

COVID-19 and Domestic and Family Violence



WOMEN'S COUNCIL
FOR DOMESTIC & FAMILY
VIOLENCE SERVICES (WA)



**Ethnic Communities Council
of Western Australia Inc.**

We expect domestic and family violence incidents will increase as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We know this through research and evidence that it becomes more frequent and severe during periods of emergency. Times of stress and hardship are never an excuse for violence.

All women and children deserve to live free from fear and domestic and family violence.

Using COVID 19 to manipulate

- Withhold necessary items such as food, medicine, hand sanitizer or disinfectants.
- Misinform you about the risk of infection to control or frighten you.
- Use the crisis as an excuse to increase or gain control of the finances
- Threaten to expose you or your children to Covid-19
- Use their job loss, health or housing issues to manipulate you to let them stay.
- Prevent you or children to obtain medical attention or hide your medicare card.

Use Isolation

- Further isolate you or your children in the home by restricting your movements in the house or keeping you in specific spaces in the house.
- Use self-isolation to stop you from communicating with extended family or friends.
- Use self-isolation to prevent you going to the shops or pharmacy.

Legal or Immigration Threats

- Breach a family violence restraining order because they think the police will be too busy to respond to your call.
- Your partner may use COVID-19 and your visa status as a threat to control you.

Use of Threats to you and your Children

- Use COVID-19 to excuse, blame or justify their abusive and violent behaviour towards you and the children.
- Increase monitoring, criticising and blaming your parenting if the children are upset.

Use media devices

- Increasingly monitoring your mobile phone calls, emails or social media messages.

The person perpetrating family violence is responsible for their abusive and violent behaviour.

You or your children are never responsible.

STAYING SAFE

A safety plan is a personalised, practical plan that includes ways to remain safe while in a relationship, planning to leave, or after you leave. Having a safety plan can help you to protect yourself during this difficult time. Some of these tips may help.

Keeping safe space

If you sense trouble or find yourself in an argument, move to a 'lower risk space': rooms with two exits and fewer things that can be used as weapons, where you can be seen or heard from the outside.

Kitchens, bathrooms and garages are more dangerous than living rooms, dining rooms or bedrooms. Teach your children – to get positioned 'between trouble and the door'

Make a plan

Where possible have a charged phone and a back-up, example if safe, have a hidden second phone.

Have an escape plan and backup. If safe, rehearse getting out in the dark and with the children.

Keep spare keys and important documents where you can get to them readily.

Have some money stashed away for emergencies or in a safe account.

Do whatever it is you need to do to buy time and/or space, to defuse the situation, or to protect yourself and your children.

Use support and signals

Create signals that will let your neighbours/family members know you need help. For example, a turned-on porch light, drawn shade, or an "I can't come over on Thursday after all" phone call.

Create signals and/or code words that will let your children know to get out and go to a pre-arranged place of safety.

Plan with children

Consistent with their age, and skills, develop safety plans for children – about calling help or getting to a place where they will be safer.

Teach the children how to call police 000 and to know their home address.

REACH OUT FOR HELP

If you are escaping harm or are at risk of harm from family violence, you can leave your home. You will not be fined if you are leaving a dangerous situation. All domestic and Family Violence services are still open and available to provide support.

If you are in danger, please call 000 and
For confidential crisis support, information and accommodation please call CRISIS CARE on 9223 1111 or 1800 199 008 – 24 HOURS

For confidential Multicultural Specialist help Monday - Friday 9.00am till 4.00pm please contact the following services:

Ishar Women's Health on 08 93455335

Multicultural Womens Advocacy Service on 08 93281200

Ethnic Advocacy and Support Team on 0452399717