

Are you feeling limited, controlled or unsafe in a relationship with your current or former 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. Under certain circumstances, you can apply to the police to check any information they may hold about your partner or former partner. Information which is relevant to your safety can be disclosed to you by the police, 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 you to make informed decisions about your safety, the safety of your children, and the future of your relationship.

What sort of behaviours might indicate that my partner may become abusive?

Early warning signs of domestic violence are sometimes difficult to recognise as harmful. You might notice that your partner:

- insists on moving in together after a short time together
- gains access or control of your income through shared bank accounts
- encourages you to quit your job thus making you financially dependent on them
- speaks disrespectfully or aggressively about 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 you frequently asking where you are and who you are with
- tries to restrict or interfere with your choices to spend time with certain friends
- appears to be emotionally reliant on you, saying they could not live without you, or that they do not know what they would do if you ever left them.

Do these behaviours make you feel uncomfortable, under pressure to comply with your partner's wishes, tense, nervous or unsafe? If you answer yes, then you should not ignore the impact of these behaviours on your safety and wellbeing.

If you are unsure about what you are experiencing in your relationship 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.



Can I make an application?

- Are you 17 years and older?
- Do you normally live in South Australia?
- Are you in a relationship with the person causing your concerns? Or have you previously been in a relationship but still have ongoing contact with your former partner?
- Do you have concerns about behaviour that they have shown towards you? Or have you been told some information about them which has caused you to be concerned for your safety? 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 your partner.

Can both men and women apply for information under the DVDS?

Yes. The DVDS is available to all persons who are concerned for their safety within a relationship irrespective of their gender and the gender of their partner.

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.

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. Your details are then shared with a specialist domestic violence worker who will contact you to set a time and date for a meeting. You may take a support person with you to the meeting. At the meeting, a police officer will advise you of information about your partner which is relevant to your safety. The specialist domestic violence worker will also be present at that meeting and can provide you with support, and help plan for your safety if required.

If the police assess that your 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 may be disclosed?

Police will only tell you about information they have which is relevant to your safety. This may include:

- convictions for offences such as physical and sexual assault, property damage, stalking and unlawful threats
- reports which have been made to police which may indicate that there could be a safety risk to you, such as previous reports of domestic violence or allegations of the sort of behaviour listed above
- current and historical intervention orders
- breaches of intervention orders
- convictions for relevant offences committed outside of South Australia
- any other relevant information that may impact on your safety.

What information will not be disclosed?

There are some types of information that the police are not permitted to disclose to you. 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 your safety.

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

If police undertake a background search for information about your partner but there is none on the police systems, a meeting will still be arranged with you and you will be advised of this in person. A specialist domestic violence worker will still attend and be available to offer you support to further discuss your concerns. The absence of information held by the police means that your partner or former partner has not come to police attention previously. While this may be of some reassurance to you, it does not guarantee your safety and you should remain cautious about your safety given the concerns and feelings that you are having about your partner's behaviour. Any future instances of abuse or violence should be immediately reported to police so that action can be taken to keep you safe.

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 you, 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 you. A police officer and a specialist domestic violence worker will be at every disclosure meeting. The police officer will disclose the relevant information to you while the specialist domestic violence worker will work with you and provide any follow-up support that you need. You will be asked to sign an Undertaking form at the beginning of the meeting which is your promise not to publish, spread or misuse any information which is given to you. The police officer can explain this further at the time. The police officer will then tell you any relevant information about your partner verbally. Nothing is provided in writing.

Can I bring a friend or support person to the disclosure?

Yes, you may bring a support person to the disclosure meeting. Your support person may be a friend or relative, or a professional working with you or your family. If you have a support person with you, they will also be required to sign an Undertaking form not to publish, spread or misuse any information that they hear.

What can the specialist domestic violence worker help me with?

All people and their children have the right to a life free of violence. The specialist domestic violence worker can assist you to make sense of the information disclosed and what it might mean for you and your relationship. They can provide counselling and information to you about domestic and family violence, and undertake safety planning with you for yourself and your children. They can facilitate your 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.

Will my current/former partner know that an application or a disclosure was made?

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

What if I change my mind about being involved in the process?

Police will always encourage you to attend the disclosure meeting given your original concerns about your partner however at any point you can choose not to continue with the disclosure process. Your decision will be respected. If you do withdraw from the process, the specialist domestic violence worker may contact you at a point in the future to check on your welfare and offer further support. You may decide to lodge another application in the future if your concerns resurface or you change your mind again.

