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Step 2: Talking with your staff and community

Step 2 includes:

- communicating with staff

- gathering evidence from your school community.

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Step 2:
Talking with your staff and community

Communicating with staff

While the leadership of key staff and school leaders is vital, a genuine whole school approach requires that all staff, not just those engaged with curriculum delivery, understand the importance of promoting gender equality and respectful relationships to prevent gender-based violence.

All staff in your school will need to be supported to build a culture where gender stereotypes are challenged, gender-based discrimination is unacceptable and gender equality is actively promoted and modelled, in and out of the classroom. Staff also need to be equipped to respond to questions, challenges and disclosures of violence being experienced that may arise from your school's implementation of Respectful Relationships Education.

The best approach to increasing staff understanding will depend on your school structure and culture, but consider some of the following methods:

- provide on-site professional learning sessions, internally or externally facilitated
- encourage regular discussions in whole of staff or team meetings
- display informative posters in staff areas
- use video clips or recent news items to prompt discussion among staff about gender equality and/or gender-based violence
- include communications in staff bulletins and share information and resources on the staff intranet.

It is important to note that staff start with different perceptions, experiences, history and levels of support. Reflecting on something as personal as gender can be confronting. Likewise, discussing gender-based violence can be distressing and potentially traumatic for some staff. It is essential that pathways for support are made clear to all staff, staff are made aware of topics to be discussed in advance of meetings and there is an opportunity to opt-out of curriculum delivery or staff discussions.

Gathering evidence from your school community

Just as this work is personal for the individual, it should be tailored to your school and community. School communities encompass all of those who have an interest in the school, including the students, staff, administrators, parents and family members of students and others. While this Toolkit can support you in developing your approach to Respectful Relationships Education, it's important to make sure what you develop and implement is based on the experience of your school community. The best way to do this is by asking your school community. Creating opportunities for discussion and feedback from staff, students and families is essential to informing your planning and actions. It also means that you're already engaging members of the school community in critical thinking about gender equality and gender-based violence.

An effective whole school approach relies on grounding priority actions and key messages in an understanding of the different perceptions, experiences, history and levels of support of students, staff and families. Creating opportunities for regular feedback from staff and students is the only way to uncover our unconscious bias in areas of potential inequality.

Suggested actions

- Share evidence and information with staff about gender-based violence and gender equality issues and regularly communicate your support for gender equality.

- Discuss school values and/or your staff Code of Conduct (see page 29 of Step 4 for further guidance) at the start of the school year. Use examples to make clear to all staff the link between these agreed values and the promotion of gender equality.

- Brief all staff on gender-based violence and Respectful Relationships Education.

- Ensure school leaders respond consistently to frequently asked questions about Respectful Relationships Education and preventing gender-based violence.

- Create opportunity for staff to provide feedback on their experience of gender equality in their workplace.

- Include questions about gender equality in staff surveys, annual appraisals and exit interviews and review these as a leadership group to identify recurring issues.

- Offer a third-party feedback channel so staff can report issues to someone outside the leadership team.

- Undertake a simple gender analysis by reviewing your organisational chart or staff structure and identifying the ratio of male to female staff in total and in particular roles or departments to identify areas of gender inequality. Ensure this is reflected in the school strategic plan and annual implementation plans.

- Understand and discuss the gender pay gap with school leaders and staff. Undertake a simple gender equality audit by comparing the average salaries earned by male staff and female staff.

- Let your community know about this work and give them an opportunity to be involved using your school newsletter or other form of regular communication with the school community.

What is unconscious bias?

We all perceive situations and make decisions based on our own background, personal experiences, societal stereotypes and cultural context. This can be true for organisations as well as individuals, so it is important to recognise potential areas of unconscious bias or assumptions about the way others experience situations or cultures in your school. Unhelpful stereotypes, unconscious bias and a lack of role models can act as barriers to gender equality, even in a predominately female workplace.

Support resources

- Step 5: Evaluating and monitoring
- List 2: Visual resources for Respectful Relationships Education
- The Line – Articles for Teachers
- Workplace Gender Equality Agency: About gender equality for small business
- Workplace Gender Equality Agency: Three step guide to fairer pay in your organisation

Step 2 Checklist

You have completed Step 2 and are ready for Step 3 if you have:

✓ Developed an understanding among all staff of Respectful Relationships Education, the drivers of gender-based violence, the whole school approach and how all staff can contribute to building a school culture that promotes gender equality among both staff and students.

✓ Given all staff an opportunity to share their perspectives and experience of gender equality in the school as their workplace and school leaders have communicated to staff how they will respond to this feedback.

✓ Communicated with the wider school community about the school's approach to Respectful Relationships Education, and ensured opportunities for consultation with the community.

Step 3:

Understanding where you are at ➔

Glossary

A bystander is someone who sees or hears about an act of sexism, harassment, discrimination or any other form of inappropriate behaviour. People who witness inappropriate behaviour, but aren't involved in an incident (either as an instigator or a target), are increasingly recognised as having the potential to be powerful allies in challenging sexist or discriminatory behaviours and attitudes.

Drivers are the underlying causes that are required to create the necessary conditions in which violence against women occurs. They relate to the particular structures, norms and practices arising from gender inequality in public and private life, but which must always be considered in the context of other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage.

Domestic violence refers to acts of violence that occur in domestic settings between two people who are, or were, in an intimate relationship. It includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse.[4] See also family violence.

Emotional/psychological violence can include a range of controlling behaviours such as control of finances, isolation from family and friends, continual humiliation, threats against children or being threatened with injury or death.[5]

Family violence is a broader term than domestic violence, as it refers not only to violence between intimate partners but also to violence between family members.[6] This includes for example, elder abuse and adolescent violence against parents. Family violence includes violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour that coerces or controls a family member or causes that family member to be fearful.[7] In Indigenous communities, family violence is often the preferred term as it encapsulates the broader issue of violence within extended families, kinship networks and community relationships, as well as intergenerational issues.[8]

Gender refers to the socially learnt roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that any given society considers appropriate for men and women; gender defines masculinity and femininity.[9] Gender expectations vary between cultures and can change over time.[10]

Gender-based violence is usually used to explain violence against women, referring to violence that is specifically 'directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately'. However it is also useful to explain other forms of violence, in recognition that rigid, binary and hierarchical constructions of gender, sex and sexuality are also a driver of violence against people whose experience and/or identity does not conform to such binary definitions, including members of the lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, queer and intersex communities.[11] In Respectful Relationships Education, the term gender-based violence is often used as it is considered to better encompass the experiences of girls and young women than 'domestic violence' or 'violence against women'. The term encompasses the various forms of violence that girls and young women experience, such as dating violence, sexting and revenge porn, and is also inclusive and extends to violence experienced by the lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, queer and intersex communities.

Gender equality[12] involves equality of opportunity and equality of results. It includes the redistribution of resources and responsibilities between women and men and the transformation of the underlying causes and structures of gender inequality to achieve substantive equality. It is about recognising diversity and disadvantage to ensure equal outcomes for all[13] and therefore often requires women-specific programs and policies to end existing inequalities.

Gender equity refers to fairness and justice in the distribution of rights, responsibilities and resources between women and men according to their respective needs.

Gender identity is a person's deeply held internal and individual sense of their gender[14] in how they define themselves in relation to masculine and feminine characteristics.

Gender inequality is the unequal distribution of power, resources, opportunity and value afforded to women and men in a society due to prevailing gendered norms and structures.

Gender roles are the functions and responsibilities[15] expected to be fulfilled by women and men, girls and boys within a given society.

Gender stereotyping is a form of sexism. Gender stereotypes are simplistic assumptions about the behaviours, attributes, skills, differences and roles of women and men. These attributes are often perceived as natural or innate but are more often the result of women and men being socialised in different ways. Gender stereotypes can be positive, for example 'women are naturally caring and nurturing' or negative, for example 'men can't communicate their emotions very well', but they are usually incorrect and based on generalised assumptions about how we believe people will act, what people are good at or what people will like and dislike, simply because of their gender.

Gender transformative approaches move beyond 'gender blind' or 'gender specific' approaches to encourage critical awareness of, and explicitly challenge, harmful gender roles, practices and norms, and shift the unequal distribution of power and resources between women and men.

Gendered drivers are the specific elements or expressions of gender inequality that are most strongly linked to violence against women. They relate to the particular structures, norms and practices arising from gender inequality in public and private life. The gendered drivers are the underlying causes required to create the necessary conditions in which violence against women occurs. They must always be considered in the context of other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage.

Gendered norms consist of a set of dominant beliefs and rules of conduct which are determined by a society or social group in relation to the types of roles, interests, behaviours and contributions expected from girls and boys, women and men.

Gendered practices are the everyday practices, processes and behaviours undertaken at an individual/relationship level, organisational/institutional and societal level that reinforce and perpetuate gendered norms and structures.

Gendered structures are the laws and systemic mechanisms that organise and reinforce an unequal distribution of economic, social and political power and resources between women and men.

Intimate partner violence is any behaviour by a man or a woman within an intimate relationship (including current or past marriages, domestic partnerships, familial relations, or people who share accommodation) that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to those in the relationship. This is the most common form of violence against women.[16]

Respectful relationships refer to relationships among intimate, romantic or dating partners characterised by non-violence, equality, mutual respect and consideration and trust.

Respectful Relationships Education is the holistic approach to school based, primary prevention of gender based violence. It uses the education system as a catalyst for generational and cultural change by engaging schools as both education institutions and as workplaces, to comprehensively address the drivers of gender based violence and to create a future free from such violence.

Settings are environments in which people live, work, learn, socialise and play.

Sex refers to the biological and physical characteristics used to define humans as female or male.

Sex discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than a person of the opposite sex would be treated in the same or similar circumstances. Direct discrimination (for example women and men doing the same job but receiving different pay) and indirect discrimination (for example a policy requirement that all managers must work full time) are both illegal in Australia.

Sexism is discrimination based on gender, and the attitudes, stereotypes and cultural elements that promote this discrimination.[17]

Sexual harassment is unwelcome or unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, which could be expected to make a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment can be obvious or subtle, direct or indirect, physical or verbal, repeated or one off, and can be perpetrated by both women and men against people of the same or opposite sex. Men are most likely to perpetrate sexual harassment against both women and other men, and women are most likely to be the victims of sexual harassment.

Sexual violence is sexual activity that happens where consent is not obtained or freely given. It occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity, such as touching, sexual harassment and intimidation, forced marriage, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual assault and rape.

Social norms are rules of conduct and models of behaviour expected by a society or social group. They are grounded in the customs, traditions and value systems that develop over time in a society or social group.[18]

Socio-ecological model is a feature of public health and is used to demonstrate how violence is a product of multiple, interacting components and social factors.[19] The model conceptualises how the

drivers of violence manifest across the personal, community and social level and illustrates the value of implementing multiple mutually-reinforcing strategies across these levels.

Violence against women is any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life.[20] This definition encompasses all forms of violence that women experience, including physical, sexual, emotional, cultural/spiritual, financial and others, that are gender-based. See also gender-based violence.

Violence prevention refers in Respectful Relationships Education to the primary prevention of gender-based violence. Primary prevention focuses on stopping gender-based violence before it occurs, rather than intervening once an incident has already happened. Primary prevention involves working with whole communities to address the attitudes, behaviours, norms and practices that drive gender-based violence.

Whole School approach refers in Respectful Relationships Education to providing students with multiple exposure to key messages across the curriculum and in different areas of the school and community. It involves engaging not just students, but school staff and the wider school community in the process of cultural change. For example, school staff, including non-teaching staff, might undergo professional learning and development around the drivers of gender-based violence and their role in prevention.

[1] Morgan, A. and Chadwick, H. (2009) *Key issues in domestic violence,* Summary paper, no. 7, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/rip/1-10/07.html.

[2] Council of Australian Governments (2011) *National plan to reduce violence against women and their children 2010-2022*, p. 1, https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/programs-services/reducing-violence/the-national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children-2010-2022.

[3] Morgan, A. and Chadwick, H. (2009). See note 4

[4] Australian Law Reform Commission [ALRC] and New South Wales Law Reform Commission [NSWLRC] (2010) *Family violence: a national legal response: Final report, volume 1*, ALRC Report 114/NSWLRC Report 128, ALRC and NSWLRC, Sydney, p. 17, http://www.alrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/pdfs/publications/ALRC114_WholeReport.pdf.

[5] Stanley, J., Tomison, A.M. and Pocock, J. (2003) *Child abuse and neglect in Indigenous Australian communities*, Child abuse prevention issues no. 19, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/issues/issues19/issues19.pdf.

[6] Australian Women's Health Network (2014) *Health and the primary prevention of violence against women position paper 2014*, http://www.gasgasgas.com.au/AWHN/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/172_AWHNHealthandThePrimaryPreventionofViolenceAgainstWomen2014.pdf.

[7] World Health Organization (2015) *Gender*, Factsheet No. 403, http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs403/en/.

8   Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth (2015). *Change the story: a shared framework for the prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia.* OurWatch, Melbourne, Australia. https://www.ourwatch. org.au/getmedia/0aa0109b-6b03-43f2-85fe-a9f5ec92ae4e/Change-the-story-framework-prevent-violence-women-children-AA-new.pdf

9   Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, opened for signature 1 March 1980, 1249 UNTS 13 (entered into force 3 September 1981) http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No 25, on Article 4, Paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on Temporary Special Measures [3]-[14] http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/General%20recommendation%2025%20(English).pdf, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No 28 on the Core Obligations of States Parties under Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 47th session, UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/28 (16 December 2010) ('General Recommendation 28'); Report on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Thirtieth Session http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/Recommendations.aspx.

10   Australian Women's Health Network (2014). See note 6.

11   Australian Human Rights Commission (2015) *Resilient individuals: Sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex rights*, National Consultation Report, https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/SOGII%20Rights%20Report%202015_Web_Version.pdf.

12   World Health Organization (2015). See note 7

1#   World Health Organization and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (2010) *Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: Taking action and generating evidence*, World Health Organization, Geneva, http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/9789241564007/en/.

14   Australian Women's Health Network (2014). See note 6.

15   VicHealth (2007) *Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne, https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/preventing-violence-before-it-occurs.

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17   This definition derives from United Nations (1993) *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm, and in turn is used in Council of Australian Governments (2011) *National plan to reduce violence against women and their children 2010-2022*, https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/programs-services/reducing-violence/the-national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children-2010-2022.

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