



Anglicare WA



STOPPING
FAMILY VIOLENCE

Relationships Australia
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Media Release

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COVID-19 ISOLATION RISK FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

Western Australia's leading family and domestic violence services have united to send a clear message to anyone isolated in an abusive or unsafe situation during COVID-19 restrictions: help will be available for you throughout the pandemic.

Anglicare WA, Centrecare, Communicare, Relationships Australia, Stopping Family Violence and the Women's Council for Family and Domestic Violence have launched the joint campaign to let families know they won't be shutting during the pandemic.

With domestic violence set to escalate amid Coronavirus restrictions, there is widespread concern amongst these support services that abusive behaviour will also go unreported as victims assume police and support services won't respond due to the outbreak.

All organisations involved in the campaign have confirmed counselling and intervention programs will continue to be delivered, now via telephone or video conferencing instead of in-person while women's refuges will keep crisis accommodation open.

The Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services WA said women are being told to stay home to be safe from the Coronavirus, yet for many, home isn't safe, it's where they're vulnerable to violence and abuse from a partner or family member.

Anglicare WA domestic violence specialist Lara Steel said social distancing is essential to limit spread of the virus but it may escalate the risk for women living with a violent partner.

"Any safety plans they had in place to escape a violent situation are now likely to be obsolete. Women may now have only limited options when seeking support when normally they might look to neighbours, the local churches, mum's groups or sporting clubs, nor can they now head to public places like shopping centres when feeling unsafe," said Ms Steel.

Relationships Australia WA executive director Michael Sheehan said evidence showed during natural disasters levels of domestic violence were heightened.

"The current environment of COVID-19 is giving new opportunities for perpetrators to be abusive and increase their ability to exercise coercive control," said Mr Sheehan.

Stopping Family Violence consultant Kate Jeffries said if you're concerned a neighbour, friend or family member are at increased risk, please keep in contact with them.

"You'll be assuring them they're not alone, nor cut-off. If possible, encourage them to develop a safety plan and reach out to one of our support services if they feel threatened or unsafe. You can even have safe words to be used if they need police intervention."

If you or anyone you know needs help, contact:

Women's Domestic Violence Helpline: 1800 007 339 | Crisis Care: 1800 199 008

Men's Domestic Violence Helpline: 1800 000 559 | Lifeline: 13 11 14

Anglicare WA: 1300 114 446

| Centrecare: (08) 9325 6644

Relationships Australia: 1300 364 277

In an emergency, call 000 for police

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