

**CARANICHE  
AT WORK**

# **Considerations when appointing Family Violence Contact Officers**

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Workplaces can appoint and train suitably skilled family violence contact officers. Ideally, contact officers will show interest and suitable skills during an application and interview process.

## What should trained contact officers do when supporting colleagues experiencing family violence?

- Find somewhere private to have the discussion
- Reassure your colleague that the information will be kept confidential
- Understand and explain the limits to confidentiality
- Open the space for listening, but don't pressure or confront
- Believe your colleague and take their fears seriously
- Be sensitive
- If they disclose or you suspect family violence you can use direct but gentle questioning such as:
  - Is everything ok at home?
  - I noticed those bruises, did someone do that to you?
  - Your partner seems to be making you frightened, is everything ok?
  - How is their behaviour affecting you?
  - Make it clear to your colleague that the abuse is not their fault
  - Reassure them that they have done the right thing by confiding in someone
  - Ask them about the impact their situation is having on their:
    - Personal life
    - Work life
- Confirm that they are aware of what processes and supports are available to them through their work
- Ask them what they would like to do and if they have a workplace safety plan
- Offer to accompany them to speak to a manager if they choose to
- Encourage them to keep a diary of events and incidents to help them recall details later on if needed
- Ensure they are aware of external supports that are available, provide them a list of resources

## What should a contact officer avoid?

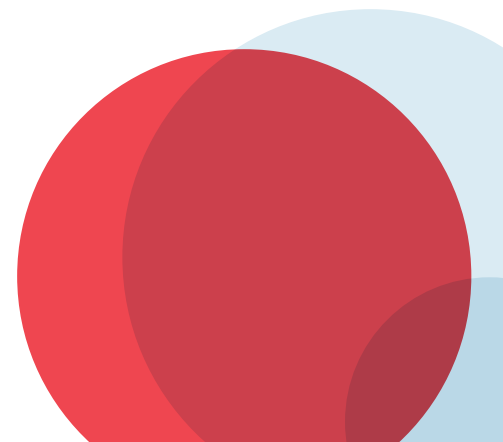
- Becoming personally involved
- Putting themselves in any danger
- Discussing the issue with anyone else unless you believe someone is at risk
- Asking questions about the details of the relationship and the violence
- Expressing opinions about the situation
- Giving advice
- Pressuring them to leave
- Blaming them for the abuse
- Trying to work out the reasons for the abuse

## Helping to increase their safety

Whilst it is not the role or responsibility of a contact officer to ensure their safety, there are some suggestions they can provide to help them identify a safety plan:

- Encourage them to identify where they or their children could go in an emergency
- Encourage them to prepare an excuse so they can leave quickly
- Encourage them to identify how they can be protected e.g. IVO, police etc.
- Suggest they can prepare an 'escape bag'

Supporting someone experiencing family violence can be confronting. It is important that contact officers are provided with support, such as EAP.



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# Details to consider including in a Family Violence Contact Officer Position Description

## Role

The role of contact officer is a voluntary role and must be undertaken in addition to the employee's usual work duties.

## Duties

- Attend training on family violence and any subsequent professional development
- Provide information about family violence as a workplace issue and raise awareness of the strategies the workplace has implemented to support employees and assist them to address family violence
- Maintain confidentiality unless there is a reason to believe someone is in imminent danger
- Assist employees to access the family violence entitlements and manage family violence in the workplace
- Support employees in the workplace who are being subject to family violence including providing appropriate referrals

## Skills

- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Ability to listen objectively and without judgement
- Ability to problem solve when facing complex and challenging situations
- Commitment to gender equity and addressing family violence as an issue in the workplace
- Well developed self-care strategies

## Boundaries

The contact officer must not:

- Breach confidentiality unless there is a belief that someone is in danger, or if consent has been provided
- Provide counselling to the employee
- Provide the employee with assistance, advice or recommendations
- Offer to deal with the perpetrator

**Learn more about how your workplace can respond to family violence.**

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This Resource accompanies the Caraniche at Work Report, Family Violence: a workplace issue.

