

# Exercise

## Intersectionality

**AVERT**  
FAMILY VIOLENCE



**Collaborative Responses in  
the Family Law System**



An Australian Government Initiative

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## Contact us

Inquiries regarding the licence and any use of this resource are welcome at:

Assistant Secretary

Family Law Branch

Attorney-General's Department

3-5 National Circuit

Barton ACT 2600

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## Intersectionality Exercise

### Intersectionality defined:

By intersectionality, we refer to the connection between aspects of identity, and by 'intersectional discrimination', the different types of discrimination or disadvantage that compound on each other and are inseparable...(Pru Goward 2002)

Multiple forms of discrimination occurring simultaneously (*Ontario Human Rights Commission 1999*)

### Purpose:

The following exercise is designed to help us recognise how our various social categories and identities can have an impact on our lives and how these intersect with one another to compound their effects. In particular, the purpose is to look at how power and privilege is structured around these identities (such as gender, race, socioeconomic status, sexuality etc...) and how these can impact our lives even when we are not consciously aware that this is happening.

It is important to highlight that the purpose is not to judge or blame anyone for having more privilege or receiving more help in achieving their goals, but to provide an opportunity to identify the obstacles and benefits experienced across a range of human experiences.

In summary, the activity seeks to:

- Promote greater recognition of the fact that a person may be subject to discrimination based on several aspects of their identity at the same time and that this impacts on issues of access and equity when seeking redress or interventions in relation to family violence
- Demonstrate that applying an intersectional approach can help us to better address multiple discriminations and understand how different sets of identities impact on rights and opportunities.

### Materials required:

- PowerPoint – *Intersectionality*
- Set of 'Identity Cards' – to be handed out, one card to each participant
- Fact Sheet – *Intersectionality*



**Facilitator notes:**

- Facilitators might like to start by making a comment on the importance of ensuring that we recognise that every individual is influenced and impacted by the multiple dimensions of their diversity.
- Any approach that only takes one or two dimensions into consideration is unlikely to have the intended impact on target groups.
- The challenge is to try and address all possible dimensions that may impact on inclusion and accessibility.

**Process:**

1. Ask participants to form a straight line across the middle of the room, all facing one way and leaving equal space in front and behind them
2. Hand out an 'identity' card to each participant and ask that they not reveal the nature of their newly ascribed identity
3. Explain to participants that you are about to read out a list of statements, and that each participant will be required to respond to the statement on the basis of the identity they have
4. Explain to participants that the details of their identity are brief, and that they may decide for themselves any other additional aspects of their identity
5. Ask participants to take one step forward if they can answer in the affirmative to the statement or backward if they can answer in the negative. If they cannot step either way or are undecided, then they should remain still
6. Each step forward or backward should be an average length step. No one is going to check up on participants, so it is entirely up to them to take the step that they feel qualified to take. They are the judge of how they should respond to the statements that are read
7. At the conclusion of the activity, it will be obvious to all participants that some are considerably further ahead of the room than others
8. Invite participants to consider how they felt during the process, and the extent to which their 'ascribed identities' determined their decision to move either way
9. Also invite participants to consider the relationship between socially ascribed roles, intersectionality and its impact on privilege and power
10. You might also wish to explore with participants whether there were any realisations that emerged for them in relation to their practice with diverse groups of clients.



**Key things to draw out of the discussion:**

- There are a multitude of ways in which we are all alike and also unlike
- All differences are not created equal. Some have profound effects on our opportunities and experiences and some are less significant
- Powerful assumptions can be held about some aspects of diversity and we need to be cautious about applying these to individuals and families
- There is no benefit in applying a hierarchy of oppression and discrimination, rather all oppressions are interconnected
- Human rights focus on creating and maintaining an environment of mutual respect and understanding, and therefore a Human Rights approach within a community of culturally diverse peoples is an important starting point for responding to family violence.

**Statements to be read out by Facilitator**

- I can negotiate safe sex with my partner
- I can find the time to read the newspaper each day
- I can get a loan when I need extra money
- I can read and write
- I can refuse a proposition of sex for money, housing or other resources
- I don't have to worry about where my next meal will come from
- I can leave my partner if s/he threatens my safety
- If I have a health problem, I can get the help I need right away
- I have had or will have opportunities to complete my education
- If my sister were pregnant, I would have access to information to know where to take her
- I can determine when and how many children I will have
- If I become HIV positive, I can access anti-retroviral treatment when I need it
- If I have a crime committed against me, the police will listen to my case



- I can walk down a street at night and not worry about being raped
- I can travel around the city easily
- I could find a new job easily
- I am respected by most members of my community.

**NB: The facilitator may choose to change or add statements as they see relevant to the particular participant group and issues being canvassed.**



## Identity Cards

<p><b>Refugee Woman</b></p> <p>35, recently arrived from the Congo under the Women at Risk Program.</p>	<p><b>Young Boy</b></p> <p>14, recently left home following a confrontation with his step father who has been physically abusive</p>
<p><b>Young Girl</b></p> <p>11, with a mild intellectual disability</p>	<p><b>Male Doctor</b></p> <p>42, Anglo Australian, married with three children</p>
<p><b>Female Doctor</b></p> <p>38, Anglo Australian, married with two children</p>	<p><b>Female Nurse</b></p> <p>28, Anglo Australian, single</p>
<p><b>Male Doctor</b></p> <p>35, Indian, married, two children, recently arrived under the skilled migration program,</p>	<p><b>Taxi Driver</b></p> <p>29, male, arrived in Australia as refugee three years ago, trying to sponsor family out to Australia</p>



<p><b>Lawyer</b></p> <p>42, female, born in Australia of Greek heritage, in long term relationship with female lover</p>	<p><b>Male Teacher</b></p> <p>27, Tongan background, single</p>
<p><b>Transexual</b></p> <p>32, male, Anglo Australian, considering legal and medical options related to 'transitioning'</p>	<p><b>Female CEO</b></p> <p>56, Australian born Chinese heritage, in defacto relationship, no children</p>
<p><b>Police Officer</b></p> <p>48, male, recently separated, three children, ranging from 16 -22.</p>	<p><b>Grandmother</b></p> <p>63, recently widowed, part time carer for daughter's four young children</p>
<p><b>Street Worker</b></p> <p>19, male, earning an income as a sex worker</p>	<p><b>Homeless Person</b></p> <p>37, male, recently retrenched from employment, evicted from rental accommodation</p>



<p><b>Unemployed</b></p> <p>56, male, Anglo Australian, married with two adult children, recently retrenched</p>	<p><b>Journalist</b></p> <p>38, female, born in Australia, Lebanese Christian background, highly successful</p>
<p><b>Lawyer</b></p> <p>45, male, born in Australia, Jewish Russian parents, recently separated, one child.</p>	<p><b>Social Worker</b></p> <p>49, female, Somali background, arrived in Australia 14 years ago, married with five children, wears hijab</p>
<p><b>Senior Police Inspector</b></p> <p>43, female, Anglo Australian, married, no children</p>	<p><b>Apprentice Hairdresser</b></p> <p>17, female, international student, limited English</p>
<p><b>Farmer</b></p> <p>56, female, recently widowed, running small dairy farm, adult children, living in small rural town</p>	<p><b>Asylum Seeker</b></p> <p>27, male, waiting for outcome of refugee application.</p>