

INFORMATION FOR THE VICTIMS OF INTRAFAMILIAL VIOLENCE

INCREASED RISK OF VIOLENCE DURING CONTAINMENT

For victims of intrafamilial violence, home is not always a safe place. We know that intrafamilial violence will increase during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, as generally observed in all natural disasters. Public health measures taken to reduce the spread of the virus, such as "social distancing" and containment (being homebound), increased financial insecurity and reduced ability to leave home quickly can increase the risk of intrafamilial violence. We also know that violence is more easily denied or excused in situations of natural or health disaster. However, periods of stress and the difficulties encountered, however important, are never an excuse to justify violence.

The person who commits intrafamilial violence is always responsible for his violent behavior.

Everyone deserves to live free from fear and intrafamilial violence.

A perpetrator of intrafamilial violence can use the epidemic to justify the violence. For example, he can:

- Deprive family, from food, medicine, hydro-alcoholic gel.
- Increase the anxiety of victims in speaking of the pandemic.
- Use the pandemic as an excuse to start or to increase control over the family budget.
- Threaten or prevent the family, including children, from seeing a doctor if they have symptoms.
- Increase monitoring and criticism of her partner's behavior towards children, making her responsible for the fact that the children behave badly or are worried.
- Further isolate his family, including children, by restricting their movements inside the house, by forcing them to stay in specific places in the house (garage, etc.).
- Increasingly monitor cell phones, emails, online messaging of family members.

- Use the epidemic to excuse or justify his violent behavior or to make others responsible for his violence.
- An ex-partner can use the pretext of the epidemic to try to reconcile with his victim and to enter or even come back to live in the victim's home.
- He may try to emotionally manipulate the ex-partner to stay to “help” her with the children or to threaten to isolate the children because of the epidemic.

PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN

- Maintain a regular lifestyle routine (getting up and going to bed).
- Help schoolchildren to continue their educational activities, rather than viewing this period as “vacation”.
- For children, school can be considered a safe space. Is there any safe space at home for them?
- If your child has an existing health problem, talk to their health care professional about how to handle this during this period of social distancing and confinement.
- Organize a family meeting and discuss with the children how you plan to deal with being trapped at home together. Be open with them about why they cannot play sports, participate in other activities, or visit family and friends - to get them used to this new restricted routine.
- The person who uses violence can target children by making them responsible for their own anxiety, frustration and feelings of helplessness.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR CHILDREN WITH A PREPARED EMERGENCY/SAFETY PLAN

It is also important to be aware that you can ask for help and that there are specialized intrafamilial violence services to help you. Even during the pandemic, specialized intrafamilial violence services are open and available for support and advice to anyone who is a victim of violence and who is concerned about how the current containment will impact their safety and wellbeing.

Because everyone is homebound, you may feel isolated from friends, family, and your support network. Even if you are isolated, try to maintain social connections online or by phone if possible.

The best way to develop a safety plan is to use outside support, such as a family violence service. However, trusted friends and family members can also play an important role in safety planning, especially during times of heightened risk such as now.

- Think in advance of things you can do to be safer when you live in a climate of family violence.
- You can get help by agreeing with a trusted outside person who can help you by agreeing a sure word, signal that you, as a victim of family violence, can use to warn her that she needs to help you in an emergency.
- Keep copies of your important documents and / or an “emergency” bag with this trusted person.
- Keep spare keys and all of your important documents handy or with a trusted outside person.
- Keep hidden money in case of an emergency.
- If possible, have a phone permanently charged near you and a backup plan in case you are separated from your phone (2nd phone hidden).
- Think about the types of essential services you can come in contact with during virus-related restrictions (such as general practitioners and other health services, the post office, supermarkets) and how you can use them as part of your security plan.
- During confinement, it can be difficult to leave your home. A loved one can then pick you up from a meeting place near you to take you to the hospital or to the police station.
- Teach - and teach your children - to position themselves in a safe place. Teach your children to call the police or send an sms and, using age-appropriate strategies, to know their home address by heart.

- Create signals and / or code words that will allow your children to go out and go to a place where they will be safe and which you will have determined in advance with them.
- Create signals that will allow your neighbors or family members to call the police if you cannot do it. For example, a light on, or a phone message "I can't come next week."
- Have an evacuation plan/safety plan for you and your children. Repeat it even in the dark and with your children.
- Your security plan should be flexible enough to allow you to implement other emergency plans if your original plan becomes unworkable.

SAFETY TIPS IN CASE OF VIOLENCE

- If you find yourself involved in an argument, try to minimize the risks:
 - Preferably go to rooms with two outlets
 - Remove anything that can be used as a weapon
 - Go if possible to a place where you can be seen or heard from the outside (kitchens, bathrooms and garages are more dangerous than living rooms, dining rooms or bedrooms).
 - Do everything you can to save time, defuse the situation, or to protect yourself and your children from abuse.
 - **Call or send a SMS to the police or an emergency number if you can or tell the trusted outside person to do it for you. Call the police if you witness, even hearing, of violence against children.**

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TAKE CARE OF YOU AND YOUR BELOVED ONES AND STAY HEALTHY