

Women's Refuge Herstory

- The first Women's Refuge in New Zealand opened its doors in 1974 in Christchurch, inspired by the efforts of UK based feminists.
- By the mid-1980s a network of refuges were providing safety and support to women and children from Kaitiāia in the north to Invercargill in the South.
- This network of safety and support for vulnerable victims and their children formed, not out of a piece of legislation or any Act of Parliament or a government plan, but out of the passion of a relatively small group of New Zealand women committed to addressing the impacts of men's violence against women.
- This work was entirely unfunded and dependent upon community goodwill

Women's Refuge Herstory

- The National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges was formed in 1981 and a part-time National Coordinator appointed
- The first Maori Women's Refuge opened in Hamilton in 1987 – Te Whakaruruhau – followed later that year by Te Whare Rokiroki in Wellington
- The first Tangata Pasifika Women's Refuge opened in 1989
- Parallel development adopted as a philosophic and operating model for NCIWR in 1985, along with commitments to feminism, collectivism and lesbian visibility

Women's Refuge Today

- Women's Refuge in New Zealand (NCIWR) has 38 member refuges delivering services across 42 sites.
- Eleven of our safe houses are tangata whenua refuges, with tangata whenua staff providing kaupapa Maori services to wahine and tamariki
- We employ approximately 275 FTE staff members who are supported in their work by around the same number of dedicated volunteers
- We work closely with government and non-government partners to provide safety and services to vulnerable women and children
- Our work is 50% government funded, with the remainder sourced through fundraising efforts and philanthropic support

Definition of Domestic Violence

A broad range of controlling behaviours, commonly of a physical, sexual, and/or psychological nature which typically involve fear, intimidation and emotional deprivation.

(Te Rito, 2002)

Some Statistics

- 1 in 3 New Zealand women will experience intimate partner abuse in their lifetime (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004)
- Police responded to more than 100,000 family violence incidents last year – but believe that around 75% of incidents are not reported to them.
- On average 50% of homicides in New Zealand are family-violence related
- Domestic and family violence is estimated to cost the New Zealand economy up to \$8 billion each year through direct costs to employers, services provided by the state and lost productivity

NCIWR Statistics

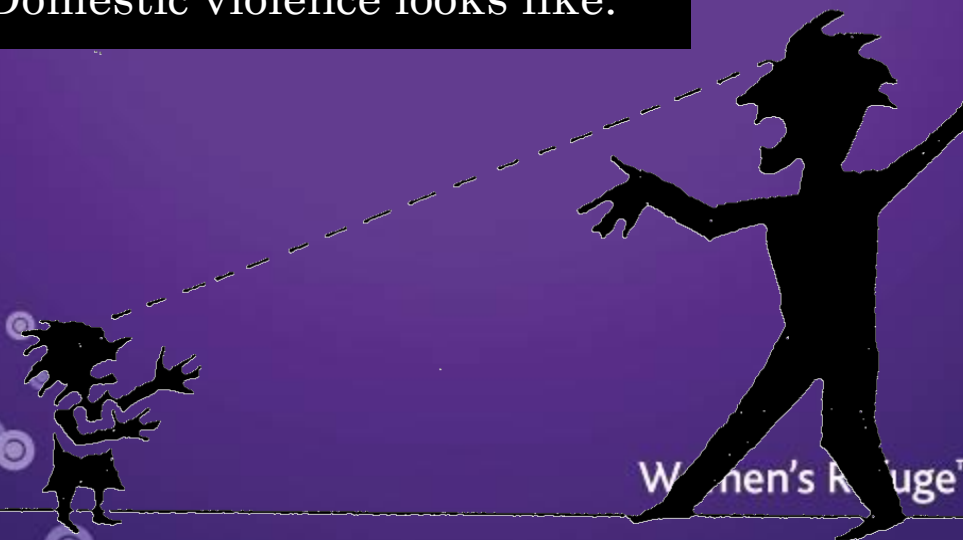
- Women's Refuges take 1 crisis call every 6 minutes
- Each night 209 women and children seek safety in a Women's Refuge safe house
- More than half of the children whose mother's accessed Women's Refuge services last year were under 10 years of age – 30% were under 5.
- 16,507 women and children needed Women's Refuge services in the past financial year

The Difference Between Arguing and Abuse

An argument looks like:



Domestic violence looks like:



Women's Refuge™

BETTER SPEAK UP
MANU KŌRERO

Types of Violence

- Psychological Violence
- Physical Violence
- Sexual Violence
- Economic Violence
- Spiritual Violence

Why do some men abuse women?

- They choose to. In the same way that they choose not to assault their boss when they are angry
- They get away with it. If there are no negative consequences such as being arrested, charged, and convicted, then the message is that their violence is acceptable
- It works. They get what they want (in the short term) one of three things: make her do something, stop her from doing something, or punish her
- Gender roles and the social system. There are still widespread beliefs about men's superiority and their innate right to dominate. Gender role stereotypes and traditions that devalue women contribute to a tolerance of male violence

How violence affects women

- Feelings of shame, embarrassment, anxiety and guilt, self-blame, feeling worthless/ useless, low self-esteem and confidence, living in constant fear, violent thoughts or actions, feeling out of control
- Mental health issues – depression, suicidal thoughts/actions, PTSD, distorted reality, self harming, alcohol and/or drug abuse,
- Social and/or cultural withdrawal, isolation from friends and family, attachment issues with children
- Permanent injury, death

How violence affects children

- Potential cognitive or language problems, developmental delay, stress-related physical ailments (such as headaches, ulcers, and rashes), and hearing and speech problems
- Difficulties in school, including problems with concentration, poor academic performance, difficulty with peer interactions, and more absences from school
- Constant anxiety, stress-related disorders, guilt for not being able to stop the abuse or for loving the abuser
- Children may become withdrawn, non-verbal, and exhibit regressed behaviours such as clinging and whining. Eating and sleeping difficulty, generalized anxiety, and physical complaints (such as headaches) are all common

Myths about Domestic Violence

There are many myths about domestic violence. These myths help continue violence by: making the abuser's actions seem ok; stopping women from seeking help; and stopping others from helping. Understanding the realities behind the myths challenges violence and allows women to come to terms with what is really happening to them, and exposes violence as a social concern not just an individual problem.

These myths include:

- domestic violence is always physical
- if it was that bad she'd just leave
- it only happens in poor, uneducated families
- she asked for/deserved it
- he just lost control or got angry

Myths about Women's Refuge

You have to go into a safe house to access Women's Refuge services

- There are no requirements for accessing Women's Refuge's services. 70% of Women's Refuge work is in the community.
- Women's Refuge will work with women where they're at – both emotionally and physically. If safehouse accommodation is needed, it's there. If not, the staff at Women's Refuge will work with a woman on staying safe wherever she is.

Women's Refuge only works with women, not families

- Women's Refuge will do whatever it takes to keep women and children safe in New Zealand.
- Working with men and families is becoming an increasing aspect of our work and if the woman wants this, we will do it.

The most important things you can do are

- Don't judge
- Listen
- Believe her
- Let her know it's not her fault
- Let her know that there are no excuses: Domestic violence is unacceptable
- Acknowledge the strength and courage it has taken her to get this far

What NOT to say

- Why don't you just leave?
- Think about what this is doing to your children
- How can you still love this person?
- It's all because they were drunk/having a hard time at work
- Their culture is like that
- But they do love you
- They're a good parent
- At least it only happened once....

What you can do

- Be supportive
- Show her some literature about family violence and talk about the topic generally without getting personal
- Allow her to make her own decisions – as long as these don't put her and/or her children in immediate danger
- Be clear about your concerns. Tell her honestly if you are afraid for her life, or if you are concerned about the children.
- Don't make any excuses for the abuser
- Don't be afraid to raise the topic if she doesn't
- Tell her about Women's Refuge services

Learn

- Educate yourself about the many reasons why it is hard for women to leave to ensure any advice you may give is safe.
- Make sure you know what services are available in your community and how these can be accessed

Safety first – don't hesitate

- If you know or suspect that a woman or child's life is in danger or that a child is suffering abuse or neglect, **do not hesitate**. Dial 111 immediately or call CYF on 0508 FAMILY
- For information, if you are worried, or if you just want to talk a situation through, call us on 0800REFUGE

Safety Plans

- Women's Refuge will work with women to create a safety plan that is specific to their situation
- There are plans that can be created for staying, leaving and for after leaving
- More information on safety planning is available on our website: www.womensrefuge.org.nz

How to Contact Us

0800 REFUGE

www.womensrefuge.org.nz

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