

Having the conversation

Are you OK?

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 her know that you are concerned. Remember, you may be wrong. She may deny it. She may not trust you. Or she may not be ready to deal with the situation. But just knowing you care may make a big difference.

If she opens up to you about what is happening:

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

Refer her to the provincial government toll-free **Family Violence Info Line: 310.1818**.

They will do an assessment of the risks she is facing and, if appropriate, help her develop a safety plan. You can order 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 her one discretely.

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 her what to do or how to fix her problem.

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

Frequently asked questions

What about her 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 victims of domestic violence. Most women don't just call the police or go to a shelter. They talk to someone they trust. So, create the opening. Let her choose whether to take it.

What do I do about what she tells me?

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. Report it. Don't promise her that you won't. **If she or someone else is in immediate danger, call the police at 911.** Safety is more important than privacy!

In other cases, you should assure her that you will respect her privacy and treat what she has told you as confidential. You may be upset by what she has told you and need to talk to someone yourself. If so, talk to someone at an agency that helps victims of domestic violence. They will help you deal with your reaction.

What if she won't do anything?

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

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

Stay calm, listen carefully, write down what you hear as soon as possible using the child's words. Read the Handy Resource: *How Can I Help* for more advice. **If you think the child is at risk you MUST report it. Call 1.800.638.0715.**

Handy resources

Alberta Human Services

Family Violence Info Line - Business card

<https://bit.ly/1r70Fv2>

How Can I Help (about talking to a child) - website

<https://bit.ly/2doZ9cN>

Reporting a Child in Need - tip sheet

<https://bit.ly/2GkfI35>

Neighbours, Friends and Families

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

<https://bit.ly/2pMrvQu>

Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta

If you are thinking of leaving – tip sheet

<https://www.cplea.ca/ThinkingOfLeaving.pdf>