



Domestic & family violence in the COVID-19 environment

Information for victim- survivors



For many people, particularly victim-survivors of domestic and family violence, being at home is not always a safe place. It is anticipated that domestic and family violence incidents will increase in the COVID-19 environment and recovery period. We know this because of research and evidence that domestic and family violence can become more frequent and severe during periods of emergency. For many people, public health and community containment measures introduced to reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as social distancing and self-isolation, as well as increased financial insecurity and reduced ability to leave relationships, may increase their risk of domestic and family violence.

Times of stress and hardship are never an excuse for violence. All people deserve to live free from fear and domestic and family violence.

During this time, people using domestic and family violence may use COVID-19 as a tactic or reason to abuse their partners and children more frequently or more severely. For example, they may:

- Withhold necessary items such as food, medicine, hand sanitizer or disinfectants.
- Misinform victim-survivors about the pandemic to control or frighten them.
- Use the pandemic as an excuse to gain total or increase their control of the family's finances.
- Threaten or prevent victim-survivors including children from seeking appropriate medical attention if they have symptoms or hide your Medicare card.
- Increase their monitoring and criticism of victim-survivors' parenting such as blaming them if children 'misbehave' or are upset.
- Further isolate victim-survivors including children in the home by restricting their movements within the house, forcing them or the children into specific spaces in the house, or disabling their mobility devices.
- Increasingly monitor victim-survivors' personal communication devices such as mobile phone, email, online messaging.
- Use COVID-19 to excuse, blame or justify their abusive and violent behaviour.
- An ex-partner may use COVID-19 in their attempt to reconcile or enter/live in the victim-survivors' home. People using family violence may try to emotionally manipulate victim-survivors to allow them to stay to 'help' them with the children.
- An ex-partner may breach a family violence intervention order.
- An ex-partner may use COVID-19 to threaten victim-survivors about isolating the children. This could include using Family Law contact orders to bluff them and allow them in to stay or have contact with the children.

The person perpetrating domestic and family violence is responsible for their abusive and violent behaviour. Women and children being abused are never responsible.



What you can do to be safer at the home you share with your partner?

Make a safety plan to avoid being hurt in an emergency. See [1800RESPECT's safety planning information](#) or a domestic and family violence service can help you (please see the list of services below).

Let supportive friends, family and neighbours know what is happening and keep a list of phone numbers for people who can help you in an emergency.

Agree with your support people on a code word or line, and call them if you feel threatened. Use a code that doesn't alert your partner and keep it secret.

Keep the phone numbers of family violence services safe by hiding them, or adding them to your phone directory under other names.

Think of a story ahead of time that allows you to leave the house in a hurry if you feel frightened of your partner or family member.

Be aware of dangerous areas in your home e.g. kitchen, bathroom, shed or garage, where your partner may have access to weapons.

Think about escape routes and keep them clear. You may need to clear tools or toys from pathways or the sides of the house.

Tell your children as much as they need to know to be safe, but don't ask them to keep secrets about future plans. Keep these plans to yourself until you are ready to put them in place.

Cover your tracks – your partner can push redial to find out who you have just called, or check your mobile's call log or internet activities. To learn how to use technology safely see [Women's Technology Safety & Privacy Toolkit](#).

Specialist domestic and family violence services, children and family services, services for men using domestic and family violence, WA Police and other government and community services are there to help ensure the safety of victims-survivors, including children.

If you are in danger call 000

For Police assistance call 131 444

National helplines

- For confidential phone help and referral in Australia, please contact **1800 RESPECT on 1800 737 732**, the National Sexual Assault, Family and Domestic Violence Counselling Line.
- For support for men, call **Men's Referral Service on 1300 766 491**.
- [Lifeline](#) (24-hour crisis line): 131 114
- [Relationships Australia](#): 1300 364 277
- The National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services provides culturally sensitive help to Aboriginal people who are survivors of family violence; Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women can also call the Aboriginal Contact Line 1800 019 123 for assistance.



Western Australian help lines

- Crisis Care: (08) 9223 1111 / 1800 199 008 (free call)
- Women's DV Helpline: (08) 9223 1188 /1800 007 339 (free call)
- Kid's Help Line: 1800 551 800
- Men's DV Helpline: (08) 9223 1199 /1800 000 599
- Sexual Assault Resource Centre
Admin: (08) 6458 1830
Emergency Crisis line: 08 6458 1828
Free call number: 1800 199 888

For contact details of women's refuges and other domestic and family violence counselling services visit the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services [website](#)

For contact details of women's health centres (providers of domestic violence counselling, support and advocacy), sexual assault support and unplanned pregnancy counselling support services in your area visit the Women's Community Health Network's [website](#)

Legal/Counselling

- DVAS Central: (08) 9328 1200 / 1800 998 399
- DV Legal Unit (LEGAL AID): (08) 9261 6254 / 1300 650 579
- Women's Law Centre of WA: (08) 9272 8800 / 1800 625 122 (Country)
- To find a community legal centre in your area, follow the link: [Community Legal WA](#)

Homelessness support:

- Entry Point: (08) 6496 0001 / 1800 124 684

Tenancy Support

- Tenancy WA: (08) 9221 0088 / 1800 621 888 (Country)
- Ruah Tenancy Support: (08) 9493 5021 / 1800 065 892 (Country)

Financial abuse

For information and resources if you are experiencing financial abuse please visit

[Your Toolkit](#)

For a comprehensive list of Family and domestic violence services and supports see

[Family and Domestic Violence Help](#)
