

CHIEF MUNICIPAL EXECUTIVE



KRISTIANSAND
KOMMUNE

GUIDE

Violence in Close Relationships

Discovery and Management



Short Version



Introduction

Physical and psychological violence are illegal, punishable acts. Violence in close relationships is a social problem because it concerns so many people and has such serious consequences – for individuals and families as well as for society at large.

Everyone has a personal responsibility to care and act when violence is witnessed or suspected. As a private person, you have a moral responsibility to give notice if you suspect that children and young people are exposed to violence. Each one of us has a duty to prevent serious violence – also called the duty of prevention. This duty is laid down in section 139 of the General Civil Penal Code and applies to everyone, whether it be in a private context or in connection with work. In addition, public employees and a number of professionals with a duty of confidentiality are obliged to inform the child welfare services when there is reason to believe that a child is exposed to abuse or other forms of serious neglect, etc.

*«Everyone is entitled to a life without violence and abuse.
No one should have to fear those closest to them.»*

Crime Prevention Plan, 2016

What is violence?

All violence is characterised by inflicting harm or pain, or threatening or violating others. Violence can take many different forms and involve various acts where the intent is to control or force others. It can also be related to re-establishing lost honour where collective honour cultures are predominant. Violence can be directed at a partner, family members, friends, elderly people, persons with functional impairment, children and young people.

Violence in close relationships affects the whole family. A close relationship does not mean only close family ties or relatives but can also be a close, friendly relationship between people who are significant to each other in other ways.

It is harmful to be directly exposed to violence. It is also harmful to witness or live in a family where violence occurs. Both trigger the same fear.

Physical violence

Physical violence can be directed at persons or material things, including hitting, kicking, pinching, taking a stranglehold, destroying objects, banging one's fist on the table, throwing things at the wall or on the floor to demonstrate power and make the other person feel bad. Physical violence in its most extreme form can result in loss of life.

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is a form of violence that has very serious consequences for the victim. This type of violence is especially destructive because it violates an individual's most private sphere. Sexual violence includes anything from unwanted touching to rape, sexual molestation and harassment. Sexual violence is talked about more

seldom by the perpetrator and the victim, and is associated with severe shame.

Psychological violence

Psychological violence is any violence that is not directly physical in nature, but harms, intimidates or hurts in some other way. Psychological violence involves exerting power and dominance, ignoring, as well as making the victim feel less worth, insecure, ugly, stupid, useless, bad, upset, guilty, etc.

Psychological violence can also involve controlling and taking control through limiting the victim's freedom to spend time with friends, family, to state their opinion or in other ways live life as he or she pleases. For many victims, living with psychological violence is the worst. Its detrimental character has serious consequences for mental and physical health. The victim of the violence will often not understand that he or she is being exposed to violence and will, to a great extent, take the blame and adopt a negative self-image.

Honour-related violence

Honour-related violence occurs in all cultures, but is the most common in typical collective cultures/communities with a clear honour code.

The opposite of honour is shame. Men are carriers of honour, whereas girls and women in particular can inflict shame on the whole extended family/group by breaking the honour code. Losing honour may be related to several things, from status, work and education to controlling young girls and women's sexuality. Extramarital affairs or sex outside marriage entails great shame for the extended family. Honour-related violence may include extreme control of young girls' freedom of movement, genital mutilation and forced marriage. A particular challenge associated with honour-related violence is that several family members know about and accept its use. In addition, the threat situation may be reinforced if the violation of the honour code becomes known outside the core family.



How to proceed?

Discovering violence is difficult. Since violence has many different expressions, it is difficult to know which symptoms to look for. Several of the symptoms resemble symptoms of other known issues and challenges, which also makes violence difficult to discover. It is common to assume that violence is either physical or psychological, but these forms of violence are not mutually exclusive.

«Violence is protected by silence.»

Per Isdal
The foundation Alternative to Violence

When violence is suspected, the situation should be discussed with relevant expert authorities and organisations, depending on the suspicion (please see the contact list at the end of this document). The first issue to keep in mind is the security of the victim. Violence can escalate and become potentially life-threatening.

When addressing your suspicion with the victim, create a setting as safe as possible for addressing the topic, and agree with the victim on what information can be shared with others, if any. You should keep in mind that a person who is experiencing violence is caught in its grip and may have challenges with setting boundaries, especially towards the perpetrator. If or when a suspected perpetrator is to be involved in the situation, the case should be discussed with an expert authority first.

A common reason why we hesitate to address such a difficult topic is that it may be unpleasant for the other person or for ourselves, and we are unsure about how the other person will react.

Do you suspect that a child is exposed to violence?

We have a particular responsibility to pay attention, take care and intervene in cases where children are involved. Everyone has a personal responsibility to prevent violence against children. If you suspect violence against children or that children witness violence, the child welfare services must be contacted, regardless of severity. This can be done anonymously if this is, at first, only a concern that you would like to discuss with experts.

Do not inform the parents (the perpetrator of the violence). This will be assessed by the person you notify, whether it be the child welfare services or the police, and has to do with the children's safety and legal protection.

Talking to adults about violence

This deals with breaking the silence and putting observations or suspicions into words. Not everyone understands that they are perpetrating or being exposed to violence. Violence is, by nature, often trivialised and given other names by both the perpetrator and the victim. Using the term «violence» brings to light a new, surprising perspective. Always keep the safety of the victim in mind – and your own safety if the perpetrator is present, angry, intoxicated or seems otherwise unstable.

- Do not thematise violence during conversations with the victim when the perpetrator is present.
- Do not act alone – consult expert personnel (please see the list on the last page).
- Listen to the stories – do not give all kinds of advice, as this can often make the victim withdraw rather than open up.
- Talk and ask openly about experiences you think may be related to violence.
- Make an agreement with the victim regarding how to proceed.
- Emergency medical services have

routines for documenting injuries and can write referrals to other relevant authorities.

- If the victim needs an interpreter, book an interpreter via an interpretation service elsewhere in the country.

Talking to children and youth about violence

Children who are able to speak should be given complete freedom to tell their story. Take the opportunity when a child shares his or her story – do not wait. Be a good listener, use the child's own words, be curious and inquisitive. Use open-ended questions rather than yes/no questions.

1. Create a safe setting, but do not make promises you cannot keep.
2. Discovering violence is sufficient – you do not need to let the child go into details.
3. Record the conversation immediately – describe the conversation thoroughly, using the words the child uses and how you asked your question.
4. Contact the child welfare services. If this is in a work context, follow the applicable routines of your workplace.
5. Be prepared to have more conversations with the child in consultation with the child welfare services. This is to limit the number of adults the child has to have contact with.

Eresrelatert vold

A specific challenge associated with honour-related violence is that it usually involves several people. Their collective organisation often involves a hierarchy where the oldest control the youngest, the husband controls his wife, and the brother controls his sisters. A daughter or sister is not necessarily punished by her father or brother; it may just as well be a cousin or an uncle coming from afar. If you suspect or are concerned that someone is exposed or subjected to honour-related violence, you should consider the following:

- Safety planning. This means that the rest of the family may not be supportive of the victim, but of the use of violence. This goes for women as well as men.
- Be curious about the victim's story
- Be attentive and create as safe a setting as possible. If you have a duty of confidentiality, explain this duty thoroughly.
- Be patient and discreet.
- Discuss with various resources how to proceed.
- Use a telephone interpreter
 - preferably from another district.A face-to-face interpreter creates fear that rumours will spread within the community.



Important telephone numbers

Adults

Vest-Agder Crisis Centre for Women	24 hours	Tel. 38 10 22 00
Vest-Agder Crisis Centre for Men	24 hours	Tel. 91 36 65 24
Aust-Agder Crisis Centre	24 hours	Tel. 37 01 32 80
Alternative to Violence, Kristiansand	9AM–2PM	Tel. 99 30 12 34
Support Centre for Victims of Crime		Tlf. 02800
Vest-Agder Family Counselling Office	Daytime	Tel. 38 10 43 10
The Support Centre Against Sexual Abuse, Agder	Daytime	Tel. 38 07 11 11
The police	24 hours	Tel. 02800

Vulnerable groups

Children and youth

Child welfare services in the Kristiansand region	Daytime	Tel. 38 07 57 70
The Child Welfare Emergency Service (Barnevernvakta)		Tel. 38 07 54 00
The Children's House, Kristiansand	Daytime	Tel. 99 25 71 61
Emergency Helpline for Children and Youth (Alarmtelefon for barn og unge)	24 hours	Tel. 116 111
Stine Sofie's Foundation	Daytime	Tel. 37 29 40 90
The Support Centre Against Sexual Abuse, Agder	Daytime	Tel. 38 07 11 11
The police	24 hours	Tel. 02800

Elderly people

National Resource Centre for Protection of the Elderly Tel. 80 03 01 96

The Support Centre Against Sexual Abuse, Agder Daytime Tel. 38 07 11 11

The police 24 hours Tel. 02800

People with functional impairment

The Consultation Team in Vest-Agder for Especially Vulnerable Adults with Functional Impairment Daytime Tel. 99 25 71 61

The Support Centre Against Sexual Abuse, Agder Daytime Tel. 38 07 11 11

The police 24 hours Tel. 02800

Honour-related violence

The Competence Team Against Forced Marriage and Genital Mutilation Tel. 47 80 90 50

The Red Cross telephone Daytime Tel. 81 55 52 01

SEIF (self-help for immigrants and refugees) Daytime Tel. 38 07 11 77

IMDi South Daytime Tel. 95 41 79 63

Minority Adviser (office at Kvadraturen School Centre) Daytime Tel. 38 07 73 38/
48 50 99 60

The Support Centre Against Sexual Abuse, Agder Daytime Tel. 38 07 11 11

The police 24 hours Tel. 02800



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