MWA Guide: Domestic Violence and Homelessness Services

First Contact:

1. What services does Muslim Women Australia provide for women experiencing domestic violence or at risk of homelessness?

Muslim Women Australia (MWA) supports women experiencing or at risk of homelessness through crisis and transitional accommodation, case management, financial assistance and referrals, support with Centrelink and housing applications, advocacy and support letters, access to financial counselling and Legal Aid NSW, community programs, and the provision of fresh and frozen meals.

2. Who can access these services? Are there eligibility requirements?

Eligibility varies depending on the service. Crisis and transitional accommodation is available to mothers and their children who are escaping domestic and family violence and or are at risk of homelessness. Assistance with Centrelink and housing matters is generally available to Australian citizens and permanent residents. Access to financial counselling, Legal Aid NSW referrals, community programs, and fresh and frozen meals is available to anyone who requires support and assistance.

3. How can someone reach out for help?

People can access MWA services by contacting us via phone, submitting an enquiry through the MWA website, or visiting MWA office in person during operating hours.

4. Is the service confidential?

Yes. MWA provides confidential services, and client information is handled respectfully and in line with privacy and confidentiality requirements.

5. Can someone contact the service on behalf of another person?

Yes. Family members, friends, professionals, or other support services can contact MWA on behalf of someone seeking assistance and can also make referrals to our services.

During the Consultation:

1. What usually happens during the first consultation?

The first consultation involves an intake and assessment process between the client and an MWA staff member. This helps gather essential information, including identification, demographic and contact details, while also assessing any risks, safety concerns, immediate needs, and health and wellbeing issues. The purpose is to understand the client's circumstances and determine the most appropriate support, service, or intervention.

2. What kind of questions will be asked?

Clients may be asked about their personal details, including their name, date of birth, address, cultural background, and languages spoken. Other questions may relate to family circumstances, such as whether they have children, as well as citizenship or residency status, year of arrival in Australia, current safety and accommodation situation, employment status, health and wellbeing concerns (including any disabilities), access to finances or bank accounts, and the type of support or services they are seeking.

3. Is the consultation face-to-face, over the phone, or online?

Intake assessment is done over the phone or face to face.

4. How long does it typically take?

The length of an intake assessment can vary depending on the client's circumstances, needs, and the complexity of the issues being discussed. Generally, an intake assessment takes between 15 and 30 minutes. However, it may be shorter for straightforward enquiries or longer if there are significant safety concerns, housing issues, or other complex support needs that require further assessment.

5. Can women bring a support person or children with them?

Yes. Clients are welcome to have a support person with them during appointments, and they may also bring their children if needed.

6. Are interpreters or culturally sensitive supports available?

Yes. MWA has access to interpreting services and is committed to providing faith and culturally safe, inclusive, and sensitive support that respects each client's religious, cultural, linguistic, and individual needs.

7. What if someone feels uncomfortable sharing certain information?

Clients are encouraged to share information at their own pace and can choose not to disclose information they feel uncomfortable discussing. Staff will explain why certain information may be helpful and will respect the client's choices wherever possible.

8. How does the organisation ensure privacy and respect during the conversation?

MWA follows strict confidentiality and privacy policies to ensure clients feel safe and respected. Client information is not shared without consent, except where required by law or for safety reasons. Case notes and documents are securely stored in protected systems, and conversations are conducted in safe and confidential settings. Clients are informed about how their information will be used, and their consent is sought before information is recorded or shared with other services.

Understanding Needs & Support

1. How does the team assess someone's situation and needs?

The team assesses a client's situation through an intake and assessment process that focuses on understanding their goals, challenges, preferences, and expectations. Staff use active listening and open-ended questions to identify immediate needs, risks, strengths, and the most appropriate supports and services.

2. What types of support might be offered?

Depending on the client's circumstances, MWA may provide crisis and temporary accommodation, case management, financial assistance, referrals to Legal Aid NSW and financial counselling services, support with Centrelink and Housing, and opportunities to connect with the community through events and programs.

3. Are there faith-based or culturally specific supports available?

Yes. MWA provides a range of faith and culturally responsive support services, particularly for Muslim women, while welcoming and supporting people from all backgrounds.

4. How quickly can support be provided in urgent situations?

For clients experiencing a crisis or requiring immediate assistance, MWA aims to provide support as quickly as possible. This may include emergency accommodation, food assistance, safety planning, and referrals to appropriate services based on the client's immediate needs.

What Happens Next:

1. What happens immediately after the consultation?

Following the intake and assessment, the MWA intake worker will assess the client's level of risk and urgency. Based on this assessment, the client may be referred to an appropriate MWA case worker, who will work with them to develop a case plan outlining their needs, goals, concerns, and required support services.

2. Will the person be assigned a case worker?

Yes. Clients who require ongoing support will be assigned a case worker to assist them in achieving their goals and accessing relevant services.

3. How long does it take to receive support or housing assistance?

The timeframe varies depending on the client's circumstances and the availability of services. If a client is experiencing homelessness or is at immediate risk to their safety, MWA aims to provide urgent assistance, including crisis accommodation and food support, as quickly as possible.

4. What if accommodation isn't available right away?

If accommodation is not immediately available through MWA, staff will assist by providing referrals and contact information for other organisations and services that may be able to offer housing or accommodation support.

5. Are there follow-up appointments or ongoing support?

Yes. Clients can receive ongoing case management and follow-up support. Regular contact and reviews help clients work towards their goals and ensure they continue to receive appropriate assistance as their circumstances change.

6. What responsibilities does the client have moving forward?

Clients are encouraged to actively participate in the support process by providing accurate information, engaging with agreed actions, communicating their needs, respecting service boundaries, and reaching out when additional support is required.

7. Can someone continue receiving support long-term?

Yes. Ongoing support may be available depending on the client's needs, goals, and eligibility for MWA services. Support plans are regularly reviewed by the client and their case worker, and clients may continue receiving assistance as they progress from high-risk situations to more stable circumstances.

Extra info:

1. What should a person prepare for a consultation

To ensure a productive and supportive consultation, MWA staff prepare a safe and private space for the conversation, gather relevant service information, and take a culturally responsive and client-centred approach. The consultation follows a clear structure that includes explaining consent and confidentiality, exploring the client's needs and goals, identifying any risks or concerns, and discussing appropriate support options and next steps.

2. What do you wish a client feels after they leave

We hope every client leaves feeling safe, respected, heard, and understood. Our aim is for clients to experience a sense of relief and reassurance, knowing that support is available and that they do not have to face their challenges alone. We want clients to feel empowered, hopeful, and confident in their ability to work towards stability, independence, and a positive future.