

Are you feeling concerned about the welfare or safety of someone you know due to something you have seen occurring in their relationship or something that you have been told about their partner? This information may help you in deciding whether the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme can assist you.

What is the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme?

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (the DVDS) provides an avenue for people who may be at risk of domestic violence from a partner or former partner, to find out if that partner has a history of abusive or violent behaviour recorded with the police. A person who is concerned for their safety in a relationship can apply for information about their partner or former partner. Under certain circumstances, a friend, relative or professional service provider can make an application as a third party. Police can provide relevant information directly to the person who you believe is at risk with support from a specialist domestic violence worker.

How can the DVDS help prevent domestic violence?

Domestic violence is usually characterised by a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviours, and perpetrators often repeat these behaviours in their relationships. The DVDS aims to prevent domestic violence from occurring by empowering a person who is at risk to make informed decisions about their safety, the safety of their children, and the future of their relationship.

What sort of behaviours might indicate the presence of domestic violence?

Early warning signs of domestic violence are sometimes difficult to recognise as harmful. You might notice that the person you think is at risk:

- has stopped attending social or family functions, or only attends in the company of their partner
- has changed the way they dress in accordance with their partner's wishes
- 'checks in' by phoning or texting their partner constantly, or has to explain or justify where they are and who they are with
- behaves differently (perhaps in a more restrained or subdued way) when their partner is around
- appears nervous, jittery, worried or scared when their partner is around.

You might notice that the partner causing your concerns behaves in some or all of the following ways towards the person you are worried about:

- insists on moving in with them after only a short time together
- gains access or control of their income through shared bank accounts
- encourages them to quit their job thus making them financially dependent on them
- speaks disrespectfully or aggressively about them or a former partner
- overreacts in situations or is quick to get angry, frustrated or upset



- behaves in ways that indicates jealousy, perhaps calling or texting them frequently, thus monitoring their movements and who they are with
- tries to restrict or interfere with their choices to spend time with certain friends
- appears to be emotionally reliant on them, saying they could not live without them, or that they do not know what they would do if the relationship ended.

If you are unsure about what you are seeing or noticing in the relationship of the person you are worried about, or unsure what the behaviour indicates, then you can call 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) to discuss your concerns. You can do this anonymously if you prefer. Alternatively, you can attend your local police station for advice.

What is a third party application?

A third party application can be made when you have concerns about the safety of a person that you know, arising from behaviour exhibited by their partner, or by the person at risk themselves, or due to information that you have been told about the partner and/or their behaviour.

As a third party applicant, you will be contacted by a specialist domestic violence worker to let you know how the application has progressed, however the disclosure of any actual information held by police will only be made to the person at risk themselves.

Can I make a third party application?

- Are you 17 years and older?
- Is the person you are concerned about aged 17 years or older?
- Does the person you are concerned about live in South Australia?
- Do you have a connection to the person you are concerned about as a friend, family member or professional service provider?
- Is the person you are concerned about and their partner in a current relationship? Or were they previously in a relationship together but still have ongoing contact with one another?
- Do you have concerns about the behaviour of the partner towards the person at risk? Or have you been told some information about the partner which has caused you to be concerned for the person at risk? Your concerns can be based around physical, verbal or controlling behaviours, emotional or psychological manipulation, or economic or social abuse or isolation.

If you have answered 'yes' to all of the above, you are eligible to make an application to police for information about the person causing your concerns.



Can I make a third party application if I live interstate?

Yes. A third party applicant can live anywhere in Australia however the person that you are concerned about, and who is the person at risk, must live in South Australia.

How do I make an application?

You will need to complete an online application form which you will find on the South Australia Police internet page at www.police.sa.gov.au/your-safety/dvds. If you need help to complete the form, please go to your local police station and staff there will assist you.

Do I have to tell the person I am concerned about that I have made an application?

No. You are encouraged to speak to the person you hold concerns about however if you think that telling the person will increase their risk of suffering harm, or cause them to stop confiding in you, or somehow aggravate their situation, you should not tell them. If you are unsure how to have a conversation with the person who may be at risk it is recommended that you call 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732). They can assist you in deciding if it is safe and appropriate to do so. The person who is at risk will be contacted during the process by the specialist domestic violence worker as any information held can only be released to them directly, but they will not be advised of who has made the application unless you give permission for that to occur.

What happens once the application is submitted?

When you submit the application, police will review the details that you have provided. If your application meets the criteria, police will check their records for information about the person causing your concerns. The details on the application are shared with a specialist domestic violence worker who will contact the person at risk to set a time and date for a disclosure meeting. At the meeting, a police officer will advise the person of information about their partner which is relevant to their safety. The specialist domestic violence worker will also be present at that meeting and can provide support, and help plan for their safety if required.

If the police assess that the application does not meet the criteria, they will share your details with the specialist domestic violence worker who will contact you to advise you of the reasons, have a further discussion, and make sure if there is extra information that you hold, you are assisted to resubmit the application.

What information will not be disclosed?

There are some types of information that the police are not permitted to disclose to the person at risk. This includes:

- spent convictions (these are convictions which are pardoned, quashed or a certain period of time has gone by since the conviction was recorded)
- convictions where the person was under the age of 18 years at the time of the offence
- offences which are unrelated to domestic violence and do not impact on their safety.



What happens if the police have no information about the partner?

If police undertake a search for information about the partner of the person you are concerned about, but there is nothing of relevance on the police systems, a meeting will still be arranged with the person at risk to advise them of this. The absence of information held by the police means that the person's partner or former partner has not come to police attention previously. While this may be of some reassurance, it does not guarantee their safety. The specialist domestic violence worker will still attend the meeting and be available to offer support and to further discuss the person's situation.

How long does it take to get a disclosure?

The process from the time that police receive your application (the next business day after you submit it online) until the disclosure meeting will normally take about two weeks. If police and the specialist domestic violence worker feel that there is a more urgent need to speak with the person at risk, this process can happen in a shorter time.

What happens at the disclosure meeting?

The meeting is arranged at a location which is safe and as convenient as possible for the person at risk. A police officer and a specialist domestic violence worker will be at every disclosure meeting. The police officer will disclose the relevant information whilst the specialist domestic violence worker will work with the person at risk and provide any follow-up support they need. The person at risk will be asked to sign an Undertaking form at the beginning of the meeting which is their promise not to publish, spread or misuse any information which is given to them. The police officer will then tell the person any relevant information about their partner verbally. Nothing is provided in writing.

Can I go to the disclosure meeting?

As a third party applicant, you may only go to the disclosure meeting if the person at risk invites you to be their support person. As a support person, you will also be required to sign an Undertaking form not to publish, spread or misuse any information that you hear.

What can the specialist domestic violence worker help with?

All people and their children have the right to a life free of violence. The specialist domestic violence worker can assist the person at risk to make sense of the information disclosed and what it might mean for them and their relationship. They can provide counselling and information about domestic and family violence, and undertake safety planning with the person at risk and their children. They can facilitate access to other services that provide health, legal, financial, housing and immigration advice and support. They can also arrange other help such as translation services, trauma counselling and other specialist support as required.



What if the person I am concerned about refuses to meet with the police?

The specialist domestic violence worker will always contact the person at risk to arrange a meeting time, however the person may choose not to participate in the disclosure process. If that occurs, their decision will be respected. Support and assistance will still be offered to the person and the specialist domestic violence worker may contact them again at a point in the future to check on their welfare.

Will I be told the outcome of the application?

If you have agreed on the application form to be contacted by the specialist domestic violence worker, they will phone you to advise you of the progress or outcome of the application. You will be advised that the person at risk has either attended a disclosure meeting, or has declined to participate in the disclosure meeting. The specialist domestic violence worker will be able to offer you advice and assistance so that you can continue to support the person at risk beyond the DVDS process.

Will the person at risk's partner/former partner know that an application or a disclosure was made, and who made it?

To ensure your safety and the safety of the person at risk, the subject of the application (the current or former partner) will **not** be informed of any application or disclosure made about them.

