



## Media release - 19 September 2024

### Health professional support a key response to family, domestic and sexual violence

Today a new Family Safety Pilot Program in the ACT was launched by the Federal Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Justine Elliot. For the first time, primary health care professionals will receive free, tailored, ACT-specific training to recognise and respond to early signs of family, domestic, sexual violence and child sexual abuse (FDSV).

Capital Health Network (CHN) CEO, Stacy Leavens said a General Practitioner is likely to see up to 5 women per week who have experienced some form of intimate partner abuse in the last 12 months.

“Primary health care professionals are often the first point of contact for victim-survivors of FDSV, due to the resulting physical injuries and mental health issues. Therefore, they have an important role in prevention, early identification and appropriate response,” said Ms Leavens, CHN CEO.

CHN has commissioned the Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS) and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre (CRCC) to deliver the pilot over the next 2 years. The Pilot will support primary health care professionals in recognising and responding to early signs of FDSV through:

- RACGP-accredited, free, tailored and trauma-informed training and resources for general practice (clinical and non-clinical staff, including allied health staff within general practices) (Phase 1); training for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and broader allied health professionals (Phase 2).
- Link Workers, embedded within DVCS and CRCC, will facilitate coordination of referrals from general practices to relevant support services and enhance service navigation for victim-survivors.

“The relationship GPs can have with people in our community mean they can be a first point of contact for people experiencing family violence, including children, and those who may be using violence. Prompt, trauma-informed responses from GPs can create an environment which enables someone to feel more confident to connect with community-based support services, including specialist family violence services. DVCS is committed to strengthening relationships and pathways between the family violence and primary health care sectors,” said Sue Webeck, CEO, Domestic Violence Crisis Service.

“The Canberra Rape Crisis Centre welcomes this opportunity to work together with general practice, Allied Health Professionals and non-clinical staff within the medical arena on increasing capability and confidence when responding to disclosures of sexual violence, as well as strengthening knowledge of appropriate referral pathways and supports available to victim survivors in the community. This pilot initiative will support in ensuring the experience of victim survivors is improved through the delivery of appropriate response and seamless referral pathways,” said Kiki Korpinen, Acting CEO, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.

CHN, ACT’s Primary Health Network received \$4.3 million funding from the Australian Government to establish the Family Safety Pilot Program.