

## Women's Refuge in your community

Women's Refuge prioritises children's needs by working with mothers to create safer futures. We work with women regardless of whether they are living in an abusive situation, about to leave or living away from their violent partner.







In fact, most of our work is achieved with women who are living in violent relationships. We can talk on the phone, in neutral spaces or at our community offices (if we have them). We can help a woman form a safety plan about her life and to be able to recognise signs that increase the dangerousness of her situation and that of her children.

We can advocate for her needs, her children's needs and we can work with her if she has pets or animals that she is also worried about. We can help her get legal or health advice, support her at visits to Work and Income, and help her find child care, counselling and housing services. Some refuges also offer Oscar programmes or structured play groups.

We have living free from violence educational programmes for women and children. If an abusive partner is open to working on their behaviour, we can even refer them to suitable agencies for help.

We provide a 24/7 Crisis line emergency service to support a woman if she decides to leave at any hour of the day or night. However, if she is in immediate danger she should call 111.

### CHILDREN NEED

-  A safe and healthy home
-  Love and affection
-  Praise and encouragement
-  Listening and talking
-  New experiences
-  Giving time



## WOMEN'S REFUGE

» Domestic violence can be psychological, emotional, financial, physical or sexual – you don't have to have experienced a physical beating before you ask us for help.

At Women's Refuge we respond to the needs of all women and their children, regardless of their ethnicity, immigration status, how rich or poor they are and whether or not they have children.

### OUR VALUES

- All women are valued and treated with dignity
- We recognise that violence can affect women at any age, with or without children, regardless of their economic circumstances or level of education
- Children are treasured and nurtured
- Wahine Māori are recognised as tangata whenua
- Lesbians rights are respected
- Pacifica, Asian, migrant and refugee women are recognised and respected regardless of immigration status
- Whatever choices women make, they are assured of our ongoing support.

### HOW CAN YOU CONTACT US?

Contact our 24/7 crisis line  
**0800 REFUGE (733 843)**

Ask your Citizen's Advice Bureau for your  
**local Women's Refuge contact**

Check out our website at  
**[www.womensrefuge.org.nz](http://www.womensrefuge.org.nz)**

If you are concerned about the serious risk of harm to a child or young person call  
**CYF 0508 FAMILY**

## CHILDREN & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*The things I need to know*

“When children come to us, like their mum they are often tired or need attention. Here they feel safe to rest or play without consequence. At home, they are always alert to ‘what he wants’ or ‘what might he do next’, waiting for the next explosion.”

– Refuge worker



**WOMEN'S REFUGE**



## What is it?

Far too many children experience domestic violence. They can experience this violence as direct victims, or by witnessing abuse inflicted on their mother and/or siblings, pets and animals. The kinds of domestic violence children can experience are – emotional, physical, sexual and psychological.

» Each year Women's Refuge reaches out to approximately 11,000 children and 15,000 women and this is the tip of the iceberg.

Exposure to any of the various kinds of domestic violence above by a dominating, controlling and manipulative or violent parent figure has a severe impact on children.

These experiences can:

- ✎ Create fear, anxiety and terror in their young bodies and brains
- ✎ Make them feel powerless and sometimes even responsible for the abuse and violence. Even if they don't see or understand what is going on, they can still hear it or pick up on tension, stress and fear
- ✎ Significantly slow down their brain development especially if they are under five years old
- ✎ Harm them physically if they are caught up in physical assaults, such as a 'punch gone wrong'
- ✎ Kill them, if the abuser takes his actions to this extreme.

In New Zealand more than 70,000 children and young people (under 17) were present at domestic violence situations attended by Police. Sadly, an average of 10 children are killed by a member of their family every year.

» On average 224 women and children stay at a Women's Refuge Safe House every night in New Zealand.

## Impact on children

» Children who witness their mothers or other members of their family being abused are victims of domestic violence. They can have more than double the rate of significant behaviour problems than other children.

### I MAY SUFFER FROM

- ✎ Living in constant fear
- ✎ Speech problems
- ✎ Delayed brain development
- ✎ Depression
- ✎ Poor health
- ✎ Sleeping problems
- ✎ Eating disorders
- ✎ Low self esteem
- ✎ Bed wetting
- ✎ Being unable to control my impulses

### AS I GROW OLDER I MIGHT

- ✎ Feel suicidal
- ✎ Hate myself
- ✎ Harm myself
- ✎ Develop eating problems
- ✎ Develop drug and alcohol problems
- ✎ Have violent thoughts or be violent to others
- ✎ Bully people
- ✎ Act out sexually, become promiscuous
- ✎ Seek violent partners
- ✎ Develop mental health issues

My symptoms can be compared with those of the victims of kidnapping, hostages and with soldiers returning from war. That's sad.



## What can I do?

*"When the yelling stopped and the hurting was no more, my whole world opened up."* – Child survivor

### SAVE A MOTHER AND YOU SAVE A FAMILY

Prioritise the needs of children and their mothers and their right to be safe and live free from violence.

Know that any child who has a significant and constant 'other' adult in their life has a greater chance for a healthier future.

### TAKE ALL VIOLENCE SERIOUSLY

Try and engage with the mother in a non judgemental way about your concerns for her and her children.

You cannot force her into making a decision but you can talk about your worries, about the impact on the children and discuss her options.

Say you will take her or support her if she wants to talk to a Women's Refuge worker, a community domestic violence advocate, social worker, the police or a lawyer.

» If you are really concerned about the care or protection of a child or young person (under 16 years) you can seek confidential advice from Women's Refuge 0800 REFUGE or Child, Youth and Family 0508 FAMILY.

*"When I was a kid, Women's Refuge was my life. It kept my mum safe and the times I spent in the safe house were always fun."*

– Child survivor