

# Coronavirus & Domestic Violence



## Simple, practical tips to help you understand and respond to Domestic Violence during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

### What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic Violence is a pattern of behaviours using power and control to dominate and intimidate a family member – most often an intimate partner. It may include sexual and physical abuse, though, this is not always the case. The victim may be living in fear or feel as though as they are ‘walking on eggshells’.

Domestic Violence also causes trauma for children and is associated with increased rates of direct child abuse.

### Domestic Violence during the coronavirus pandemic

In times of natural disaster, rates of Domestic Violence are known to increase, with women and children being most significantly at risk.

As our country and, indeed, the world, responds to the coronavirus, many Australians may be experiencing heightened personal and family stress. While this is not the primary cause of Domestic Violence, it is likely to increase its frequency and severity.

The coronavirus pandemic may be used by a perpetrator of Domestic Violence as an excuse for greater monitoring and social control or financial abuse. More time together may see a rise in the abuse of children or sexual abuse of a partner. The threat of infection may be used to intimidate or control.

Ultimately, social isolation may serve to limit a person’s contact with their support networks and place them in closer contact with the perpetrator of their abuse, in turn, increasing the risk of emotional, verbal and physical abuse.

### How can you help?

- **Check in** - If you are currently supporting someone who is experiencing Domestic Violence, check in to see how they are doing – but be sure to do it carefully. Make your enquiry general until you are sure the perpetrator is not in the vicinity.
- **Code word** - If possible, you should set up an agreed code word or sign which your friend or loved one can use to let you (or a designated person) know if they need help in an emergency – when police can be called. Be aware that the perpetrator may be monitoring your friend or loved one’s electronic communication. Be wise about what you send them.
- **Access to essentials** - Check to see that they have access to enough food and personal care essentials – that these are not being withheld.

- **Be careful not to minimise** - New disclosures or concerns about Domestic Violence should not be minimised as “just the stress everyone is under”. Take any concerns you may have seriously and seek professional support services.
- **Prioritise safety**- encourage your friend or loved one to take the necessary steps to be safe.

## What to do if you're experiencing Domestic Violence

If you are experiencing Domestic Violence yourself, continue practices you know help you and your children to stay safe.

- **Stay connected** - Keep your phone charged and with you.
- **Identify transport options** - consider what options are available if you need to leave quickly.
- **Reach out** - Seek support from services that are here to help you – you are not alone and you are not to blame. You have a right to be safe and free from violence. You have a right to leave.
- **Call the police** - If things escalate dial 000. The police may ask if there are any coronavirus risks in your home.

## Anglicare Assistance

### Anglicare Counselling

1300 651 728

[anglicare.org.au/what-we-offer/counselling/](http://anglicare.org.au/what-we-offer/counselling/)

## Other Support Services

**1800 RESPECT National Helpline:** 1800 737 732

**NSW Domestic Violence Hotline:** 1800 656 463

**Men's Referral Service:** 1300 766 491

**Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Programme NSW:** 1800 938 227

**Family Relationships Advice Line:** 1800 050 321

**LifeLine:** 13 11 14

**E-safety Women:** [www.esafety.gov.au/women](http://www.esafety.gov.au/women)

**Daisy App** (connecting women): download from [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#)