

ACTION MODEL FOR THE TREATMENT OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

PREVENTION, DETECTION AND
CONNECTION TO THE SERVICES



**We Are Here
Somos Aquí!**

Research conducted by

Funded by:



'We are here. Detecting gender-based violence from children's perspective'

[SomAquí! Detecció de la violència masclista des de la perspectiva dels infants].

Awarded project of the Caixa Foundation's Social Research Call 2020 (SR20-00330).

Time period and location: from 1/2/2021 to 31/1/2023, in Catalonia.

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With the collaboration of:



Institut Dertosa



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This model has its origin in the **research project WeAreHere! (SomAquí!)** funded by the “La Caixa” Foundation and carried out by Liberi, Research Group on Childhood, Youth and Community of the Universitat de Girona, with the collaboration of the Secretariat for Childhood, Adolescence and Youth and the Department of Education of the Government of Catalonia.

The aim of this project, carried out during 2021 and 2022, has been to create an action model applicable to schools to help **put an end to gender-based violence that some children and adolescents may experience in their homes**. By giving children an active role both in research and in dealing with the problem we aim to promote a useful support for them.

For this purpose, **six advisory groups** with children from Figueres, Girona, Palau d'Anglesola, Tortosa and Vic accompanied the research team throughout the research. A total of **3,650 children** between the fourth year of primary school and the fourth year of ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education) from **106 schools in Catalonia** were surveyed. Finally, **322 teachers** from 86 of these schools also responded to a questionnaire with the aim of gathering their opinion and checking the feasibility of the pupils' proposals.



You can consult the results of the project here:



<https://www.udg.edu/ca/projectes/wearehere>

Considerations for the foundations of the model

1. Gender-based violence is a persistent social problem affecting women and children

Gender-based violence is considered a “global health problem of pandemic proportions” by the World Health Organisation¹. Despite legislative efforts, awareness-raising campaigns and the programmes and resources put in place, 1,158 women died as a result of gender-based violence in Spain between January 2003 and August 2022, while 47 children were killed and 357 orphaned due to gender-based violence in their homes between January 2013 and August 2022².

¹ World Health Organization (2019). *Respect women: Preventing violence against women*. WHO.

² Data constantly updated on the website of the Ministry of Equality estadisticasviolenciagenero.igualdad.mpr.gob.es/

10% of the pupils surveyed had experienced situations of gender-based violence at home (N=362). Forty per cent said that the violence was directed towards them.

39% of the teachers surveyed said that they have had to apply the protocols for cases of violence on one or more occasions.

2. All forms of gender-based are considered

As defined by the Catalan legislative framework³, gender-based violence is “*violence against women exercised as a manifestation of discrimination and of a situation of inequality within a system of power relations between men and women and which, by physical, economic or psychological means, including threats, intimidation and coercion, results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering, whether it takes place in the public or private sphere*”. The forms of gender-based violence are classified as physical, psychological, sexual, economic, digital, and second-order, as well as violence during pregnancy and by proxy.

³ Law 5/2008 of 24 April 2008 *on the right of women to eradicate gender-based violence*, as amended by Law 17/2020 of 22 December <https://portaldogc.gencat.cat/utillsEADOP/PDF/8303/1828756.pdf>

The children surveyed unequivocally identified sexual and physical violence, but had doubts about psychological and economic violence and violence by proxy. According to the teachers, the last two are the least common forms of violence addressed in the classroom.

3. Schools are key in the detection of violence

Schools can provide children with a network of positive and trusting relationships with close and 'safe' adults. In this way, schools can become privileged spaces for the detection of gender-based violence. However, international research⁴ has identified a number of obstacles such as: the social function of the school is not always fully understood by teachers; pupils do not often perceive teachers as people with the knowledge and resources to help them in these cases; or children do not explain the problem for fear of the consequences that this might entail.

⁴ Mullender, A., Hague, G., Imam, U. F., Kelly, L., Malos, E., & Regan, L. (2002). *Children's perspectives on domestic violence*. Sage; Münger, A.-C., & Markström, A.-M. (2019). School and child protection services professionals' views on the school's mission and responsibilities for children living with domestic violence—tensions and gaps. *Journal of Family Violence*, 34(5), 385–398.

Children say they would sooner tell the police (74%), their relatives (70%) or call an emergency helpline (68%) than tell their teachers (40%).

According to the teachers, pupils do not usually report these situations: most do not say anything (68%), they avoid the subject or protect their parents (45%) and when the school finds out about it, it is because there are obvious signs or through other childcare practitioners.

4. Children have the right to participate in issues that affect them

In the face of gender-based violence, children have the need and the right to be protected and to be considered not only as victims but also as rights holders. In line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child⁵, they should be recognised as active social actors and participate in decision-making, especially in matters that concern them.

⁵ [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989.

The majority of children want to be actively involved in stopping gender-based violence. Most of the children surveyed responded that in a situation of gender-based violence at home they would defend their mother (85%) and ask for help (84%).

ACTION MODEL FOR THE TREATMENT OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE “WE ARE HERE!”

This model is a **guide** that can complement the work already being carried out in schools. Its application is **compatible with following existing protocols and routes** for the referral of cases to social services or emergency channels. It is complemented by the work of **the Support Unit for Students in Situations of Violence (USAV) and the use of its App (UsApps)** and is framed within the framework of **State Law 8/2021** and **Regional Law 14/2010** on protection, rights and opportunities for children and adolescents.

Although it focuses on gender-based violence, **it can be applicable to other situations of violence** that a child or adolescent may suffer directly or indirectly at home, in school or outside of school.

The model is structured in **three blocks** that correspond to its objectives. It has a total of **15 measures** based on what children and adolescents have expressed in the expert groups and in the representative sample of students surveyed, the assessments of the schools' education teams and the results of previous research.





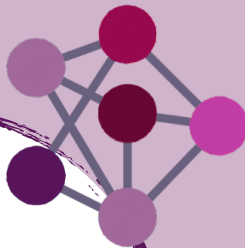
**RAISING AWARENESS OF
GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS**

Raising awareness of gender-based violence in all its forms, in a cross-cutting manner and integrated into the school's educational project.



Organising help for students who experience situations of gender-based violence in their homes.

**PREPARING THE
SCHOOL TO LISTEN TO
STUDENTS WHO
EXPERIENCE GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE IN THE HOME**



**COORDINATING
WITH THE SERVICES
NETWORK**

Establishing flexible ways of coordination and connection with the services network.



RAISING AWARENESS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

The aim of this block is to **raise awareness and debate in the classroom about gender-based violence and its forms, in a cross-cutting manner and integrated into the school's educational project.** Awareness-raising and open discussion with teachers and students is a way of promoting early detection and prevention and implies the need to train teaching staff and obtain advice from experts in the field.

1

To promote a specific programme at school that includes not only the treatment of the issue of gender-based violence but the support that can be offered to students who need it. This must be integrated into the school's educational project and the tutorial action plan.

2

To promote the active participation of pupils in the school organisation in terms of awareness-raising and detection of cases of gender-based violence and in the drafting of a specific school programme. To ensure this, it is necessary to inform children of the agreements established by the teaching staff and to invite them to participate in the decision-making process.

3

To provide training for teachers and other education professionals to work on gender-based violence in schools. This should be regular and systematic, addressing all types of gender-based violence. It can be in-house, led by a reference person in the school in this area, or external, provided by experts from the services network. The aim is to learn to work on gender violence in a cross-cutting way, from a broad and open perspective, including space for debate and exchange of ideas where students can express any doubts or reservations and contribute the opinions they hear from the "outside" (networks, media, conversations at home, etc.).

4

To provide training for teachers and other professionals to detect and accompany children who are experiencing this problem in their homes. This training should be regular and systematic and include tools for detecting and identifying situations of violence and abuse, an understanding of the harm it does to children, emotional resources for support, and strategies for helping students and communicating respectfully with the family.

PREPARING THE SCHOOL TO LISTEN TO STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE HOME



The aim of this block is to **organise support for students who experience situations of gender-based violence in their homes**. This means being able to trust the school as a place where they can report their problem. This involves making clear who they can turn to and how, when and where the help will be given, ensuring that information about this procedure reaches all students.

5

To promote the active role of the education team in the detection of gender-based violence, so that students feel they can be actively listened to. This means encouraging teachers to regard listening to and providing support for students as part of their educational duties, besides merely addressing their academic learning needs.

6

To clarify who students can turn to in order to explain or report a situation of violence they may be experiencing at home. They should know that they can turn to the person in the education team *they trust the most*, and choose the person who first raises the issue. In primary education it is more likely to be the class tutor, whereas in secondary education it may be more diverse: the tutor, another teacher, or any other professional who is usually at the school (social integration specialist, educational psychologist, educator, nurse, etc.).

7

To ensure that the members of the teaching team who are made aware of a given situation have time to spend individually with the child in order to build up a relationship of trust. Depending on the child's situation and characteristics, the nature of what he/she wants to explain, his/her age or capacity to communicate, it will be necessary to provide individual tutoring sessions or more informal settings where he/she feels less pressured and can be listened to in a more spontaneous and direct way.

8

To promote safe and quiet places in schools where students feel comfortable to talk about personal issues in privacy. It is important to ensure that these spaces do not lead to stigmatisation and therefore, depending on the case, we can use more informal spaces or spaces that are not so visible to the rest of pupils, such as the classroom after school.

PREPARING THE SCHOOL TO LISTEN TO STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE HOME



9

To ensure that the school is able to offer students ways of reporting situations of violence other than to a person of trust. These can be: a mailbox set up in each school for this purpose or information on other channels of help such as a WhatsApp number, an email, an emergency telephone number, the children's helpline, a specific application (such as "UsApps" in Catalonia), or information on how to contact social services or the Directorate General for Child and Adolescent Care (DGAIA).

10

Schools must have an expert on the subject of violence and child protection, as defined in Article 35 of Organic Law 8/2021, *on the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents against violence*, through the creation of the figure of the **Welfare and Protection Coordinator** working in schools. This practitioner⁶ should receive extensive and ongoing training in order to be able to support teachers and other members of the education team. This can be both to deal with a case of gender-based violence, as well as to provide information and guidance on how to access the network of external services (social services, healthcare, police, etc.). Children should be made aware of their existence and have access to them, both to get information and to report situations of gender-based violence, if needed.

11

Children should be provided with information on how to seek help in situations of violence, knowing that they can turn to the person in the school they trust the most, but that they can also choose other avenues. This information must be clear, graphically presented, adapted to the different levels of understanding of the pupils and always visible and present in the school. Pupils can participate in preparing it: posters, leaflets, web proposals, etc.

⁶ As defined by the Catalan Education Department (teacher, social educator, educational psychologist, member of the management team, etc.).



CONNECTION WITH THE SERVICES NETWORK

The aim of this block is to **establish flexible coordination and connection channels with the network of services**, in order to help children as quickly and safely as possible.

12

To integrate this action model in the existing channels and protocols for the care and referral of cases of the Department of Education through the Support Unit for Students in a Situation of Violence (USAV) and the use of its App (UsApps), the social services of the local administrations and the Directorate General for Child and Adolescent Care (DGAIA). It must also be framed within the framework of state law 8/2021 and regional law 14/2010. The model will need to be adapted and a consensus reached within each territory regarding the specific features required according to the context (urban, rural, existence of certain services, etc.).

13

External support for the detection and referral of cases of gender-based violence. The Welfare and Protection Coordinator, the school's point of reference on issues of violence, should have direct and permanent access to professionals from the social services and child protection services to receive advice on how to help the child and to agree on subsequent actions and referrals for the case.

14


To ensure smooth and swift coordination with all services connected to the child. Social and child protection services, as well as leisure centres, open centres, sports facilities, health centres, etc.

15

To inform children about the actions that can be taken after reporting situations of gender-based violence, for them as well as for their mothers and families. Information must be presented in a comprehensible way so that children can learn about the protocols, channels and routes used by the services and agents that intervene in a given area in cases of gender-based violence. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring that they are aware of the aspects that guarantee their safety, confidentiality and their rights throughout the process, and that they can participate in decision-making. The same applies to the obligation of practitioners to report such situations when there is an immediate risk to the child's physical integrity or that of other members of their family.

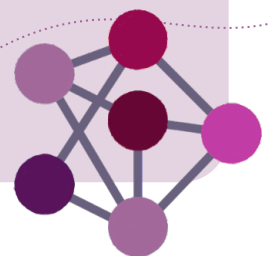
Summary of the model



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- 1.** To promote the establishment of a specific programme for the school.
 - 2.** To promote the active participation of pupils.
 - 3.** To offer training to teachers and other practitioners to work on gender-based violence in schools.
 - 4.** To provide training for teachers and other practitioners in detecting and supporting children who experience gender-based violence in their homes.

- 5.** To promote the active role of the education team in the detection of gender-based violence.
- 6.** To clarify who students can turn to in order to report a situation of violence.
- 7.** To ensure that the members of the education team who are made aware of a particular situation are given time to spend individually with the pupil.
- 8.** To promote safe and quiet places in schools.
- 9.** To ensure that the school can provide other avenues for reporting situations of violence.
- 10.** To promote the availability of an expert on the subject in school.
- 11.** To ensure that children have access to information on how to ask for help.

- 12.** To integrate this action model into existing channels and protocols.
- 13.** To have external support for the detection and referral of cases of gender-based violence.
- 14.** To ensure smooth and swift coordination with all services connected to the child.
- 15.** To inform children about actions that can be taken after they have reported the problem.



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