

# A SKILLS AND CAPABILITY SELF-REFLECTION TOOL

**SAFE+EQUAL**

Standing strong  
against family  
violence



**for working with  
survivor advocates**

This resource has been developed by Safe and Equal and is informed by the **Family Violence Experts by Experience Framework**. Services will need to make their own determination as to the suitability of the information provided to their organisational context and adapt accordingly.

For information about ways in which Safe and Equal can support your organisation to embed lived experience in the design, delivery and evaluation of your services contact [livedexperience@safeandequal.org.au](mailto:livedexperience@safeandequal.org.au)

Authentic engagement with survivor advocates starts with preparation and self-reflection. Use this tool to identify the skills and capabilities you will apply to ensure safe and respectful engagement with survivor advocates.

Your answers to these questions impact how you understand lived experience and ultimately how you relate to and engage with survivor advocates. Engaging with survivor advocates can sometimes feel challenging or uncomfortable, and it requires relinquishing some control. You won't always 'get it right', but you can aim to get better with each engagement by putting in mechanisms for reflection and continuous improvement.

This series of questions will support you to recognise the strengths and experiences you bring to your engagement with survivor advocates, as well as any gaps to your knowledge and confidence, and assist you to identify actions and strategies you can take to address these. It will take about 30 minutes to complete.

#### **A note on language**

**Victim survivor** is used to describe the people – including adults, infants, children and young people – who have experienced family violence.<sup>1</sup>

**Survivor advocate** is used to describe victim survivors that are engaged in formal activities and mechanisms to influence policy development, service planning and practice.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Domestic Violence Victoria (2020). Code of Practice: Principles and Standards for Specialist Family Violence Services for Victim-Survivors. 2nd Edition. Melbourne: DV Vic <https://safeandequal.org.au/working-in-family-violence/service-responses/specialist-family-violence-services/the-code-of-practice/>

2 Lamb K, Hegarty K, Amanda, Cina, Fiona, and the University of Melbourne WEAVERS lived experience group, Parker R. (2020) The Family Violence Experts by Experience Framework: Domestic Violence Victoria. Melbourne, Australia. <https://safeandequal.org.au/resources/family-violence-experts-by-experience-framework/>



## Previous experiences working with survivor advocates

Have you had previous experiences working with victim survivors or survivor advocates?

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What steps did you take to establish trust?

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What did you find challenging? Would you do anything differently this time?

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If you have previous experience working with victim survivors as clients, how might your engagement with survivor advocates be different?

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How do you view or understand victim survivors of family violence?

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What assumptions or biases have you held in the past, or are currently holding? How might you challenge or overcome these?

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## Knowledge and confidence

How confident are you engaging and communicating with survivor advocates?

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Do you have any excitements? Do you have any fears?

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How might you increase your confidence and knowledge to effectively engage survivor advocates?

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What elements of the Experts by Experience Framework and/or Specialist Family Violence Code of Practice can you draw on to support your engagement?

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Survivor advocates may offer perspectives and knowledge different to your own understanding. How would it feel to have your thinking challenged and how might you respond?

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Who can you talk to in order to build your skills in this area? Within your organisation and outside of your organisation?

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## Your lived experiences

How might your own lived experiences of service system navigation, family violence, abuse or trauma turn up in your engagement with survivor advocates?

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What experiences of privilege and/or discrimination do you bring to this work?

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What strategies or supports do you have in place that you might access?

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Who do you feel safe speaking to about this if needed? A safe manager, teammate or Employment Assistance Program?

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## Safety and support

What does a trauma informed approach mean to you?

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How will you ensure you take a trauma informed approach to your work with survivor advocates?

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How will you remain flexible and adaptive in the face of project timelines or deliverables?

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Do you have experience providing support and debriefing? If not, what process would you follow? Is there a manager, teammate or another colleague with skills in this area you might ask to assist?

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Are you confident in identifying and responding to risk and safety issues? If not, what process would you follow? Is there a manager, teammate or another colleague with skills in this area you might ask to assist?

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## Action

Take your answers to these questions to your next supervision, team meeting or community of practice. Use it as a tool to build your skills and capability.

### Reflection questions to ask yourself before an engagement

- Do I feel clear about the purpose of the engagement?
  - Have I given myself time before hand to “get present” and feel prepared?
  - What do I know about the survivor advocates and the other participants?
  - Are there any risks or concerns I should be prepared for?
  - Do I have the support I need to engage well?
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### Reflection questions to ask yourself after an engagement

- What worked well?
  - What could be better next time?
  - What steps could I take to be better prepared next time?
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### Has the engagement left me with questions or concerns I need to talk to someone about?

- Have I thanked the survivor advocate and checked in with them?
  - When will I let them know the outcome of their engagement?
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### Resource Library

- [The Family Violence Experts by Experience Framework](#)
- Addressing power imbalances [video](#) developed by the WEAVERS.
- [Code of Practice](#): Principles and Standards for Specialist Family Violence Services for Victim Survivors
- Experts by Experience Framework launch [webinar](#)
- Parity Article: [Listening to Lived Experience in the Specialist Family Violence Sector](#).
- What other resources can you identify to add to your library?