Having the conversation

If you have seen or heard something that concerns you, trust your gut. Many people are reluctant to 'get involved' because they don't know what to say or how to say it. So take a moment to think things through. What did you actually see or hear? What words can you use to describe it that don't make any accusations? There may be several explanations. Don't jump to conclusions.

Your role is to show you care and open the door for support. Ask… Are you OK?

Tell your tenant what you have noticed. Stick to the facts. Let them know that you are concerned. Remember, you may be wrong. They may deny it. They may not trust you. Or may not be ready to deal with the situation. But just knowing you care may make a big difference.

If they open up to you about what is happening:

- Tell them you believe them
- Thank them for trusting you
- Ask if there is anything you can do to help
- Ask if there is someone else they would rather talk to
- Let them know there are services that can help
- Give them information not advice

Refer tenants to the provincial government toll-free **Family Violence Info Line: 310-1818**

The Info Line will do an assessment of the risks the tenant is facing and, if appropriate, help them develop a safety plan.

You can download business cards with the number for the Family Violence Info Line on it from the Alberta government. Keep a few of the business cards handy so you can give a tenant one discreetly.

Signs that things may get worse include:

- History of domestic violence
- Actual or pending separation
- Loss of job
- Access to firearms

If you think anyone is in danger call the police: 911

If you think children may be at risk, you MUST report it to Child and Family Services: 1-800-638-0715

Your role is NOT to tell a tenant what to do or how to fix the problem.

- Don't be judgmental or jump to conclusions.
- Don't 'take charge'. You don't actually know what is going on or what their choices really are.
- Don't make promises you can't keep.
- You are not a social worker or a counsellor. Refer the tenant to someone who is.

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Frequently Asked Questions

What about the tenant's privacy?

Of course you don't want to be seen as meddling, get caught in the middle of a dispute, or even become the target of a tenant's anger. But everyone has a role to play in helping people experiencing domestic violence. Most people experiencing domestic violence don't just call the police or go to a shelter. They talk to someone they trust. So, create the opening. Let your tenant choose whether to take it.

What do I do about what they tell me?

If the tenant or someone else is in immediate danger, call the police at 911. Safety is more important than privacy!

If children may be at risk, you MUST report it. Even if the children are not being physically abused, just being exposed to violence in the home is harmful. Don't promise that you won't.

In other cases, you should assure the tenant that you will respect their privacy and that you will treat what they have told you as confidential. You may be upset by what you have been told and need to talk to someone yourself. If so, talk to someone at an agency that helps people experiencing domestic violence. They will treat what you tell them as confidential and will help you deal with your reaction.

What if the tenant won't do anything?

Unless someone is in immediate danger, it is up to the tenant to decide what to do. It likely won't be a simple decision. Don't judge. Knowing that you care will be important as they deal with the situation.

What if it is a child who tells me what's happening?

Stay calm, listen carefully, and write down what you hear as soon as possible using the child's words. Read the *Handy Resource: How Albertans can help* for more advice.

If you think the child is at risk you MUST report it. Call 1-800-638-0715.

Handy Resources

Alberta Government

Family Violence Info Line – business card

How Albertans can help – website

Reporting a Child in Need – tip sheet

Neighbours, Friends and Families

SNCit Conversations: See, Name and Check the warning signs – tip sheet

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Domestic Violence and the Law: Planning to Leave – info sheet

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