

Exercise

Language and Meaning

AVERT
FAMILY VIOLENCE



**Collaborative Responses in
the Family Law System**



An Australian Government Initiative

Australian
INSTITUTE
of SOCIAL
RELATIONS™

© Commonwealth of Australia 2010

This resource is protected by copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, and those explicitly granted below, all other rights are reserved.

With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms and except where otherwise noted, all material presented in this training package is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 Australia licence <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/au/legalcode>. The terms under which the Coat of Arms can be used are detailed on the It's an Honour website <http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/coat-arms/>.

For the avoidance of doubt, this means this licence only applies to material as set out in this training package.

You must include the following link: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/au/legalcode> when re-using or distributing this work so that it is clear to others that the Creative Commons licence applies to this copyright material.

The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website (accessible using the links provided) as is the full legal code for the CC BY-ND 3.0 AU licence <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/au/legalcode>.

Any reference to, reuse or distribution of all or part of this training package must be attributed in the following way: Australian Attorney-General's Department, **AVERT Family Violence: Collaborative Responses in the Family Law System**.

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

Disclaimer

The information presented and opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government.



An Australian Government Initiative





Language and Meaning Exercise

Purpose:

- To demonstrate that there are a range of words associated with violence and that people attribute different meanings to the same concept
- To demonstrate that a collaborative process can assist people to understand other people's meanings and perspectives
- To highlight the importance of the language used when it will inform decisions in the area of family violence.

Materials Required:

- Sheet of writing paper and a pen for each participant.

Process:

1. Tell participants that this is a language exercise and that there are no right or wrong answers. They are going to be given the words **Family Violence** and asked to write down the four words that come to mind for them in relation to this phrase. They are not being asked to define the term but rather to choose words that they think of in relation to it. They should not consult with anyone just write down their own four words on their piece of paper.
2. When they have done this, ask them to join with another person. So now there are two people with eight words between them. Ask the pairs to discuss their eight words and decide which four they will keep (the four that feel right). Prune out the other four.
3. When each pair has four words ask them to join with another pair. Now there are four people with eight words between them. Ask the four people to discuss which four words they will keep and which four they will prune out.
4. So now, each group of four people has four words.
5. When this is done, as a whole group ask whether they have any comments about the process e.g. How did they decide and how did that feel? Did they have favourite words?



6. Collect each group's words on the whiteboard. Discuss the range of words that have been produced. Ask how these different words might influence someone's judgement if they appeared in a written report, in relation to a family violence case.

Key elements to draw out of the discussion:

- Ensuring good information is presented to the courts is one of the most vital factors in terms of safety outcomes for victims and children experiencing family violence
- 'Insiders' such as court reporters are in a powerful position to 'translate' important events and concepts into court language.