

tipsHEET

Economic abuse

Economic abuse can be a form of domestic and family violence. A client may not identify their situation as one involving economic abuse. Economic abuse may be a hurdle that prevents a person from leaving a violent relationship. It is important to screen early to see if your client needs assistance, support or referrals to gain economic security.

Screening questions

The following are examples of questions you can ask a client to find out whether they are experiencing or have experienced economic abuse:

- Do you have any money problems?
- Who controlled your household finances?
- Did your ex-partner ever use finances or money to intimidate or threaten you?
- Do you know what you and your ex-partner's financial situation was like? Were your accounts in joint names? Did your ex-partner try to keep financial affairs or decisions secret from you?
- Did you and ex-partner often argue about money?
- Was your ex-partner controlling about money, for example, checking receipts, giving you an allowance or preventing you from accessing money?
- Did your ex-partner ever try to interfere with you working or studying?
- Did your ex-partner take your money or Centrelink?
- Did your ex-partner ever apply for, or transfer loans, contracts, a lease or bills into your sole name?
- Did you leave any property or assets behind when you left the relationship?

How Legal Aid can help

If your client is experiencing economic abuse, Legal Aid may be able to assist your client by:

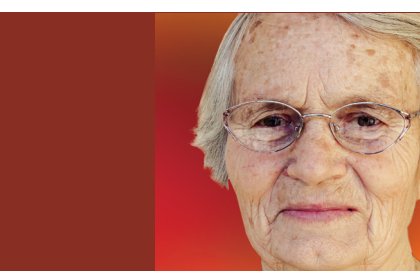
- An AVO (Domestic Violence Unit)
- Financial hardship provisions for debts or tenancy assistance (Civil)
- Property settlement matter or a superannuation split (Family Law)
- Child support assistance (Child Support)

Tips for economic safety planning

It is important to plan for your client's economic safety so that the risk of further economic abuse of your client is minimised. Here are some suggestions to give clients:

- Change passwords, PINS and security questions for personal accounts on a safe computer
- Change passwords, PINS and security questions for Centrelink, online shopping accounts, emails, mobile phones and social media accounts on a safe computer





- Update your mailing address with any financial or other providers. Get a PO Box if your partner does not know your location
- Request new bank cards for personal accounts if your partner knows your card details and cancel any secondary cards
- Let mortgagors or lenders know about the separation
- Gather important documents that show records of your financial position if it is safe to do so
- For assistance with joint bank and credit card, utility bills and mortgage/loans – talk to your family lawyer for some advice

Further referrals

ASIC Money Smart website - includes a separation financial checklist, how-to videos and budget planners

Credit and Debt Hotline 1800 007 007 - provides free telephone financial counselling, advice and referrals

Centrelink - a Centrelink social worker may assist a client with a crisis payment, special benefit or an exception to seeking child support action

Victims Support – the Victims Access Line on 1800 633 063 offers support and information about applying for Victims Support. This can include a recognition payment, financial assistance or counselling

Brokerage – some community and charitable organisations can provide emergency crisis relief. The Ask Izzy website may assist with referrals

Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program (WDVCAS) – support at Court and referrals to domestic violence support services. Refer clients to their local service here.

Domestic Violence Line 1800 656 463 – assistance with emergency accommodation and referrals for counselling, health and legal services. 24 hours 7 days.

Mensline 1800 789 978 – phone support and referrals for male victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence. 24 hours 7 days.

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