

Reproductive Coercion and Abuse

Guide to detect the presence of RCA
and how to communicate about it.



Warning Flags of Reproductive Coercion and Abuse

Is someone you know experiencing reproductive coercion or pressure?

Reproductive Coercion and Abuse (RCA) involves behaviours aimed at controlling the reproductive choices and outcomes of a person who can become pregnant. It can be pregnancy promoting (pressure or force to become or stay pregnant) or pregnancy preventing (pressure or force to prevent or end pregnancy). Intimate partners, family members, carers, health providers, and others can use RCA.

Around 1 in 7 people seeking pregnancy options counselling in Australia report experiencing RCA. It is significantly more common among people who are experiencing other forms of domestic and family violence.

Red Flags/Examples of RCA

Forced contraception use, forcible removal/ throwing away of contraception

Threaten harm if a pregnant person makes a decision to end or continue their pregnancy

Threaten to withdraw finances, support, housing or end relationship, depending on pregnancy outcome

Forced conception or pregnancy continuation

Intense pressure from someone to end a pregnancy, or physical violence causing miscarriage

If someone is experiencing these, you can think of them as 'red flags' – they are, or are likely to be, experiencing Reproductive Coercion and Abuse.

Yellow Flags – Potential for RCA

Present over 12 weeks gestation for an abortion/ pregnancy decision making support

Person has more than 1 pregnancy or children in under 12 months

Inconsistent use of contraception

Person experience multiple unintended pregnancies or multiple abortions

Presence of domestic or family violence or sexual assault

These are 'yellow flags': They indicate someone could be, though aren't necessarily experiencing Reproductive Coercion and Abuse.

Other signs that someone might be experiencing RCA:

- They don't usually have control over if, when and how they have sex – they're experiencing sexual coercion or violence.
- They feel generally controlled or unsafe in their relationship with a partner, family member or carer.
- They feel like they are being pressured or forced to become pregnant, end a pregnancy, or stay pregnant.
- They worry that someone is monitoring their Medicare, prescription or Myhealth records.
- They feel like they can't talk honestly with you about what they're experiencing.
- They don't have access to money or transport, and other people control what they can buy and where they can go.
- Do they require a translator when accessing health care? Is it possible that translator could be using their limited knowledge of English to give them false information, or coerce them into a certain outcome?
- If you suspect someone is experiencing Reproductive Coercion and Abuse:
- Before you raise or delve into the topic, consider: is this the right time to have this conversation? Is it safe?

If you suspect someone is experiencing Reproductive Coercion and Abuse:

Before you raise or delve into the topic, consider: is this the right time to have this conversation? Is it safe?

Sometimes the safest thing you can do is just to let someone know that you're there to support them if they ever want to talk.

People often don't recognise reproductive and contraceptive pressure as a form of coercion, so you can 'plant a seed'. You might feel it's safe to let them know that what they're experiencing may be a form of coercion or violence.

It is important to:

- Listen without judgment,
- Ask how you can help – they might need practical or emotional support.
- Let them know you believe them and are there to support them.
- Let them know that what they're experiencing is not their fault and that they are not the only ones experiencing this.
- **Support them to call 1800 Respect on 1800 737 732. They might like you to be there with them or make the call for them.**
- Connect them to information and support services:
- Help them to find their nearest specialist domestic violence service at www.1800respect.org.au/service-support/
- Read through some of the textversations/examples with them to see if they connect with any of the examples – you can find them [HERE](#).
- Send them the link to this page so they can read more about RCA.
- If they are pregnant they can contact a non-directive/pro-choice pregnancy options counselling service for support. You can find your state/territory service here: [LINK TO CBYC PAGE WITH NUMBERS](#)

Make sure they leave the conversation knowing you are there to support them, and with the phone number for 1800 RESPECT.