

REPORT

**EFFECTIVE
POLICE
TRAINING FOR
FAMILY
VIOLENCE
PROJECT**
SEM 1 2021





THIS REPORT

This document is a Project Report, summarising the work undertaken by the WA Justice Association student Project Team in Semester 1, 2021. The Project Team created a comprehensive Research Paper for their Partner Organisation, EEO Specialists, in consultation with WA Police. Due to the confidential nature of this Project, the final deliverable will not be published publicly. Alternatively, this Project Report highlights some of the key findings from the final Research Paper and provides insight into the work undertaken by WAJA's Policy Analysts on this topic.

ABOUT

The WA Justice Association (**WAJA**) is a not-for-profit organisation and a registered charity with the ACNC. WAJA's mission is to reduce incarceration rates and improve outcomes for people coming into contact with Western Australia's criminal justice system. We hope to achieve this by effecting law/policy reform and promoting student engagement with social justice organisations and the legal community.

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This report has been prepared by Fran Lamont, Shiya Tee, Gen Mascarenhas, Gavin Tay Fernandez, and Rhianna Dehne. Special thanks to Melanie Naylor and Franca Sala Tenna for mentoring and supervising the project respectively.

The WA Justice Association acknowledges Aboriginal people as the traditional owners and custodians of Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We acknowledge and respect Aboriginal Elders past and present, and support emerging leaders across Western Australia and Australia.

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THE PROJECT

Effective Police Training for Family Violence



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Context + Method

The WA Justice Association (WAJA) has developed a research paper which investigates best practice strategies for training police officers to respond effectively to family violence situations.

As part of their Project, the student Policy Analysts conducted desktop research and engaged in consultations with organisations, government agencies and Police departments not only in WA, but also nationally and internationally. The Project Team worked alongside WA Police and considered their goals when drafting the paper, ensuring that it was optimally informative and applicable. The paper also benefited from a number of case studies collected by the Project Team and other organisations they worked alongside. These anonymised recounts added a human element to the paper which described firsthand the impact of family violence on individuals.

The Research

This Project involved a two-phase approach to research which considered both the content and manner of family violence response training.

The first research phase involved a comprehensive study of the nature of family

violence in Western Australia. This included developing a critical understanding of family violence definitions across various sectors, and future potential for legislative improvement. The Research Paper also contextualised the issue of family violence by highlighting some of the key barriers to addressing family violence, and identifying the most at-risk demographics. This research also acknowledged some of the key contextual factors which impact this issue in Western Australia, such as its manifestation in regional and rural areas. This in-depth exploration of the issue was critical to understanding how to best train police officers to respond to instances of family violence.

The second research phase focused on establishing best-practice models for effectively training police officers to respond to family violence situations. The Paper broadly considered effective methods for educating and training police generally, and the strengths and weaknesses of these strategies, before moving on to discuss effective education methods for specialised training. Importantly, the Research Paper also detailed the best methods for measuring the effectiveness of different training strategies. The Project Team also had the initiative to consider future projections and teaching methods such as online learning and virtual reality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A key element of the Project, and important feature of the final deliverable, was the development of recommendations relating to both the manner and content of training for first responders to family and domestic violence (FDV) situations. Based on their research, the Project Team drafted recommendations regarding both educational strategies for delivering training to an entirely Police-based audience, and the areas which would be beneficial to include in the training's substantive content.

The final Research Report proposed a range of recommendations, some of these include:

Training Manner

- *Adopt problem-based learning techniques to teach FDV concepts and promote critical thinking.*
- *Ask questions or open the floor to audience contribution to promote participation for increased engagement.*
- *Engage multiple senses through multi-modal learning techniques. Provide accompanied readings and modules to complement the face-to-face content.*
- *Simulate real-life scenarios through analysing case studies in which police have successfully or unsuccessfully intervened in a FDV incident.*
- *Design the training to be comprised of various components that can be used or omitted in the police training depending on the audience.*
- *Implement the voices of FDV victims in scenario-based training.*

Training Content

- *Provide training on recent amendments to FDV legislation and covert forms of FDV, including economic abuse.*
- *Include training regarding the issue of the potential dangers of criminalisation of victims.*
- *Include training on the nuances and breadth of FDV typologies. This training should be informed by both legal and non-legal definitions of FDV.*
- *Train officers on how to question people with disabilities, with a particular focus on intellectual disabilities and mental illness.*
- *Develop training for de-escalation techniques, with particular focus on engagement with people under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.*
- *Design specific training to educate officers on Elder Abuse and how it operates within Aboriginal family structures, including examples i.e. financial abuse.*





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