

# Legal Aid NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategy 2021-2023

Promoting access to justice and pursuing excellence in legal services, including for people in domestic and family violence situations, continues to be a priority for Legal Aid NSW. The Strategy includes six key objectives and actions for achieving those objectives. This Strategy also builds on actions in the previous Legal Aid NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategy which operated from 2019-2020.

	OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS
1	Provide people affected by domestic and family violence with high quality, targeted services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Consider the results of our survey into the impact of our services on clients who have experienced domestic and family violence and implement any appropriate improvements to services.</li> <li>(b) Review Legal Aid NSW eligibility policies to ensure access to legal assistance for victims compensation issues relevant to domestic and family violence, and monitor any change to the Victims Support Scheme and impact on our clients.</li> <li>(c) Review existing Legal Aid NSW services for older women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and where that intersects with (their experience of) domestic and family violence and/or financial abuse, identify where we can improve the delivery of our services to better meet their needs.</li> <li>(d) Explore options to improve service delivery for children and young people who are primary victims of domestic and family violence.</li> </ul>
2	Provide innovative models of service delivery to clients affected by domestic and family violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Explore ways to provide more holistic services to children and young people who are subject to an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order.</li> <li>(b) Explore options for expanding legal advice for Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services clients at first mention dates.</li> </ul>
3	Equip our workforce to appropriately respond to clients and colleagues affected by domestic and family violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Review domestic and family violence training provided to all Legal Aid NSW staff and develop an action plan to address any training gaps.</li> <li>(b) Facilitate a workshop with solicitors from the Criminal Law Division, Domestic Violence Unit and other internal stakeholders to explore options to improve solicitors' knowledge and information sharing around Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders, to improve Apprehended Domestic Violence Order outcomes in the Local Court.</li> <li>(c) Develop training for solicitors on how to better tailor Apprehended Domestic Violence Order conditions and to vary Orders to reflect Family Court orders/ parenting arrangements, to increase the number of Orders made by consent.</li> <li>(d) Explore options for additional training for our solicitors to better identify the particular legal needs of older women who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness as a result of (or related to) their experience of domestic and family violence and/or financial abuse.</li> </ul>
4	Support others to provide services to people affected by domestic and family violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Review domestic and family violence training provided to panel practitioners, Community Legal Centres and community workers and develop an action plan to address any training gaps.</li> <li>(b) Develop community legal education for community workers and housing providers who provide services to older women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness as a result of (or related to) their experience of domestic and family violence to increase relevant referrals to Legal Aid NSW.</li> </ul>
5	Develop partnerships that work collaboratively to support people affected by domestic and family violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Explore opportunities for collaboration with the NSW Police Force, Youth Justice and other agencies where relevant to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• better identify and respond to defendants who are primary victims of domestic and family violence.</li> <li>• improve children and young persons' understanding of Apprehended Domestic Violence Order conditions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>(b) Develop a communications strategy for strengthening relationships between Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services and Legal Aid NSW practitioners and panel practitioners.</li> </ul>
6	Undertake strategic advocacy about domestic and family violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Monitor the impact of indefinite and long term Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders on defendants and identify opportunities for strategic advocacy for law and policy reform to address issues.</li> <li>(b) Consider barriers to Persons in Need of Protection being able to vary a provisional Apprehended Domestic Violence Order and advocate for reform.</li> <li>(c) Identify law and policy reform gaps in relation to how the current laws and policies apply to defendants who are primary victims of domestic and family violence and advocate for reform.</li> <li>(d) Advocate for amendments to the Children's Court Domestic Violence Practice Note concerning Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders against children under 14 to improve responses to children who are perpetrators in domestic and family violence matters.</li> <li>(e) Advocate for a more nuanced approach to the prosecution of children for breach of Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders.</li> </ul>