

Workforce Development Program on Gender and Disability

Increasing women's wellbeing and preventing violence against women with disabilities are strategic priorities for Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV). A key initiative to support this is the WDV *Workforce Development Program on Gender and Disability*, funded through Victoria's [Action Plan to Address Violence Against Women and Children](#).

The need for violence prevention programs tailored for people with disabilities and the disability sector is well supported. The higher risks of violence against women with disabilities is documented in research such as [Voices Against Violence](#) and [Stop the Silence](#). Further, the [National Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women Survey](#) and the [Scope 1 in 4 Poll](#) have findings indicating a need for tailored prevention programs on violence against women with disabilities.

The *Gender and Disability Workforce Development Program* is designed to change culture across whole organisations, working with clients, staff, managers and executives. The aim is to increase awareness of how to deliver gender equitable and sensitive services as a strategy for improving women's well-being and status and reducing gender based violence.

WDV piloted all Program components throughout 2014/2015 alongside an evaluation process that was completed in August 2015.

Program Components

The piloting of the Gender and Disability Workforce Development Program consists of:

1. Train the Trainer Program
2. Delivery of:
 - Disability Support Workers Workshops
 - Service Management Leadership Workshop
 - Senior Executive Leadership Workshop
3. Peer Education Programs for women with disabilities
4. Follow up Communities of Practice

Train the Trainer

Fundamental to the program is training women with disabilities and workers from women's health and violence prevention and response services to co-facilitate training workshops. This model demonstrates equitable professional relationships with women with disabilities.



Co-Facilitators Jax Brown and Emma Mahony with Gateways Support Services leadership team.

Human Rights and Quality Services: What does gender have to do with it?"

Staff training was piloted with two Victorian disability agencies (Yooralla and Gateways Support Services). As frontline service providers, disability workers and managers are in a key position to support women with disabilities to uphold their right to achieve their goals.

The objective of the program is to improve the quality of gender sensitive practice amongst disability workers by improving their knowledge and skills in regard to:

- Concepts of gender, gender equality, gender relations and sex
- The socio-economic disadvantage of women with disabilities and its impact on social inclusion
- Human rights obligations pertaining to gender and disability
- The relationship between marginalisation, disability, gender stereotypes and violence
- Gender sensitive practice in delivering disability services
- Good practice in health promotion and primary prevention of violence against women

Women with Disabilities: Our Right to Respect

This peer education program allows women with disabilities to build understanding of rights, healthy relationships, what violence is and how to seek support to feel safe. At the same time, participants can build confidence and relationships to improve well-being.

"It's a good idea – women coming together."

Evaluation and next steps

Following completion of the program and encouraging program evaluation findings, extension of funding was announced in July 2015 by the Hon Fiona Richardson, Minister for Women and Minister for Prevention of Family Violence.

"Advocacy and education through this program are fundamental in promoting and upholding the rights of Victorian women with a disability and reducing the risk of gender-based violence."

WDV will be offering disability support organisations the opportunity to participate in the next stage of this exciting cultural change program.

"Great, it was presented by people with disabilities and we hear their take on life"

"It opened my eyes. It flicked a switch and made me more aware".

For more information contact:

Fofi Christou
Gender Equity Program Manager
Women with Disabilities Victoria
Email: fofi.christou@wdv.org.au
Ph: 03 9286 7805

