

# Family and Domestic Violence Policy

Effective Date	1 December 2023
Version	1.1
Company	Real Utilities Pty Ltd

The purpose of this policy is to outline our commitment to assisting, respecting, and caring for each affected customer during every interaction.

Family violence can be described as:

- a) Physical abuse, including any use of physical force against another person.
- b) Sexual abuse, encompassing any form of forced or unwanted sexual activity.
- c) Verbal abuse, involving yelling, screaming, or consistently making negative statements about a person.
- d) Emotional abuse, which can be equally harmful.
- e) Social abuse, such as isolating a person from their support networks by preventing them from spending time with family and friends.

Family violence can also have financial implications for affected customers, such as:

- a) Insisting an energy account is in an affected customer's name and refusing to contribute to the cost.
- b) Holding an energy account jointly and refusing to contribute to the cost.
- c) Holding an energy account in the perpetrator's name and not paying bills, resulting in disconnection.
- d) Holding the account in the perpetrator's name and threatening to have the service cut off or disconnect it when they leave the family home.

Real Utilities commits to the following.

1. **Prioritising Customer Safety:**
  - All employees must be trained to recognise signs of domestic violence during customer interactions.
  - Develop a clear protocol for employees to follow when they suspect a customer is experiencing domestic violence, ensuring their safety and confidentiality.
2. **Minimising Repeated Disclosures:**
  - Avoid the need for customers to repeatedly disclose or repeat their experience with Family and Domestic Violence through internal policy and procedures.
3. **Secure Communication Methods:**
  - Offer customers the option to communicate via a secure online portal, email, or through designated customer support agents who have been trained in handling sensitive situations.
4. **Confidential Information Handling:**
  - Strictly adhere to data privacy regulations and protocols when handling customer information related to domestic violence.
  - Maintain separate records or notes for sensitive cases, limiting access to authorised personnel only.

**5. Tailored Support:**

- Assign dedicated case managers to customers affected by domestic violence, who can assess their unique situations and offer personalised assistance.
- Establish clear guidelines for providing financial relief, such as hardship assistance and payment plans, and ensure they are easily accessible to affected customers.

**6. Information Provision:**

- Provide our Family and Domestic Violence support through multiple channels to cater to individual needs.

**7. Specialist Referrals:**

- Train employees to recognise when a customer needs specialised support beyond the company's scope and make referrals to local domestic violence shelters, counselling services, or legal aid organisations.
- Maintain partnerships with these external service providers to facilitate seamless referrals.

**8. Continuous Employee Training:**

- Conduct regular training sessions for all employees, including customer service representatives and field personnel, to increase their awareness of domestic violence issues.
- Ensure employees are well-versed in the company's policies and procedures for handling domestic violence cases.

**9. Documentary Evidence Requirements:**

- Create a clear policy that outlines when and how the company may request documentary evidence from customers.
- Specify that such requests should be made only when necessary for legitimate business purposes, such as debt management or disconnection prevention.

**10. Policy Accessibility:**

- Publish the Family and Domestic Violence Policy on the company's website and provide printed copies upon request.
- Include contact information for local domestic violence support agencies alongside the policy.

**11. Regular Policy Review:**

- Appoint a designated team or individual responsible for reviewing and updating the policy every two years.
- Engage with external experts or organisations specialising in domestic violence to ensure the policy remains in line with best practices and legal requirements.

Outside of Real Utilities, there are many organisations that are here to help you when you need them, a few of them are listed below.

**Government**

- Police Law enforcement services
  - If you or your child/family is in immediate danger phone 000

- Services Australia Centrelink, Medicare, Child Support services – social workers can provide short term counselling, support and information, and refer you to other support services such as Social Work Services
  - Tel: 13 28 50
  - Multilingual, Tel: 13 12 02
  - [www.servicesaustralia.gov.au](http://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au)

## Financial

- National Debt Helpline
  - Free financial counselling services – get help in managing bills and debts
  - Tel: 1800 007 007
  - [www.ndh.org.au](http://www.ndh.org.au)

## Legal

- Community Legal Centres Australia
  - A directory of not-for-profit community law centres in Australia, focusing on the disadvantaged and people with special needs – find legal and related services
  - [www.clcs.org.au](http://www.clcs.org.au)
- Women's Legal Services Australia
  - A national network of community legal centres that specialise in women's legal issues – request legal advice or a referral
  - [www.wlsa.org.au](http://www.wlsa.org.au)

## Wellbeing

- Lifeline Crisis support services
  - Tel: 13 11 14
- 1800 RESPECT
  - Free, confidential family violence and sexual assault counselling services
  - Tel: 1800 737 732 [www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)