

Name of Policy: **FAMILY VIOLENCE POLICY**

Policy Developer: Board of Elders

Policy Formulation: **Dates**

SLT: September 2015

Board of Elders: 25th August 2016

Policy Implementation: **MultiSite Leadership Team**

Document History and Version Control Table

Version Number	Author	Approved by (e.g. Elders, SLT) & Date:	Brief Description
1.0	Exec	B.O.E. 25/08/16	New policy
1.1	Exec	BoE 2/3/2017	Minor amendments to improve on the procedures and clarify some definitions
1.2	Business Manager	Business Manager 22/05/2017	Correct definition of CityLife, and usage in policy.
1.3	Business Manager	Business Manager 16 th August 2018	Update of new Contact Persons details
1.4	Business Manager	BoE-28 March 2019	Scheduled review – minor updates within definitions, Response to FV and Procedures
1.5	Executive Minister	BoE 30 June 2022	Update of reporting flowchart, duty of care and response to FV, contact details and related policies

1. RATIONALE

CityLife has a zero tolerance for violence of any form to men, women or children, including family violence, and is committed to providing a safe place for all people, including people who have experienced or are at risk of family violence, and their family members, across all of our congregations, services and worksites.

Family violence differs from conflict, it refers to a range of abusive and controlling behaviours, both physical and non-physical, that make a person feel fearful, intimidated, threatened and powerless.

The Victorian Family Violence Protection Act 20081 defines family violence as behaviour by a person towards a family member that is:

- Physically or sexually abusive

- Emotionally or psychologically abusive
- Economically abusive
- Threatening
- Coercive
- Or in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of themselves or another family member¹.

At CityLife we also consider Spiritual Abuse as a form of family violence.

This policy outlines the position CityLife takes on family violence and how personnel will respond to family violence within CityLife in a sensitive and culturally responsive manner.

A person's experience of FV is informed by multiple identities and circumstances. This policy considers the intersectionality of age, gender identity, cultural background, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, religion, visa status, class, socio-economic status, ability (including physical, neurological, cognitive, sensory, intellectual or psychosocial impairment and/or disability) and geographic location, plus gender inequality, when responding to family violence.²

2. BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Lord tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence
Psalm 11:5

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, contractors and volunteers of CityLife.

This policy applies in the instance where there is:

- a report from a person (either directly or indirectly) that they are a victim of family violence; and/or
- a reasonable belief that a person is experiencing family violence.

4. DEFINITIONS

Aboriginal definition of family violence: The Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force defined family violence in the context of Aboriginal communities as 'an issue focused around a wide range of physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses that occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities.'

¹ Family Violence Protection Act 2008, Parliament of Victoria, Melbourne, accessed 20 September 2016.

It extends to one-on-one fighting, abuse of Indigenous community workers as well as self-harm, injury and suicide.’ The definition also acknowledges the spiritual and cultural perpetration of violence by non-Aboriginal people against Aboriginal partners which manifests as exclusion or isolation from Aboriginal culture and/or community.³

Adolescent who uses family violence: A young person who chooses to use coercive and controlling techniques and violence against family members, including intimate partners. Adolescents who use family violence often coexist as victims of family violence.

Affected Person: A person who has or is experiencing Family Violence.

Child/Young person: Any person under the age of 18.

CityLife: Encompassing both CityLife Church and CityLife Community Care.

CityLife Personnel: Employees, contractors and volunteers of CityLife involved in providing pastoral care or managing volunteers in any activity of the church, or involved with services provided by CityLife Community Care.

Coercive control: pattern of domination that includes tactics to isolate, degrade, exploit and control, as well as to frighten or hurt another physically. It is an assault on one’s dignity, liberty, autonomy and personhood, as well as to their physical and psychological integrity.⁴

Culturally safe responses: To practice in a culturally safe way means to respond collaboratively, with care and insight for a person’s culture, while being mindful of one’s own. A culturally safe environment is one where people feel safe and where there is no challenge or need for the denial of their identity.

Economical abuse: includes denying the victim access to money, including their own. Demanding that the family live on inadequate resources. Incurring debt in the victim’s name. Making significant financial decisions without consulting the victim. Selling the victim’s possessions.

Elder abuse: Is any harm or mistreatment of an older person that is committed by someone with whom the older person has a relationship of trust. In the context of family violence, this may be elder abuse by any person who is a family member (such as their partner or adult children) or carer. Elder abuse may take any of the forms defined under ‘family violence’.

Emotional abuse: includes any behaviour that deliberately undermines the victim’s confidence (for example, that leads her to believe they are stupid, useless, or even crazy or insane). Acts that humiliate, degrade and demean the victim. Threatening to harm the victim, their friend or family member; to take their children; or to commit suicide. Silence and withdrawal as a means to abuse.

³ State of Victoria, Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities — 10 year plan, Second Edition, 2008.

⁴ Stark.E. (2012). Re-presenting Battered Women: Coercive Control and the Defense of Liberty.

Threatening to report the victim to authorities such as Centrelink or Immigration.

Family Violence (FV): Has the meaning set out in section 5 of the Family Violence Protection Act which is summarised here as any behaviour that occurs in family, domestic or intimate relationships that is physically or sexually abusive; emotionally or psychologically abusive; economically abusive; threatening or coercive; or is in any other way controlling that causes a person to live in fear for their safety or wellbeing or that of another person. In relation to children, family violence is also defined as behaviour by any person that causes a child to hear or witness or otherwise be exposed to the effects of the above behaviour. This definition includes violence within a broader family context, such as extended families, kinship networks and communities.

FV forms: Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse, social abuse, spiritual abuse or other coercive controlling or intimidating behaviours.

FV Risk Factors: Evidence-based factors that are associated with the likelihood of family violence occurring or the severity of the risk of family violence. Examples include: Reported current or past abuse (of any form), planning to leave or has recently left an abusive relationship, pregnancy, choking, unusually controlling or dominant behaviour, stalking, belief in strict gender or cultural roles (e.g. women are to be submissive and men control and make the decisions), report of an actual or an application for a FV intervention order.

Family Member: A member of the perpetrator's family, or someone who is or has been in an intimate relationship with the perpetrator. In Aboriginal and some other communities, the definition of family may include kinship groups and other community members.

Imminence of risk: Likelihood of risk of harm or death escalating immediately or within a short timeframe.

Perpetrator: Someone who threatens the safety of an individual or their dependants, within the definition of Family Violence in this policy.

Perpetrator accountability: The process by which the perpetrator themselves acknowledge and take responsibility for their choices to use family violence and work to change their behaviour.

Physical abuse: Includes showing lack of consideration for the victim's physical comfort or safety (such as dangerous driving). Pushing, shoving, hitting, slapping, choking, hair-pulling, punching or using weapons. Destroying possessions (Note: acts are physically abusive even if they do not result in physical injury)

Qualified Personnel: Those persons who are formally qualified and trained in working with people at risk, such as counsellors, psychologists, social workers and CityLife Community Care personnel.

Reasonable Belief: A reasonable belief requires the existence of facts that are sufficient to induce the belief in a reasonable person. Belief requires something more than suspicion.

A 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- a person states they are in fear of someone or something,
- a person states that they know someone who may be in a difficult relationship (sometimes the person may be talking about themselves),
- professional observations of the person's behaviour lead a person to form a belief that the person may be at risk of harm to self or from others.

Sexual abuse: includes rape (which includes being forced to perform unwanted sexual acts, or to have sex with others). Being pressured to agree to sex. Unwanted touching of sexual or private parts Causing injury to the victim's sexual organs. Note: forced sex is a criminal offense even in marriage.

Social abuse: includes isolating the victim from their social networks and supports, either by preventing them from having contact with their family or friends or by verbally or physically abusing them in public or in front of others. Continually putting friends and family down so the victim is slowly disconnected from a support network. Preventing the victim from having contact with people who speak their language and/or share their culture.

Spiritual abuse: includes ridiculing or putting down the victim's beliefs and culture. Preventing the victim from belonging to or taking part in a group that is important to their spiritual beliefs or practising their religion. Note: this can include misusing scriptures to maintain power and control.

Unqualified Personnel: Those persons; employees, volunteers, and others, without formal qualifications or training in working with people at risk.

Verbal abuse: includes screaming, swearing, shouting, put-downs, name-calling, and using sarcasm. Using words as a weapon to cause significant damage.

5. CityLife Family Violence Contact Officers

Nominated Contact Officers are:

- The CLCC Director
 - PH: 03 9871 8907
 - Email: riskmanager@citylife.care
- The CityLife Associate Minister - Pastoral
 - PH: 03 9871 8321
 - Mobile: 0403 231 130
- Safe Ministries Manager
 - PH: 03 9871 8905

6. POLICY STATEMENT

The Board of Elders of CityLife Church and the Board of Management of CityLife Community Care (CLCC) have a zero tolerance of Family Violence (FV) and are committed to the ongoing training of CityLife personnel in the content and application of this Family Violence Policy.

6.1 Related policies

In addition to the CityLife Family Violence policy, CityLife Personnel must have a thorough knowledge of the following policies:

- CityLife Church Person at Risk policy
- CityLife Community Care Person at Risk policy
- CityLife Child Protection Policy

Note: Children require a specific duty of care. Protection of children concerns are to be actioned in accordance with the Child Protection Policy.

CityLife Personnel must also have read and be familiar with the following policy and procedures:

- Emergency Management Policy
- CLCC Incident Procedures

6.2 Duty of Care

CityLife personnel who suspect or who are advised of family violence, have a responsibility to:

In general:

- Ensure services are offered in a safe and secure environment.
- Prioritise the safety of the affected person and any dependants.
- Work only within the area of their training, expertise or role boundaries, referring to other persons or services as necessary.
- Be aware of imminence of risk to all parties.

Specific to Family Violence:

- Be aware that children and young people are recognised as victim survivors in their own right and may need separate risk assessment and management.
- Alert the affected person appropriately if the affected person does not seem to have understood the level of risk to themselves or others, or if they have minimised it.
- Report or refer all matters of concern relating to FV to an immediate supervisor or a CityLife contact officer as specified in this policy in the first instance; or to the police and/or specialist family violence service, in line with the [Reporting Procedure](#) in this policy.

- Undertake regular training commensurate with their role at CityLife in order to keep informed of changes to best practice and legislation in the area of FV, appropriate to their level of responsibility.
- Understand and be able to implement emergency procedures pertaining to the relevant CL premises, including responses to a FV related civil disturbance or a threat to an individual's safety.
 - In the first instance, these procedures are detailed in the Emergency Management Policy and Procedures, in the Civil Disorder/Disturbance clause, a Building Services Policy in the Staff Manual.
 - Specific procedures apply to any incident in CLCC. These are detailed in the CLCC Incident Procedures, a Building Services Policy in the Staff Manual.

6.3 Response to Family Violence

All aspects of a response to FV must adhere to the following principles:

- FV is a fundamental violation of human rights and unacceptable in any form. Behaviours that constitute FV are completely unacceptable.
- The safety of all individuals, including the affected person and their dependants, is of paramount consideration, and the first priority, in determining any response.
- Children and dependants need to be protected from harm and to have their rights protected.
- Promote the accountability of perpetrators of family violence for their actions through the process of alerting authorities where there is a reasonable belief and/or evidence of serious and imminence of risk.
- Responses to FV must recognise and address power, resource and opportunity imbalances, and gender inequality between those using violence and those experiencing violence.
- Responses to FV will be trauma-informed and victim-centred.
- Responses to FV will recognise the unique challenges faced by Aboriginal people and communities, people from diverse communities, older people and those with disability challenges.
- Information collected will be shared in accordance with the CityLife Church and CityLife Community Care Privacy Policies and with relevant authorities in accordance with relevant information sharing schemes/ legal requirements.

The primary objectives of any response to FV are to ensure:

- restoration of the affected person, through providing appropriate support at CityLife and/or through referral to specialist FV support in appropriate external agencies, and
- restoration of the family relationship, only where appropriate and when safe to do so.

CityLife's response to the affected person must:

- respect their agency, identity and unique situation (including their culture, family structure, and own assessment of level of risk)
- be non-judgemental and sensitive
- consider other factors that must also be addressed to ensure an appropriate response, including but not limited to ethnicity, age, sexuality, disability, mental health, gender and marital status
- acknowledge the efforts made by affected persons to prevent or minimise harm to themselves and to their dependants
- meet the specific needs of those affected, including practical needs where possible
- implement measures to protect the safety for those affected and their dependants
- consider the safety of dependants may require specific referral and reporting (as outlined in the CL Child Protection Policy)
- make necessary reports internally, and to external authorities, where appropriate
- make referrals to specialist FV agencies.

6.4 Information

During the process of assisting those affected by FV, it will be important to collect and record relevant information. This will assist in assessing the risks to persons involved and determining appropriate responses and subsequent actions.

6.4.1 Collecting Information

All collection and sharing of information is governed by the Privacy Policy.

When collecting information, the individual should be reminded of the appropriate Privacy Policy and must be made aware:

- of the purposes for which the information is being collected,
- that information can be shared with consent,
- that information can be lawfully shared even without consent in some circumstances, and
- of the possible consequences of sharing information.

6.4.2 Sharing Information Collected

Sharing of Information or referring a person to another service involves the transfer of information from one party to another.

Sharing information appropriately helps to ensure that those affected by FV receive support and assistance in a timely and effective manner from those best equipped to provide it. This in turn increases the likelihood of safety for individuals and their dependants.

All sharing of information will be undertaken in accordance with the CityLife Community Care Person at Risk Policy and the appropriate CityLife Privacy Policy.

6.5 Risk Assessment

A Risk Assessment must be completed for all situations involving FV.

All Risk Assessments are to be performed by qualified personnel in compliance with the CityLife Person at Risk policies. A risk assessment is intended to identify factors which may threaten the physical, emotional and/or psychological safety of a person or their dependants.

Family Violence is recognised across a spectrum of seriousness of risk (from 'at-risk' to 'elevated risk' to 'serious risk').

A risk assessment:

- seeks to determine if a person is at risk of family violence and then determine the seriousness of the risk,
- understand the protective and risk factors experienced by an affected person and any dependants,
- evaluates the likelihood of the escalation of violence and potential severity of future violence,
- considers the needs of all family members,
- needs to be regularly reviewed through monitoring and assessment, as risk is dynamic and can change over time,
- is formally recorded,
- considers whether it is safe to engage the client in couple counselling, and
- considers what risk management and safety planning need to be in place.

6.6 Risk Management

All Risk Management is to be performed by qualified personnel in compliance with CityLife Person at Risk Policies. Risk Management is intended to respond to and reduce the level of violence and minimise the risk of future violence to the affected person.

Risk Management:

- a) includes the affected person and all family members in decision-making,
- b) makes safety of the affected person and dependants as its first priority,
- c) seeks to improve the safety of the affected person and any dependants,
- d) includes a tailored safety plan to address risk factors identified in the risk assessment. This typically refers to planning to avoid serious injury, to escape violence, and to ensure the safety of dependants,
- e) makes appropriate referrals or shares information internally and where appropriate externally, in consultation with the affected person, as per clause 6.4.2 of this policy,

- f) plans to address the needs of the affected person, utilising specialist services that might include, but are not limited to:
 - I. Counselling
 - II. Note: Couples counselling should not be recommended for couples experiencing FV. Advocacy
 - III. Legal services
 - IV. Practical assistance
 - V. Referral to specialist FV service/agency
- g) provides a consistent response to the perpetrator, a standardised and consistent message about how the matter is being dealt with by CityLife if approached by the perpetrator, and
- h) is scheduled for regular monitoring and review.

6.7 Training

Ongoing training will be provided to CityLife Personnel according to the level of responsibility and likely or anticipated exposure to situations and persons affected by FV. A tiered approach is required for FV training, commensurate with the requirements of the various roles at CityLife.

Level 1 - Universal awareness and understanding training, available to unqualified personnel and volunteers, including Life Group Leaders

Level 2 – Only for staff directly involved in the pastoral care of people at CityLife, staff who manage volunteers in their ministry area and staff who work with CLCC clients.

Level 3 - for personnel who are formally qualified and trained in working with people at risk, including the provision of secondary consultation, risk assessment and risk management e.g. CLCC team leaders, Counsellors or Psychologists

7. PROCEDURES

Where a reasonable belief is formed that FV does, or is likely to exist, through observations, indirect admission, direct report, or some other means, the following actions, from the FV Response Checklist on the 'Person at Risk' Intranet Page, are to be applied where appropriate:

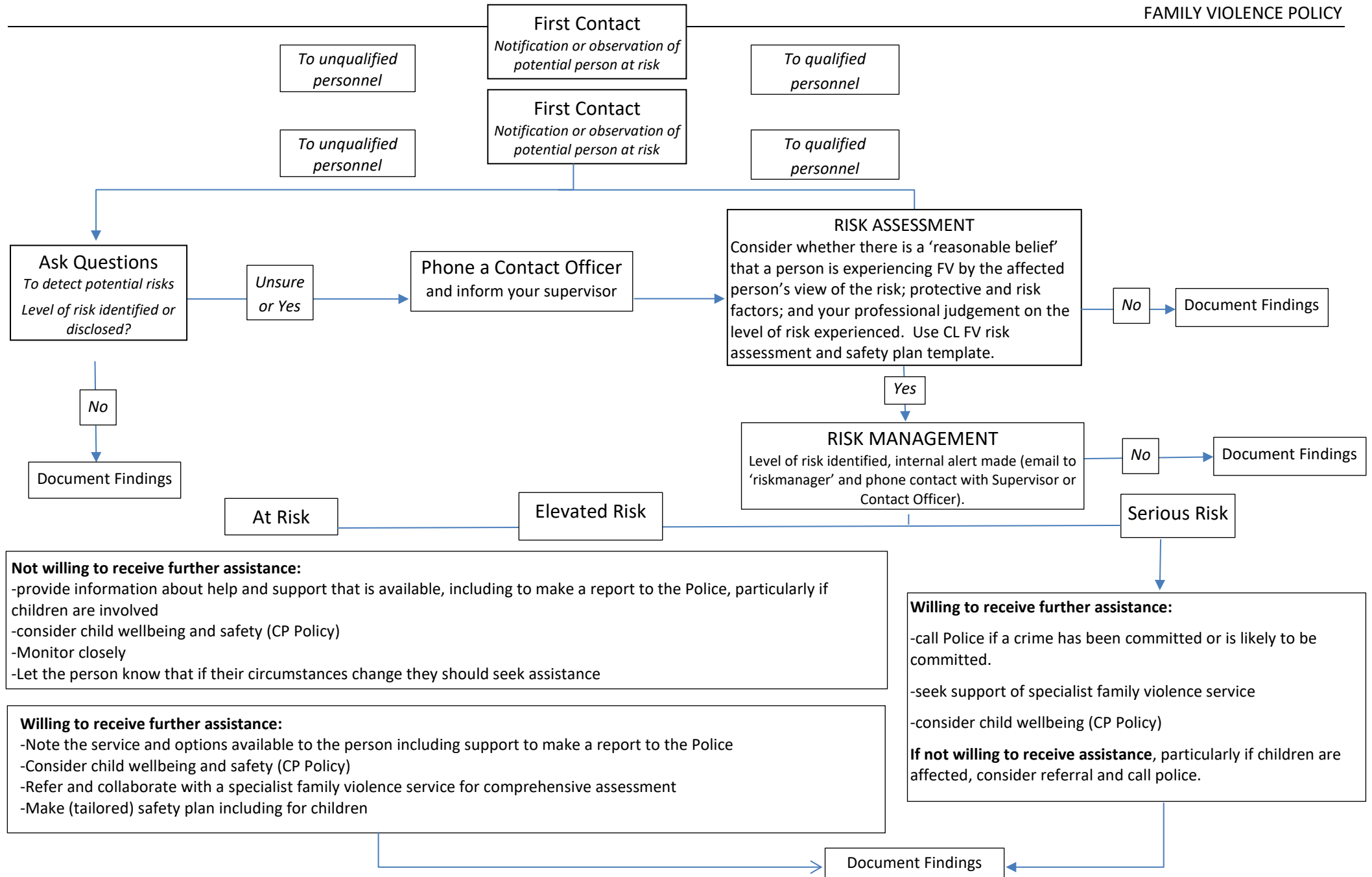
7.1 FV Response Checklist

7.1.1 Unqualified Personnel:

- Consider all FV risk factors that you are observing or being informed of, seeking advice from and reporting suspected or actual FV to your supervisor or a contact officer.
- Where there is a serious and imminent threat to life, health, safety or welfare of the affected person or their dependants, ring the police on "000" and inform one of the CityLife Contact Officers.
- Consider the safety of the affected person and their dependants as the highest priority.
- Encourage and support disclosure by the affected person to qualified personnel, relevant agencies or the authorities.

7.1.2 Qualified Personnel

- Complete a risk assessment to identify the level of risk, in compliance with the CityLife Church Person at Risk Policy.
- Alert riskmanager@citylife.care of the identified risk, in compliance with the CityLife Community Care Person at Risk Policy
- Where there is a serious and imminent threat to life, health, safety or welfare of the affected person or their dependants, ring the police on "000"
- Develop a risk management plan, which may include a safety plan and referral options.
- Empower the affected person wherever possible by offering options and involving them in the decision-making process around their safety.
- Refer or consult internally and where appropriate externally to provide the most appropriate response as needed.
- Report the matter to authorities as outlined in 6.2 of this policy.
- Document actions, risk assessments, risk management plans, safety plans and referrals and rationale for the decisions made.
- Update appropriate risk records.



8. REVIEW

This policy will be scheduled for review at least every two (2) years, or as the law or community standards require.