

# Leading the Way

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## Who are we?



Eastern Health is geographically one of the largest metropolitan health services in Victoria. There are over 50 facilities which deliver clinical services to more than 750,000 people throughout the eastern region.

With over 9000 employees serving over 1 million people with services extending from the inner eastern metropolitan area to the rural reaches of the Yarra Valley.

In 2016 Eastern Health committed to ensuring a comprehensive system was in place to identify and respond to suspected and confirmed instances of family violence including elder abuse impacting on any person within our health service, across the continuum of age. As such the objective for Eastern Health was to develop a response for its patients and staff.

# Step 1: Start with a commitment

- In 2016 Eastern Health committed to ensuring a comprehensive system was in place to identify and respond to suspected and confirmed instances of family violence including elder abuse impacting on any person within our health service, across the continuum of age.
- As such the objective for Eastern Health was to develop a response for its patients and staff.

# Why staff?

- A visit to Eastern Health from Rosie Batty increased the momentum for change with recognition of the impact that family violence was having on staff and patients. Rosie's visit commenced a culture among staff where conversations about personal experience with family violence became normalised.
- Rosie also pointed out to us that with the known incidence of family violence that over 2600 staff were likely to be being impacted by family violence. It was sobering too to reflect that victims and perpetrators were on our staff.
- Momentum for change was also supported through knowledge of changes coming in enterprise agreements.

# Where did we start?

## Step 2: Create momentum

- Eastern Health Family Violence Reference Group was established with broad representation including Eastern Health programs, a consumer and representatives from key community family violence organisations and support services to lead this process and sustain the momentum needed to undertake the significant change required.

## Step 3 – Make it meaningful and relevant.

### What was going on for our staff?

- Questions about recent experience with family violence were included in a staff well-being survey that was completed by more than 25% of Eastern Health staff. This survey indicated that 7% of Eastern Health staff had experienced family violence within the previous 12 months.
- We learnt that many of our staff were working through their own experience of family violence and without access to their own support, supporting our patients, client and consumers would be extremely challenging.

# Step 4 – Drive the commitment into policy

- Performance standards to guide practice in providing support to staff experiencing family violence and staff working with patients who are at risk of or experiencing family violence were developed following extensive consultation with all clinical programs, our consumer and external stakeholders.

# Step 5 – Support the change

- In addition Human Resources Advisors were provided with tailored training to enable them to support managers and staff.

# Step 6 - Partnership

- Through the community partnerships fostered within our Family Violence Reference group, Eastern Health and Eastern Domestic Violence Outreach Support Services (EDVOS) developed a Memorandum of Understanding to employ a Specialist Family Violence Advocate for staff.
- The free and confidential advice and support is now available to any staff member experiencing or a risk of experiencing family violence.

# Step 7 – Don't drop the ball

- To date over 1000 hours of family violence leave has been access by Eastern Health staff and many more hours of support provided.
- Our hope is to continue to build on this work and create a workplace that supports all our staff towards safety and wellbeing.

# A story from staff.

- *I am currently working at \*\* and am a victim of domestic violence. I have removed myself from the threat however I am struggling to perform the duties within my job.*
- *I have thought about being removed from my current environment and being rotated to a different area as there are multiple roles within my field however I am unsure how to approach my manager as I really do not want to disclose my previous trauma. I do not want my colleagues to know my personal circumstances and I am unsure of what I can do.*
- *The work promoted by Eastern Health instilled a great amount of hope and gave me the courage to speak up and write this email, asking for help.*