

Escaping Violence Payment Trial Fact Sheet

Information for referring agencies (updated September 2022)

What is the Escaping Violence Payment Program?

The Escaping Violence Payment (EVP) program offers financial assistance and confidential support to help people move forward and set up a home that's free from violence.

The EVP program is for people whose living situation has recently changed, or is about to change, because of intimate partner violence.

An intimate partner is a current or former romantic partner. Intimate partner violence can be:

- physically, verbally or sexually abusive;
- emotionally, spiritually or psychologically abusive;
- economically abusive; and/or
- threatening, coercive, or seeking to control or dominate the other person.

The EVP program provides individualised financial assistance packages of up to \$5,000.

An EVP package consists of:

- up to **\$1,500** in cash (or cash equivalent depending on the person's needs and preferences), and
- up to **\$3,500** in goods and services such as removalists, bonds, or basics for a new home.

People who need help from the EVP program can work with a case worker or referring agency, or can contact the program directly at: www.unitingvictas.org.au/escaping-violence-payment/

Please be aware that **the EVP program is not an emergency response service.**

Who is Eligible?

The EVP program is for people who:

- have Australian citizenship, permanent residency, or a protected special category visa;
- currently live in Australia;
- are over 18 years of age;
- their living situation has changed within the last 12 weeks, or they have a plan in place to change it;
- are experiencing financial stress because of the change, or upcoming change, in their living situation; and
- have not used the EVP program in the last 12 months.

The EVP program is available to everyone who is eligible, regardless of their gender.

Examples of changes in living situations include:

- The person experiencing violence has left their home,
- The partner has left the home,
- The person experiencing violence has left a refuge or temporary residence,
- The partner has been removed from the home,
- The person experiencing violence has a safe plan in place to leave their home, the refuge, or the temporary residence soon.

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How to access the Escaping Violence Payment Program

The Uniting Care Network is delivering the EVP program nationally, on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Social Services, with program partners in each state.

Agencies or case workers can check eligibility and submit applications by clicking on the “agency contact form” link on the Uniting website: www.unitingvictas.org.au/escaping-violence-payment/

People who would like to apply for the EVP and do not have a case worker or referring agency can contact the program directly by clicking on the “Are you eligible?” button on the Uniting website: www.unitingvictas.org.au/escaping-violence-payment/

Frequently Asked Questions and Additional Information

In the time since the EVP Program Trial was announced, some questions and requests for clarification have been raised and we’ve addressed them below.

Case Management Expectations

In line with trauma-informed practice, when case workers submit applications on behalf of their clients, they will be responsible for coordinating their clients’ financial packages. This relieves people who have experienced violence from retelling their stories to multiple agencies.

The people who have experienced violence choose what their packages include with help from their case workers. The case workers are responsible for helping them to identify their goals, the path toward them, and how the EVP package can assist with the achievement of these goals. This includes the plan for using the \$5000, and might also include linking clients with other specialists such as financial counsellors, cultural networks and so on, to help them establish a sustainable, independent future.

In these scenarios, the role of the EVP program team is to review and approve the packages.

If a case worker does not have the capacity to provide this support, the client should self-refer to the program so that the EVP program team can provide this support directly. Clients can self-refer by clicking on the “Are you eligible?” button on the Uniting website: www.unitingvictas.org.au/escaping-violence-payment/

Eligibility Checks in Referral Process

The EVP program conducts eligibility checks according to program policies set by the Department of Social Services. This data is required by the Department of Social Services, so Uniting or its program partners may request supporting documentation as part of the client referral process.

Family or Domestic Violence

People are only eligible for the EVP when the person using violence is an intimate partner that the person experiencing violence normally resides with. Other family members or people who the person experiencing violence lives with are not considered intimate partners.

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Cash Component

The EVP package can include provision of up to \$1,500 cash or cash equivalent, based on the needs of the person requiring assistance. For instance, a prepaid debit card can be provided, or a combination of cash, a debit card, and vouchers may be an option that better reflects the consumer's needs.

Accessing Multiple Programs

A consumer can receive support from the EVP program and access other programs simultaneously. However, the EVP program tries to avoid providing funding for an item or service that is already being funded by another program.

Please be aware that other programs or grants may have restrictions on the number of programs a consumer can access at one time.

Additionally, Services Australia's "Crisis Payment for Extreme Circumstances Family and Domestic Violence" program counts the EVP as liquid assets when assessing an application.

Time Frames for EVP Eligibility

To be eligible for the EVP program a person needs to have changed their living arrangements, or have experienced a change in their living arrangements, within the last 12 weeks. The violence does not need to have occurred within the last 12 weeks, it is the act of leaving or the perpetrator leaving the home that should be within this time frame.

For example, the EVP could be used to facilitate a move from a women's shelter. The violence may have occurred longer than 12 weeks ago, but the move from the women's shelter to a rented home is current and is the result of intimate partner violence.

Financial Liquidity

This is not an asset tested program. It is designed for people leaving a violent intimate partner situation who are experiencing financial difficulty.

Australian Citizen or Permanent Resident

The EVP is open to Australian citizens, permanent residents and holders of a protected special category visa living in Australia.

The Red Cross may be able to provide financial assistance to people with temporary visas, or with uncertain visa status. <https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/help-for-migrants-in-transition/family-and-domestic-violence-financial-assistance>

Please be aware that **the EVP program is not an emergency response service**. If your client needs immediate assistance, call emergency services 000 or 1800 RESPECT.

