and as such, the relationships listed above can include those both past and present.

In addition to intimate or family relationships, some definitions of domestic violence extend to persons co-habiting, for instance, persons living in a shared house or other non-familial domestic arrangements.

Whilst family and domestic violence has often been thought of as violence between partners, FDV extends to cover instances of abuse within extended families and families defined through kinship, and the other relationship forms as listed above. Kinship relationships have dual meanings, as they are formed through cultural grounds and under cultural lore, e.g. Indigenous Australian kinship systems.

One further form of domestic violence is 'elder abuse': neglect or harm of an older person that is caused by a person with whom the older person has a domestic relationship implying trust and/or dependence. Elder abuse is not a unique or exclusive category of behaviour, but can overlap with FDV, when the abuse is perpetrated for example by a partner or other members of the older person's family, or by unpaid carers in an informal care arrangement. Similarly, child abuse and neglect can occur within more complex family violence situations, and can range from direct violence and maltreatment of a child, through to witnessing family violence in the home or between relatives. From a legal point of view, protection is often provided under specific legislation relating to the abuse of children, as well as coverage under family or domestic violence legislation. Ultimately, there is an intersection between FDV, elder, and child abuse. This Framework focusses on family and domestic violence, and the intersection of these with abuses of children and of elders.

COUNTING FAMILY AND  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

As an area of concern, family and domestic violence is a term that represents different behaviours and parameters across researchers, service providers, and multiple disciplines and jurisdictions.

The statistical challenge is to derive information and data elements that:

- cover the concepts, terminology, definitions and data items that support user-defined measures of FDV;
- appropriately capture the elements of each jurisdiction's legislation; and
- provide a tool for the capture of data required by users for development of policy at all levels of government, research and evaluation, and planning of services and service delivery.

Once appropriate data elements have been determined, it is important to give consideration to some of the methodological considerations in obtaining information about family and domestic violence, including the limitations encountered with FDV data collection, and possible data sources.



ADDITIONAL  
TERMINOLOGY USED IN  
RELATION TO FAMILY AND  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*Terminology*

*Data limitations*

PREVALENCE AND INCIDENCE

Levels of victimisation in society through family and domestic violence can be measured in multiple ways, and incidence and prevalence are both terms used in this Framework as measures of the extent to which members of the community may be victimised by FDV:

- *prevalence*: defined as the number of people in the relevant population who have experienced FDV at least once in a given period. Prevalence estimates are measures of the extent of victimisation within the community;
- *incidence*: the number of incidents of FDV that have occurred in the relevant population in a specified reference period. This measures the extent of offending behaviour within a community. Because many FDV victims experience more than one episode, incidence measures will be larger than prevalence measures.

These terms can be used in a range of different ways, depending on the FDV definition that is most relevant, and the context in which the measure is to be used.

Family and domestic violence often takes place in the private domain, and can comprise a range of illegal and legal actions and events. Any attempt to collect reliable information will encounter problems arising from issues of perception (whether an incident was FDV-related and thus whether, under a legal FDV definition, it involved the commission of one or more acts against another person or persons), and therefore of self-classification by both the victim and the perpetrator. Other issues that limit attempts to measure items of interest about FDV include the following:

- *under-reporting*: many crimes are not reported to police or other authorities, so neither the total number of victims nor the total number of perpetrators is captured in their data;
- *bidden reporting*: this may occur where a victim seeks services, or reports an incident, but does not disclose that FDV was the reason for the contact;
- *under-recording*: this occurs due to variations in the processes followed for recording incidents coming to the attention of authorities or services. There is also potential for misclassification of FDV incidents, e.g. where a victim presents as a general assault victim (not an FDV victim); and
- *counting or recording rules*: as an example, some jurisdictions' FDV-related orders also cover non FDV-related disputes, thus overstating the number of orders handed down for FDV perpetrators. For example, in Victoria, an Intervention Order may be handed down for FDV and non FDV-related incidents, such as stalking. Conversely, Apprehended Violence Orders in NSW are linked to FDV incidents. As a result, Victoria's count of Intervention Orders may not provide a good indication of FDV orders and overstate the use of these for FDV incidents. In the health system, treatment for specific injuries may be recorded without recording the cause of the injury.

It must be acknowledged that it is unlikely that the 'real number' of incidents of FDV will ever be known. Different collection vehicles, using different scopes and definitions, will often produce different levels of estimates. At the same time, these methodological issues that apply to counts of criminal incidents are compounded by the complexities of constantly evolving definitions of FDV. However, data that are currently available may

*Data limitations  
continued*

provide valuable estimates that can be used as indicators in the development of a picture of FDV within the context of the Conceptual Framework.

Further, it is important that when measuring the growth or reduction in FDV or in assessing the impact of different interactions that a common definition and collection method is used. This can be particularly difficult when the legal and other definitions used by authorities and agencies are changing over time.

*Data sources*

Any attempt to build a picture of FDV in Australia must look to include information from a number of sources. These sources can vary in quality. It is also recognised that there are many potentially useful data sources that are relatively under-utilised or are not in the public domain. Work that could be undertaken using this Framework could include the assembly of an inventory of these data sources, their definitions, methodology and quality.

The two main types of data sources that can be used to obtain information about FDV are administrative by-product data and surveys.

Administrative by-product (ABP) data can be derived from government agencies (e.g. Police, Family Courts, Child Protection Authorities) and service providers (e.g. Family Relationship Services Programs) that keep clinical, case or other administrative records about clients and the nature of their transactions with the service. Information may be extracted from these records and compiled for statistical or analytical purposes. There are advantages in using ABP data, as direct respondent burden is minimised and data are often able to be collated or provided to a central data collection agency electronically. The usefulness of ABP data can be limited by the fact that it cannot account for people who do not report to or access the services provided, and because the data focus on attributes relating only to that specific service. Additionally, the primary role of these agencies is that of service providers – not as repositories or collectors/providers of data. The nature of their services is therefore such that not all elements of the FDV Framework could be covered through the use of administrative data. This is further complicated when authorities and agencies do not record the separate elements in the incident, thus preventing comparison of data from different sources if different definitions of FDV are used.

One of the primary reasons for conducting victimisation surveys is to collect data not captured by ABP, as many victims of crime do not report their experiences to the police or other service providers. As surveys use a standard definition of incidents, they are able to measure FDV incidents that may or may not be classified as criminal across all jurisdictions or by all service providers. Comparability issues exist when attempting to align rates of FDV victimisation. There are variations in legislation between jurisdictions and services, and administrative data therefore relies on differing definitions and thresholds. Surveys are therefore useful in their ability to overcome this data issue. However surveys are still limited in that they are subject to problems of recall, disclosure and coverage. For example when being surveyed, respondents may not remember an incident of victimisation or use of a relevant service that could be reported and they may not be comfortable speaking about an incident that was particularly upsetting or confronting. No single data source can ever provide a complete picture of the occurrence of crime or the uptake and usage of services.

THE NATURE AND  
FUNCTIONS OF A  
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Frameworks are a well recognised tool used to support statistical measurement, data analysis and analytical commentary. They represent a systematic and rigorous way of thinking about an area of interest, and promote standards, consistency and comparability across data collections and between jurisdictions and sectors. They can be used to direct investigation and to assess the coverage of statistical programs.

A primary function of a conceptual framework is to map the terrain surrounding an area of interest. Each identified element can represent a specific area about which information is required. Additionally, such a framework defines the scope of enquiry, delineates important concepts, and organises these into a logical structure showing the key relationships, processes and flows that exist between elements. Successful frameworks are logical in structure, comprehensive but concise, dynamic and flexible to allow for change, and cognisant of other frameworks, classifications and standards.

A CONCEPTUAL  
FRAMEWORK FOR FAMILY  
AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

While the ABS has been involved in the development of a number of conceptual and statistical frameworks in the area of social statistics, the issues surrounding FDV do not fit easily into existing frameworks. Family and domestic violence therefore requires the development of a specific, detailed framework as it crosses a number of areas of concern and is best considered as a multi-disciplinary issue.

The Framework provides for:

- data to support the analysis of the current status of FDV as an area of social concern;
- data to support measurement of the activity and performance of the various systems that provide responses to FDV; and
- data to support the measurement of changes over time in the field of FDV.

Various units of analysis are applicable, for individual victims and offenders; from examination of specific responses and services, to analysis of communities.

OVERVIEW OF THE  
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Conceptual Framework for Family and Domestic Violence is summarised in Diagram 1 on page 13. It illustrates relationships between the key concepts and processes that exist between the elements and delineates these elements as: Context, Risk, Incident, Responses, Impacts and Outcomes, and Programs, Research and Evaluation.

The diagram does not represent the flows of individuals or linear interactions with the system, as these can occur in many different orders or combinations depending on the individual or situation. Rather, the arrows that join the various elements of enquiry when examining FDV represent the links or influences that can exist between each element and many different relationships can occur between these concepts. For example, the arrow between Context and Risk indicates that the contextual factors for an individual - whether these be environmental or psychosocial - can impact on the level of perceived

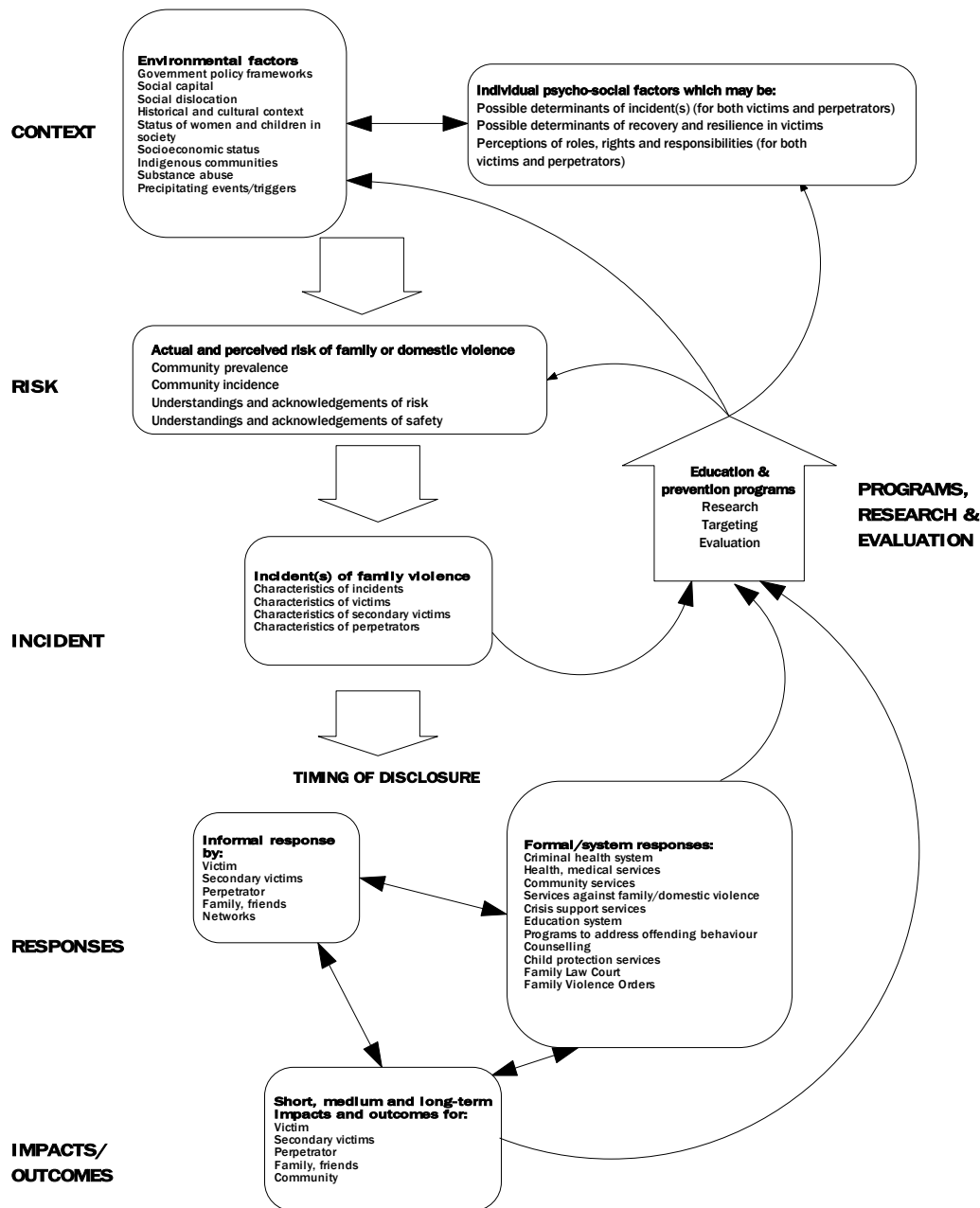
OVERVIEW OF THE  
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK  
*continued*

or actual risk or likelihood of a person being an FDV victim or offender. As a further example, a victim's response to FDV, whether through formal or informal channels, can moderate the extent or magnitude of the impacts or outcomes for them; or the impacts and outcomes may equally affect whether a victim ultimately chooses to seek services.

All areas of the Conceptual Framework can be informed by qualitative information but some areas are more easily articulated through quantitative information. The data needs identified mostly cover areas that can be measured quantitatively and are comprehensive but not exhaustive.

OVERVIEW OF THE  
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK  
*continued*

Diagram 1: A Conceptual Framework for Family and Domestic Violence



OVERVIEW

The Context element of the Framework comprises the environmental factors present at societal and community levels, and the relationships, daily events, and situations that shape individuals and their family unit or partnerships. Contextual factors relate to both potential victims and potential perpetrators and include the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, the dynamics of the family and community, and the situations in which violence can arise. Previous experiences can influence the nature of the context in which FDV may occur, and this includes the personal histories and values that each member of a family, or a relationship, brings to the context of that interaction.

The two major components of the Context element of the Framework are environmental factors and psychosocial factors, both of which need to be considered together to create a holistic picture of the context in which FDV occurs.

*Environmental factors*

The social and physical environment in which people live can affect them in different ways, one of these being the formation of attitudes. Attitudes may reflect influences such as historical and cultural background, sex and socioeconomic status. Data about environmental factors are required to inform this element of the Framework, which may then feed into the development and targeting of education and prevention policies that influence these factors where there is opportunity to do so. Quantitative data about people's social and physical environments may be useful, but these data will also be mediated by attitudes. Therefore, subjective data will also assist in describing this element.

*Psychosocial factors*

In contrast to the environmental factors that measure the broader environment in which people operate, psychosocial factors exist at the individual level and can relate to both potential victims and potential perpetrators. These factors may influence such aspects as the determinants of victimisation and offending, victims' recovery and resilience, and perceptions of rights and responsibilities.

DATA NEEDS IN RELATION TO 'CONTEXT' ELEMENT OF THE FRAMEWORK

Given that FDV is an area of interest for multiple disciplines, there are a range of different agencies and researchers that require data from across the health, welfare, community and justice sectors. Contextual factors can relate to systematic, community or individual characteristics as well as the formation and effect of attitudes.

The following contextual factors may influence the vulnerability of individuals as both victims and offenders:

- socioeconomic status;
- social dislocation;
- social and geographical isolation;
- criminal histories;
- recurrence of abuse or violence;

DATA NEEDS IN RELATION  
TO 'CONTEXT' ELEMENT  
OF THE FRAMEWORK  
*continued*

- mental health;
- patterns of substance use and abuse in the general community; and
- age-groups and population groups of interest (for example, children and youth), and by gender.

There is also interest in further understanding the dynamics involved in family or domestic relationships that may contribute to FDV for a victim or perpetrator, e.g. family breakdown, use of support networks or services, family stresses and transitions, and personal histories of mental illness, substance use and violence. Where these themes of interest overlap, there is added complexity in the analysis of family and domestic violence.

Contextual factors may also contribute towards the formation of attitudes about subpopulations and the use of violence, as well as the attitudes held within particular groups. Attitudes of particular interests that emerged in consultation with experts, key stakeholders and user were those about:

- women, children and elders;
- those within particular sub-populations (such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people with disabilities); and
- those within ethnic or religious groups.

It is acknowledged that researchers and policy developers are often interested in developing links of causality between contextual factors and the occurrence of FDV. This type of analysis requires special purpose studies that may involve a longitudinal component.

*Research/policy questions*

- What are the environmental factors that influence the societal and community context within which FDV occurs?
- What are the factors that influence community attitude formation and change?
- Where might there be opportunities to influence or change this environment?
- What environmental factors are most predictive of an increased prevalence of FDV?

POTENTIAL FACTORS  
RELATING TO 'CONTEXT'

Given that many of the components of the Context element of the Framework are not ideally suited to statistical measurement, a number of sources of information may be consulted to build an understanding of environmental and individual factors. Factors that may inform this element of the Framework will likely cover a wide range of social domains, and may not necessarily be directly related to family and domestic violence, for example:

- General social environment, attitudes and norms
- Geographical location
- Social capital
- Historical and cultural context
- Socioeconomic status
- Substance use
- Mental illness
- Family composition.

*Potential units for analysis*

In exploring contextual factors that can influence the life experiences of those effected by FDV and the attitudes held within the community, the contextual factors above may be considered for the following subpopulations of interest:

- Women
- Men
- Children and youth
- Elderly people
- People with disabilities
- Indigenous peoples
- Ethnic and religious groups.



OVERVIEW

The Risk element of the Framework describes the actual and perceived level of the risk or likelihood of FDV occurring, and relates both to potential victims and to potential perpetrators. In short, risk represents the likelihood of being a victim or an offender. To develop a general, community level indicator of current risk, data that measure past prevalence and incidence of FDV can be used. At an individual or sub-population group level, the risk or likelihood of being a victim or perpetrator of FDV can be examined in the context of factors that enhance the risk of, or protect against, FDV.

*Community level risk of family and domestic violence victimisation*

At the community level the risk or likelihood of an individual person experiencing an incident of FDV in Australia may be measured by recent past data on actual victimisation. The level of FDV victimisation in the community can be measured by both incidence and prevalence.

Community incidence is defined as the number of incidents of FDV in the relevant population in a specified reference period.

Community prevalence is defined as the number of people in the relevant population who have experienced FDV at least once. This may be recorded or estimated for a given period, since a certain age, or as lifetime experience.

Both incidence and prevalence may be expressed as a percentage, or a rate per 100,000 of the specified population for the specified reference period.

*Community level likelihood of family and domestic violence offending*

The likelihood of any individual person being a perpetrator of FDV is also of interest. However, measurement of this risk is more problematic as many perpetrators are not detected or recorded by agencies - whether by the justice system or through services related to health and welfare - and therefore reliable information about them is scarce. Furthermore, if perpetrators do come into contact with the criminal justice system or other formal processes they may not be recorded in such a way as to identify them specifically as a perpetrator of FDV as opposed to other offenders.

*Individual level risk of being a victim or offender*

When examining the risk of a particular individual being a victim of FDV, it is important to consider the contextual factors that may enhance this risk or protect against it. For example, the environment within which one lives - whether this be linked to culture or religion or socioeconomic status - may serve to increase or decrease the risk of becoming an FDV victim or offender. In this respect, the personal histories and experiences that an individual brings to their interactions with others can be viewed as risk enhancing or risk preventing. For example, an individual's personal history of violence, substance abuse or mental illness, or the presence of a disability, may be risk enhancing.

*Individual level risk of being a victim or offender continued*

The risk enhancing or protecting factors that both the potential victim and the potential offender bring to their relationship together, can then be combined to provide an indicator of the likelihood or risk of FDV in that relationship.

Risk and protective factors are also aspects of the impacts and outcomes element of the Framework, discussed later.

*Risk profiles*

The risk or likelihood of being a victim and/or perpetrator of FDV may be increased through previous exposure to family and domestic violence or other forms of violence. Information about previous exposure, for example, can feed into the formal risk assessment tools that are often utilised by agencies when determining the level of response and support required for clients. As a result, interventions can be planned to reduce the risk in individual situations.

Additionally, profiles of high-risk categories of potential perpetrators and victims may be constructed using data about known perpetrators and victims. Such data may be collected through victimisation surveys, or administrative data held by service providers. These profiles may then be used to target education campaigns and programs to influence attitudes and behaviour, and raise the awareness of people in these categories.

*Changes over time*

The risk or likelihood of being a FDV victim or offender may change over time, or as a result of mediating factors. Such factors may include increased levels of support through informal networks; or engagement with programs aimed at supporting parents, relieving stressors, improving family functioning or parental efficacy.

It is necessary to be able to track key indicators and determinants of FDV reporting to measure whether or not these are influencing apparent changes in incidence and prevalence:

- The level of reporting of FDV may change over time, independently of any change in incidence and prevalence rates, e.g. through awareness campaigns;
- The processes for translating reported incidents into recording systems may change; and
- The timing of reporting does not necessarily correspond to the timing of incident(s), e.g. current figures may be inflated by reporting of past incidents.

DATA NEEDS IN RELATION TO 'RISK' ELEMENT OF THE FRAMEWORK

Measures of the current risk of FDV can be estimated by using data on past levels of, or exposure to, FDV. Key measures required for a defined population, per defined time period, since a defined age, are:

- Number of people who have experienced FDV directly or indirectly, disaggregated by age etc;
- Prevalence rates for victimisation;
- Number of people who have committed FDV-related offences;
- Prevalence rates for offending;
- Number of incidents of FDV;
- Incidence rates (for victimisation and for perpetration); and
- Prevalence rates for people with different characteristics who may have been exposed to some mediating effect/s.

*Research/policy questions*

- How big is the problem of FDV in Australia?

*Research/policy questions  
continued*

- Does the size of the problem vary across different populations groups or communities?
- Does the risk or likelihood of being a victim/perpetrator of FDV increase or decrease significantly through engagement with services, programs and support?
- How likely is it that Australians will be a victim of FDV?
- How likely is it that Australians will be a repeat victim of FDV, and who is likely to experience repeat victimisation?
- How likely is it that Australians will commit FDV-related offences?
- How likely is it that Australians will be a repeat offender of FDV, and who is likely to re-commit these offences?
- What are the characteristics of particular sub-populations that place them at more or less risk of FDV?
- Is there change over time?
- Are victims more likely to repeatedly form relationships that are characterised by violence?
- Is FDV self-perpetuating? Are victims and witnesses of FDV more likely to become future victims or perpetrators of FDV?

MEASUREMENT OF 'RISK'

Estimates of the incidence and prevalence of family and domestic violence can be made from a number of data sources, such as police records, child protection agencies and support services. However, measurement of 'the size of the problem' is problematic due to the different pathways a reported offence may take through the criminal justice system, and attrition in the numbers of incidents and people counted at several points in a sequence of events. Measurement is also challenging when multiple services are accessed by a victim or perpetrator, whether that be within a sector (e.g. multiple health services), or across sectors (such as when a perpetrator is dealt with by the criminal justice system and the health system). For this reason, developing an accurate measure is difficult when using administrative data to indicate risk through uptake of services. Finally, it is recognised that gaining a measure of the prevalence and effects of these risk enhancing or protecting attributes is complex, and identification of specific target groups that are at risk is difficult as FDV affects all cross-sections of society. Despite these difficulties, it remains important from a research and service provider perspective to maximise data about target groups so as to better target interventions, education programs and supports and support evaluation.

Victimisation surveys provide the most comprehensive measure of the prevalence of FDV, capturing information about people who have experienced FDV regardless of whether they have reported the incident(s) to police or other services. Some information about perpetrators can also be collected via this method. Official surveys generally only ask questions about FDV of adults, and some are more comprehensive sources of FDV information than others. These sources are likely to be less useful for identifying specific risk-enhancing or mitigating factors. Additionally, specific case studies may not be appropriate for collecting data in this area.

OVERLAPS, DEFICIENCIES  
AND GAPS IN THE DATA

A number of issues make it difficult to estimate the incidence and prevalence of FDV:

- Under-reporting and under-recording;
- Hidden reporting and the effects of counting or recording rules;
- The amalgamation of multiple or serial victimisations in single statistics or records;

OVERLAPS, DEFICIENCIES  
AND GAPS IN THE DATA  
*continued*

- The loss of information about offenders in victim-based records;
- Timing of recording;
- False reporting;
- Pathways of reported offences through the criminal justice system;
- Complexities in the way referrals to child protection for FDV-related incidents are made, resulting in double-counting where information is not shared between service providers;
- Difficulties in linking data to see patterns in offending or escalations in violence;
- Comparability between states and territories, across different data sources, and through the use of different recording rules; and
- A lack of data recording on specific risk factors.

Most of these issues are believed to result in significant under-estimation of levels of FDV, but some may contribute to an inflation of counts. This would be particularly the case where multiple counting of incidents across different service providers, using administrative data, could occur. It is difficult to assess the magnitude of these effects.

*Potential units for analysis*

Risk is primarily concerned with understanding the likelihood of involvement in FDV incidents and is therefore focussed upon analysis of:

- People (both victims and perpetrators of FDV); and
- Incidents (of FDV).

Investigations of risk can be focussed on particular sub-populations, such as Indigenous women, who may experience differential rates of risk. Risk can also be measured at different levels, such as population, community or individual levels (as with risk profiling).

OVERVIEW

The Incident element of the Framework provides for the description of characteristics of incidents (i.e. what happened and in what circumstances), characteristics of victims and characteristics of perpetrators.

The issues set out below have been compiled in order to identify the type of data needed to meet the information needs of researchers, policy-makers and service-providers. Detailed information about every incident is not necessarily required, nor is it generally possible to collect data with this level of coverage and detail.

*Characteristics of incident(s)*

In order to address major policy priorities, it is necessary to develop a better understanding of the nature of FDV, and thus of the relevant issues that will assist in providing appropriate services and developing education and prevention programs.

It is recognised that FDV may occur as a relatively sporadic series of incidents for some people, be they victims or perpetrators, and may be a long-term or ‘chronic’ enduring experience for others. These differences introduce statistical measurement issues when attempting to record details of victimisation(s); whether individual incidents are recorded, or whether the record is primarily based on the occurrence of incidents within a particular relationship. Measurement of different counting units at different points of the system’s processes (incidents, victims, offenders) and different reference periods (financial year, calendar year or other reporting periods) also introduce issues for measurement of incidents.

A further difficulty for the analysis of incidents by services is that data are generally collected by a number of disparate agencies. This makes building a cohesive picture of incidents complex, where data and information are not easily shared due to privacy or security issues. In addition, some aspects of FDV, such as financial deprivation, may not be easily identifiable through counts of specific incidents.

*Characteristics of victims and perpetrators*

Information relating to the characteristics of victims and to the characteristics of perpetrators can be used to identify population groups that are over-represented in either category, and to profile high-risk groups. Information can also be used to inform and educate the general public.

Another area for which an understanding of FDV incidents, victims and perpetrators is needed is the planning and provision of appropriately targeted services through various government and private systems. These services include police response, court support services, services dealing specifically with FDV, health/medical services, disability services, community services, treatment and rehabilitation programs, child protection services, and education and prevention programs. Interactions between a victim/perpetrator, family and friends, and all services, take place within the context of perceptions and beliefs about FDV as well as the fear and possibility of recurrence of

*Characteristics of victims  
and perpetrators  
continued*

violence. Specific services may be required for different groups of people affected by incidents of FDV, and the ability to appropriately recognise these people is essential for providing appropriate services to reduce negative outcomes.

DATA NEEDS IN RELATION  
TO 'INCIDENT' ELEMENT  
OF THE FRAMEWORK

There are many possible data sources relating to the 'Incident' element of the Framework, across crime and justice sources; from health and welfare sectors; through child protection authorities, particularly as a source of information regarding children witnessing violence; targeted help lines; and through administrative data from local-level services providers. It is likely, however, that not all areas of data need will be covered.

*Research/policy questions*

- What is the nature of FDV in Australia? What are the characteristics of incidents of FDV?
- What are the characteristics of victims of FDV? What are their experiences and their perceptions of FDV?
- What are the characteristics of perpetrators of FDV? What are their experiences and their perceptions of FDV?
- Are some population groups and age groups over-represented in incidents of FDV (as victims or as perpetrators)?
- In what circumstances does FDV occur?
- Are these changing over time? In what way?
- Are there any common trigger events? If so what are they, and in what proportion of cases are they a factor?
- Is there a common trajectory with FDV incidents; do they tend to escalate over time or do behaviours remain relatively stable?
- What proportion of victims respond to a period of abuse with violence, thereby becoming a perpetrator themselves?
- What proportion of FDV incidents involve secondary victims, e.g. children as witnesses?
- What is known about incidents of FDV involving parents and children? Is there a correlation between these incidents, and those in which children are witnesses to abuse between parents?

*Potential units for analysis*

In answering questions about the incident, information may be sourced from administrative records or surveys about following counting units:

- People (both victims and perpetrators of FDV);
- Incidents (of FDV); and
- Characteristics of FDV incidents.

OVERVIEW

The Framework provides for Responses to FDV to be classified as either informal or formal. Informal responses are actions that do not involve reporting to, or utilising services provided by, formal systems. Formal responses involve reporting to, or engaging services provided by, various formal systems – such as government services or other targeted, organised services. The distinction between informal and formal responses lies mainly in the service transaction, that is the requirement that payment be exchanged or records of service be maintained; and in the potential for codes of professional conduct to be involved, for example in mandatory reporting. Formal services will generally require that these functions be administered, whereas informal responses will not. As an example, both a friend or family member and a psychologist might be a source of support for a victim or perpetrator; on the one hand as an informal source of support the friend or family member would not be expected to take notes regarding the interaction or seek payment for their time, however the psychologist, as a formal support, would do both of these.

There are linkages and interactions between formal and informal responses, and between areas of response and impacts and outcomes.

Measures are needed to assess how well the systems are performing in delivering quality actions, along a continuum from prevention to intervention, to reduce the incidence of FDV and to improve outcomes for clients of those systems and the community as a whole. It is therefore also necessary to assess the types of services provided, how accessible they are, whether there is sufficient knowledge of these services, and finally the relevance of services to particular population groups of interest (e.g. migrant communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, children and youth, and people with disabilities).

*Characteristics of response(s)*

Responses are actions that may be taken following an incident of FDV. These actions may be taken by:

- the victim, family and friends, or other networks associated with the victim;
- a witness to the incident;
- the perpetrator; or
- service providers and the criminal justice system.

Any responses by people other than the victim, perpetrator or witness depend on disclosure of the event(s) to them. It may be that no action is ever taken.

Any actions taken will depend on the characteristics of individual people and the perceptions they and their community hold; for example, the degree to which FDV is ‘accepted as something that happens’, or the perceived utility of reporting incidents to formal systems or accessing formal services. Events such as changes in policies and the funding of services, and the widespread publicising of these may change a victim's

*Characteristics of response(s) continued*

willingness to come forward and report crimes. Perceptions of the seriousness of an incident of FDV and the perception of whether or not the incident was a crime will also influence any actions taken.

Much of what is known empirically about the behaviour of perpetrators following the incidence of FDV comes through the operation and analysis of perpetrator programs. Other evidence about perpetrators is known as a result of disclosure by victims. However there are still gaps in the understanding of responses and it would be useful to know more about the actions a perpetrator might take following incidents of FDV.

*Informal responses*

'Informal responses' refer to the actions a victim or perpetrator may take following an incident(s) of FDV, that do not involve reporting to or utilising services provided by an agency belonging to a formal 'system'. These responses may involve talking to someone informally, such as a family member, friend, neighbour, work colleague or religious advisor.

*Formal responses by the system*

'Formal responses' encompass the actions undertaken by a formal system following an incident(s) of FDV. These actions may be triggered by a victim or an offender, when they report to, or utilise a service provided by, a formal 'system'. Alternatively, they may be actions undertaken by the system on behalf of the individual, in response to an incident(s) that becomes known to it through other means – such as a referral from another service or process. Although there is some overlap, the relevant systems fall into three main groups:

- detection and prosecution (processes of the criminal justice system or other agencies or professionals);
- treatment and support (health services, child protection, crisis support services, community services and services dealing specifically with FDV); and
- prevention (education, prevention and treatment/rehabilitation programs).  
Education and prevention programs are covered later in the Framework.

One example of an action taken by a formal system in response to FDV is the utilisation of Family Violence Orders, which are generally made under prescribed laws of the states and territories to protect a person from FDV. They can be referred to by different names across different jurisdictions, e.g.:

- Protection Orders (QLD & ACT);
- Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (NSW);
- Intervention Orders (VIC);
- Restraining Orders (NT, SA & WA); and
- Family Violence Orders / Police Family Violence Orders (TAS).

These orders are protective functions of the justice system that prevent one person from coming within a set distance, or stalking or harassing, another person(s), and can remove a perpetrator from their home. Orders can be made by a court without the requirement of proof that an offence has been committed. Generally the order itself is a civil order, but if breached, the matter then becomes criminal. Children may be included on a parent's application for an order.

Child Protection Orders are a further type of order, made by a state or territory Children's Court Magistrate, when it is believed that a child is in need of protection from



*Formal responses by the system continued*

harm. There are a number of different types of Child Protection Orders, which may direct a parent or guardian to do specific actions, or may grant supervision of the child to a government department or other family member or person. They can also involve removing a child from the family situation. Orders may be short or long-term, possibly lasting until the young person turns 18 years of age. For a magistrate to grant a Child Protection Order, they must be sure that the child or young person is in need of protection and that the order is not more intrusive than what is needed for the child to remain safe.

Finally, some people resolve or address issues of family and domestic violence through the Family Law Courts.

Where formal, non-justice system responses are concerned, a range of services and agencies are available at the local level. Referral to these services may come from a range of sources and may for example be self-initiated, court-initiated, or as a result of mandatory reporting requirements covering professionals such as teachers suspecting cases of child abuse. These agencies, and the services they provide, include:

- *family violence services* – provide case management, emergency accommodation options, and community education supports;
- *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)* – transitional supported accommodation and related support services for women and children escaping domestic violence, or for those at risk of homelessness;
- *counselling support programs* – provide individual and group counselling for women and children;
- *family relationships centres* – information, support, referral and dispute resolution;
- *telephone help lines* – confidential counselling and a referral service for victims and perpetrators; and
- *behaviour change programs* – group programs for perpetrators that address violent behaviour, prioritising the safety of the victim and encouraging the perpetrator to take responsibility for their violence and end it; or programs for victims that empower and build confidence.

It should be noted that some behaviour that would qualify as family and domestic violence under the relevant Act might, in some service sectors, be directed to alternative formal complaints processes. For instance, incidents of abuse by carers who may also be in a familial or domestic relationship with the victim may be referred to Disability, Health or Aged Care Commissioners.

For each of the systems that provide responses to FDV, outlined above, two areas of analysis are required. The first focuses on the services provided and the utilisation of those services. The second focuses on the performance and cost of the system, of which the five major ones are:

- criminal justice system;
- health services;
- community services (including child protection and crisis support);
- services dealing specifically with FDV; and
- ancillary support services required in addition to FDV services, for instance personal care.

*Formal responses by the system continued*

For these major systems, information is needed relating to the provision and utilisation of services and the performance and cost of the system providing those services. For such analysis a count of FDV cases, rather than incidents, would more appropriately measure the demand for services. This would need to be considered in the context of a broad, system-wide approach that additionally included analysis of outcomes.

It is also very important to understand the usage of multiple services, in particular whether a victim or perpetrator might approach or use multiple services, and if so whether they reveal to each of these services that the incident is FDV-related.

One further area would include an examination of the way in which these systems interact with each other. Given the existence of multi-agency responses to FDV, an understanding of the degree to which agencies and systems operate in a co-ordinated and integrated fashion is fundamentally important to best practice.

*Research/policy questions*

There are a number of research/policy questions for systems responding to FDV.

**ABOUT VICTIMS:**

- What actions are likely to be taken by a person who has experienced FDV?
- Why do some victims seek professional services or support while others do not?
- Are victims who do not come into contact with or report to any formal system different from those who do? In what ways?
- What services and support are needed by victims of FDV?
- What additional supports and services are required by specific population groups?
- Does the type of response to FDV differ between particular population groups?
- Are special supports required for child victims of/witnesses to FDV?
- What is the rate of co-presentation of cases of FDV and child abuse?
- What risks are associated with tailoring services and support around the needs of the small percentage of people who currently use these services?
- How best might these services and support be provided?
- How effective are programs and services in preventing victims from being subjected to FDV in the future?
- Why do some victims report FDV to police while others do not?
- Do specific policies, such as pro-arrest policies, have positive or negative effects on the number of FDV reports made?
- What data are available about discretionary decision-making in arrests, where police attend an FDV incident call-out?
- Where FDV-related matters proceed to court, do victims have legal representation?

**ABOUT PERPETRATORS:**

- What actions might be taken by a perpetrator of FDV in response to incident(s)?
- What services might be needed by a perpetrator? How might they be accessed?
- How likely is it that a perpetrator of FDV will re-offend?
- How effective are programs and services in preventing perpetrators from engaging in FDV in the future?
- Are perpetrators who do not come into contact with any formal system different from those who do? In what ways?

Research/policy questions  
continued

ABOUT PERPETRATORS: *continued*

- How likely is it that a perpetrator will be dealt with through the criminal justice system? What is the outcome likely to be?

ABOUT FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY:

- How well-equipped are family, friends, and the community in providing effective support to a person who has experienced FDV?
- How well-equipped are family, friends, and the community in dealing with a perpetrator of FDV?
- What support do families and friends need to fulfil these social roles in relation to informal FDV responses?
- What sort of response do family, friends and the community have towards victims and perpetrators of FDV?
- Are informed responses effective in preventing the re-occurrence of FDV?

ABOUT SYSTEMS AND SERVICES:

- How do the responses to FDV vary across jurisdictions?
- What impact do the various public policy approaches towards FDV have upon outcomes for victims and perpetrators of FDV across jurisdictions?
- What kinds of services are most effective?
- To what extent do systems for victims and perpetrators co-refer their clients and/or have formal systems in place to co-ordinate their service delivery?
- To what extent do these systems share information to ensure victims' safety and perpetrator accountability?
- To what degree are system interactions monitored and reviewed to ensure victim safety and perpetrator accountability?
- Will formal system agencies and services providing responses be able to deal with any increased demand?
- In what types of cases and what situations does there end up being statutory involvement?
- What proportion and types of cases end up with Family Law Court proceedings?

DISCLOSURE

Evidence from victimisation surveys indicates that many people who experience FDV never report the crime to police, and/or do not access any professional or other support services. It is possible that many others never disclose such incidents to anyone. Some may only ever seek the informal support of their network of family and friends, while others may only seek more formal types of support and/or medical treatment. A victim may make use of informal and/or formal support soon after an incident(s) occurs, or may not do so until years afterwards. The service or support needs will therefore depend on the timing of the disclosure or report of the occurrence of FDV.

More information is needed about the responses of both victims and perpetrators, especially when they have not reported to, or had contact with, any systems or services.

It is important to understand why some victims do not report to police or access other services, particularly if there is a fear of repercussions or of not being believed, a lack of knowledge about services, or a difficulty in accessing the services that were needed. If a victim's response was to talk to someone, then information about who that person was

DISCLOSURE *continued*

and the degree of support provided may be related to the outcome. If no action is taken and no-one is told, information is needed about the reasons why, and about the relationship to outcomes.

Additionally, a key obstacle to disclosure is self-identification. If a victim does not interpret the events that have occurred as violence, nor wish to identify themselves as a victim, then it is likely that events may never come to the attention of others. Exceptions to this may include instances where the violence is witnessed by another person and reported outside the family or domestic environment, or the severity of the violence or injury makes the incident impossible to hide.

In relation to perpetrators, it is important to understand the types of intervention or other support that may assist in the prevention of further offending. If perpetrators feel remorse or accept responsibility for their actions, they may voluntarily seek counselling or other assistance to help avoid development (or maintenance) of this pattern of behaviour. The effectiveness of sanctioned interventions such as court-ordered counselling or other programs is also important to assess. If perpetrators do not seek, or are not exposed to, this type of assistance, then information about whether they tell other people, change their routines, or respond in other ways would be useful.

*Research/policy questions*

- When is disclosure made by a victim of FDV, and in what context?
- What factors impact on the likelihood of a victim's disclosure?
- To whom is disclosure made? How well equipped are people to support a victim of FDV?
- How does the type of support needed change with the time elapsed?
- Is fear for safety, or of other repercussions, preventing victims from disclosing incidents of FDV?
- Do rates or types of disclosure differ across population groups?
- Do perpetrators tend to disclose the incident(s) to others?
- What factors impact on the likelihood of a perpetrator's disclosure?
- To whom is disclosure made? How well equipped are people to counsel a perpetrator of FDV?
- In what ways does disclosure differentially impact on children, young people and adults?

DATA NEEDS IN RELATION TO 'RESPONSES' ELEMENT OF THE FRAMEWORK

By definition, informal responses do not involve reporting to services or systems providing formal responses to FDV, so the only opportunity to collect data on the informal responses of victims is through victimisation or other surveys where victims of FDV are randomly sampled. Surveys may ask about victims' reliance on family, friends and other networks for support through disclosure after an incident(s). Currently, there is no direct information collected through surveys in Australia about informal responses to FDV by or for a perpetrator.

Surveys can also estimate the proportion of victims who respond more formally to FDV through reports to police and/or the utilisation of professional and other services. This provides an indication of the total demand for, and usage of, such services.

Finally, systems providing services in response to FDV – for example the criminal justice system, health services, and child protection services – keep records of their clients, the

DATA NEEDS IN RELATION  
TO 'RESPONSES'  
ELEMENT OF THE  
FRAMEWORK *continued*

services provided and outcomes. This provides opportunities for the collection of administrative by-product data about the workloads, resourcing and performance of the systems, provided that appropriate confidentiality is observed. These administrative by-product data therefore complement survey data, and provide an indication of potential under-reporting and under-utilisation of services. This information can then feed into policy approaches and evaluation of service provision.

There are many survey and administrative data sources relating to the 'Responses' element of the Framework, but again, not all areas of data need will necessarily be covered.

*Potential units for analysis*

While there are many potential avenues that victims and perpetrators may pursue in response to experiences of FDV, information about these interactions with formal and informal support and services may be reflected through the following primary counting units:

- People (both victims and perpetrators of FDV);
- Incidents (of FDV); and
- Transactions (services provided in relation to FDV).

It should also be noted that one of the major limitations of administrative by-product data is that the counting units used are generally transactions. As a result, deriving person counts across multiple transactions to obtain multiple victimisation counts or multiple service accesses may not be possible.

OVERVIEW

The Impacts and Outcomes element of the Framework includes the short, medium and long-term impacts and outcomes for victims, for perpetrators, for their children, for other family and friends, and for the community. These may affect a wide range of areas of wellbeing: population, family and community, physical and mental health, education, employment, economic resources, housing, crime and justice, and culture and leisure. The challenge is to accurately measure these potentially myriad outcomes of FDV.

Potential impacts and outcomes of FDV may vary according to the time-frame under consideration. Short and medium-term effects of FDV are described as impacts, and medium to long-term effects, particularly after interventions by systems responding to FDV, are described as outcomes. The impacts and outcomes will also vary depending on the type of abuse and the length of time victimised; and the age of the victim at the time of the offending.

*Impacts and outcomes for victims*

Data on the short-term impacts, and the medium and longer term outcomes, are required. These short-term impacts for victims may be physical and emotional. Medium and longer-term outcomes may include changes in physical and mental health, self-esteem, psychological wellbeing, relationship or family status, social and other relationships, living arrangements, access to essential personal care, work/study activities, day-to-day activities, loss of income due to time off work, economic costs of health services or relocation, and changes in financial status. Outcomes of FDV may also extend to homicide and suicide and other forms of self harm.

Victims of FDV may also experience trauma through subsequent involvement in the criminal justice system, and may also be at higher risk themselves of becoming perpetrators of future violence. Labelling may also influence the way in which others relate to and interact with a victim or a perpetrator.

Data on the impacts and outcomes for children and elders are also an important data need. The impacts and outcomes for a child that experiences or witnesses FDV may be very different to those of an adult, or a vulnerable elderly person. For young children, being exposed to FDV may have serious implications for their cognitive, social and emotional development. For an older person subjected to elder abuse, the vulnerabilities associated with medical conditions and the progression of age could compound the abuse being experienced.

Longitudinal data about outcomes for each of these sets of victims would assist in monitoring long-term outcomes and evaluation of interventions, and outcomes related to disclosure and support. Health sector and community services datasets also provide a potentially rich data source of information. Indirect information may also be 'hidden' in case records where FDV is not specifically identified, such as in police administrative datasets.

*Impacts and outcomes for perpetrators*

Potential impacts and outcomes for perpetrators can be generated from the health, welfare and justice sectors. Pathways for perpetrators in the health and welfare sectors may involve the identification of outcomes from services and supports, such as counselling and treatment programs. Impacts and outcomes are currently documented best when they are dealt with through the criminal justice system. Justice system data can be limited, however, due to difficulties in identifying perpetrators of FDV as they move through the system, and the restriction of coverage to only reported incidents that result in a perpetrator becoming known to the justice system. As a result, there is currently minimal information publicly available about outcomes for perpetrators.

Information about perpetrators may be most efficiently collected at the point of contact with systems and services accessed by a victim, or through victimisation surveys. Self-reported surveys on offending, whilst also potential sources of information about perpetrators, are not currently conducted in Australia. Longitudinal data about outcomes for perpetrators would be ideal and would provide for evaluation of interventions, however such collections are difficult to conduct.

*Further impacts and outcomes*

Impacts and outcomes can extend to those for family and friends, the community and the economy. Data are therefore required on the way in which FDV may affect these different areas for analysis.

For family members and particularly children, who are witnesses to or immediately affected by FDV, further impacts and outcomes may include those relating to their own physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing. They may also affect family cohesion; interpersonal relationships; and create a need for support and counselling. There are currently no data available in this area, however there may be some potential to collect data from services that provide support for family and friends of FDV victims.

Data on the impacts and outcomes for the community would provide for an analysis of the way in which FDV may affect changes in community perception, attitudes and behaviours, or where highly prevalent, contribute to breakdown in community supports and overall community wellbeing. Both direct and indirect costs are incurred by the community in relation to FDV. Direct costs include the costs of funding the systems that provide responses to FDV and of funding community prevention and education programs, and in aggregate, the costs to individuals of accessing services. Indirect costs include the costs to businesses and to the economy of lost time and reduced productivity, and the opportunity cost of using resources to provide services in response to FDV.

Analysis of the social and economic impacts of FDV, and data available to facilitate this, is currently limited. However, two reports released in 2004 modelled and estimated these impacts: Access Economics' report, *The Cost of Domestic Violence to the Australian Economy*; and VicHealth's report on *The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence*.

DATA NEEDS IN RELATION  
TO 'IMPACTS AND  
OUTCOMES' ELEMENT OF  
THE FRAMEWORK

A range of data about impacts and outcomes may be required to fully inform this element of the Framework. As examples, information can be gathered when victims report in victimisation surveys, or access counselling or support programs; from partners of those involved in behaviour change programs; or potentially through the administrative by-product data of health and welfare information systems. The following explains some of these needs in more detail.

*Victims*

HEALTH, AND OTHER PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORTS

Information on the range and severity of physical and mental health impacts, and the longer-term outcomes of FDV, would inform an understanding of the experiences of victims and those who witness FDV, and assist in the provision of appropriate support and services. An understanding of the experience of seeking and receiving these services and referrals – through GPs, hospitals, counsellors etc. – would also assist to further develop appropriate supports for victims of FDV.

EXPERIENCE OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

An understanding of victims' experiences of the criminal justice system would provide information for evaluating and improving system responses, processes and outcomes. It is important to measure perceptions of these experiences and responses as they may influence the propensity to report crime generally, and FDV in particular.

ECONOMIC COSTS

Measurement of the types of direct economic costs to victims informs the overall impact and outcomes of FDV and can assist in estimating the cost of crime. Changes in work patterns and income may occur through:

- a reduction in hours due to the impacts of FDV; or
- an increase in the amount of time spent at work in an attempt to avoid being at home.

Further economic impacts for victims and secondary victims may be felt through costs associated with moving house, relocating, and losses to income involved in the dissolution of a relationship.

OTHER

In order to fully assess the areas of individual wellbeing affected by FDV, information is required about changes across relationship/family status and residence, in social and other relationships, in day-to-day activities, work or study, and in financial situation.

*Perpetrators*

HEALTH AND OTHER PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORTS

Outcomes of treatment programs, rehabilitation programs and other interventions and supports provide for evaluation and an indication of their effectiveness. An understanding of the elements associated with positive or negative outcomes (rehabilitation or recidivism) is important in planning future interventions and better targeting programs to treat and assist particular types of perpetrators. Information about the effectiveness of such programs may potentially be elicited from those involved, and their former or current partners.



*Perpetrators continued*

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE OUTCOMES

Criminal justice outcomes for perpetrators can be well-documented and recorded when FDV is reported and dealt with through police, courts and corrective services. There are issues in the identification of perpetrators of FDV however, given that offenders in many jurisdictions will be charged with offences such as assault that are not further defined or flagged as FDV-related. Thus meaningful and detailed data about perpetrators can be lost in justice systems.

At the same time there is also a need for a better understanding of the outcomes for those perpetrators who do not progress beyond key points in the criminal justice system. Information about outcomes may influence public confidence in the system's ability to deal with FDV, and thus influence future reporting of crime in general and FDV in particular.

*Family, friends and community*

Information required about impacts on family and friends includes:

- types of support provided;
- linkages to outcomes for the victim (or perpetrator);
- changes in relationships;
- changes to activities or lifestyle; and
- any costs incurred – whether emotional or financial.

*Research/policy questions*

- What are the impacts and outcomes of FDV for victims? How do these vary for different population groups?
- Are there impacts on victims of violence resulting from their interactions with other legal processes, e.g. relocation orders?
- Do rates of accessing services or seeking criminal justice protection vary across different population groups? If so, why?
- What are the impacts and outcomes of FDV for perpetrators, both those within the criminal justice system and those who do not come into contact with the system?
- Does arrest reduce the likelihood of recidivism, with current or future partners?
- What are the impacts and outcomes for perpetrators of FDV with a criminal conviction?
- What are the impacts and outcomes of FDV for children and other witnesses to FDV?
- What are the impacts and outcomes of FDV for family, friends and the community?
- Who are the indirect victims of FDV?
- What are the social costs of FDV?
- What are the economic costs of FDV for responding to family and domestic violence through the health, welfare and criminal justice system?
- What are the impacts of the changed economic contribution made by individuals affected by FDV?

OVERVIEW

In addition to the characteristics of FDV discussed in previous chapters of the Framework, there are a range of broader activities that can occur in relation to FDV to both aid understanding of the phenomenon, and to intervene to reduce the prevalence of FDV in the future.

Interventions such as education and prevention programs are informed by analysis of information from the Framework's other elements, which determine the context, targeting, and resourcing of such programs. Implementation of education and prevention programs, as part of a response to FDV, influences the future status of the Context and Risk elements.

Evaluation of interventions such as education and prevention programs, and activities of the criminal justice system (for example, incarceration of perpetrators or restricting contact between parties), can involve measurement of the effectiveness of interventions over time. Outcomes can be evaluated in relation to the impacts they have on the first two elements (Context and Risk) of the framework.

A strong research base is fundamental to the understanding of all elements described in the Conceptual Framework, and for informing social policy to respond to and prevent FDV, and provide best practice support to victims and perpetrators.

*Development and Operation of Specialised Programs*

Family and domestic violence education and prevention programs draw on information from all other elements of the Conceptual Framework. The broad aim of these types of programs is to bring about behavioural change as a part of cultural change at the community level. Information about the incident, and impacts and outcomes for victims and offenders, feeds into the development of education and prevention programs. Education and prevention programs can therefore be seen as having a strong relationship to the formal system responses element of the Framework.

There are differences between FDV awareness and education programs and general crime programs, and specific programs delivered to and for victims and offenders and high risk potential victims and offenders. For example, some prevention programs are framed specifically for FDV offenders and delivered with a focus on rehabilitation; these are usually court-mandated and aim to prevent further offending.

Programs can be focussed on education, or prevention. Further distinctions can be made between education programs that aim to generally:

- inform the general community about the occurrence of FDV;
- inform the professional community about the occurrence of FDV;
- identify the circumstances in which it may occur; and
- attempt to influence attitudinal and behaviour change;

and those prevention and intervention programs that are:

*Development and  
Operation of Specialised  
Programs continued*

- targeted at specific victims or offenders;
- targeted at specific services, sectors or disciplines; and
- designed to deliver early intervention in high risk relationships.

The effectiveness of the above types of programs depends on appropriate messages reaching the right 'audiences' in order to change attitudes and influence behaviour.

Success of education and prevention programs can also be mediated by a range of contextual and individual factors. For example, different family structures and support networks can provide positive and negative influences, which impact upon the level of engagement with services and programs.

*Research and Evaluation*

A number of disciplines have an interest in researching various aspects of FDV. Research can be performed on a general level, exploring community attitudes, identifying risk factors and the prevalence of FDV as well as on a specific level where detailed characteristics of FDV are sought, or where program efficacy is a major goal. The availability of a strong evidence base is a key factor in the development of evidence-based policy, and can involve different approaches across disciplines.

Evaluation of interventions is essential to determine efficacy and utility. Formal FDV interventions may be implemented through activities of the health, welfare or justice sectors, and a sound understanding of the effectiveness of these interventions will assist agencies concerned in developing policies, planning funding and delivering appropriate services. Collation of evaluation data over time can allow the monitoring of changes, and assist in building the evidence-base to inform future investigations, policy and programming. For instance, changes to FDV occurrence as a result of specific violence-related orders or sentencing practices may prove to be of interest.

There has been limited evaluation of FDV-related programs in Australia, thus it is difficult to develop a good understanding of what works, what does not work, and why. It is also difficult to establish the effectiveness of general prevention and awareness programs purely through quantifying changes in prevalence and incidence of FDV as there may be a number of reasons for changes in these measures.

Evaluation of the delivery and efficacy of specific intervention and prevention programs may be more easily performed, as progress or outcome is more measurable and more easily attributed to the effectiveness of the specific program.

Evaluation of general and specific programs, to understand which are the most useful in influencing the prevalence and incident of FDV and effect behaviour change, could follow a model of levels wherein:

- the first level looks at activity, 'clients' of the program, services provided and utilisation levels; and
- the second looks at performance - in terms of outcomes and satisfaction with the service; and cost - in terms of expenditure, personnel and facilities.

In this context, delivery of specific programs may be more easily measured and evaluated than delivery of broader programs for the general community.

In aggregate, the outcomes may be measured through changes effected over time in the Context, Risk and Incident elements of the Framework.

DATA NEEDS IN RELATION  
TO 'PROGRAMS,  
RESEARCH AND  
EVALUATION' ELEMENT OF  
THE FRAMEWORK

Planning both the content and target audience(s) of education and prevention programs needs a sound information base. Data are needed to identify and analyse high-risk groups (of potential victims and potential perpetrators), the attitudes they hold, and their behaviour patterns. Data from all other elements of the Framework are needed for this breadth of analysis and for input to the planning and delivery of education and prevention programs. Accordingly, all of the data sources listed in previous elements may be considered relevant.

Collection and reporting of data about program objectives, activities, deliverables, client numbers and profiles, costs and outcomes, may be a part of the arrangements negotiated by funding agencies. This information may then be collated for all such programs and made available through, for example, the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse. Although evaluation of FDV-related interventions and programs is generally limited to the objectives of a specific program, the outcomes of education and prevention programs can be evaluated through the impact they have on the Context and Risk elements of the Framework. Therefore, measurement of changes over time in these areas is again needed.

*Research/policy questions*

- What are the determinants of FDV?
- How can FDV be prevented?
- How can the risk (prevalence and incidence) of FDV be reduced?
- Where should attempts be made to intervene to reduce the risk of FDV?
- How can the formation of individual and community attitudes be influenced?
- What are the perceptions held in the community now and how can these existing attitudes be changed?
- How can unacceptable behaviours be changed?
- How can behaviours in specific population groups or settings be influenced?
- Which formal interventions from the health, welfare or justice systems reduce the occurrence of FDV incidents?
- Which supportive interventions for victims are most effective in assisting recovery?
- What is the effectiveness of education programs aimed at reducing FDV and changing community attitudes generally?
- How effective are specific prevention and intervention programs that are available to victims and perpetrators, in terms of cost, utilisation and outcome?
- What effects do the presence of or lack of family and community support have on engagement with programs, and successful intervention?

*Potential units for analysis*

In conducting research and evaluation, and developing and delivering programs, information about the following units of analysis may be useful:

- People (both victims and perpetrators of FDV);
- Behaviours in incidents (of FDV);
- Re-entry of FDV perpetrators to the criminal justice system;
- Attitudes of program participants;
- Satisfaction of program participants; and
- Services and practitioners' activity and budgetary expenditure.

SUMMARY

Family and domestic violence is a significant social and policy issue that has profound psychological and financial impacts on the individual, their friends and family, and on the local and broader community.

Awareness of the incidence and prevalence of family and domestic violence has been increasing. However accurate data to support the development of policy, services and responses for victims and perpetrators is still lacking.

This Framework has:

- described issues in the collection of FDV data, for example the terminology and legislation;
- outlined elements of a definition of FDV
- conceptualised the data elements that are required to describe FDV; and
- identified the research and police questions within each element of the framework.

In doing so the Framework will allow for a better understanding of FDV concepts, and the relationships between these concepts, that require measurement, and for identifying data gaps.

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