



Updated March 24, 2020

Recommended Guidance for Domestic Violence Victims

Background

SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus that has emerged and caused coronavirus disease (abbreviated as COVID-19). Public health experts continue to learn about SARS-CoV-2, but based on current data and similar coronaviruses, spread from person-to-person happens most frequently among close contacts (those within about six feet) via respiratory droplets. Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 to persons from surfaces contaminated with the virus has not been documented yet, but current evidence suggests that SARS-CoV-2 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of material. One primary measure discussed in this guidance will be cleaning of visibly dirty surfaces followed by disinfection – a best practice for prevention of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory illnesses in XXX.

Purpose

Avoiding public spaces and working remotely can help to reduce the spread of COVID-19, but for many survivors, staying home may not be the safest option. We know that any external factors that add stress and financial strain can negatively impact survivors and create circumstances where their safety is further compromised.

Abuse is about power and control. When survivors are forced to stay in the home or in close proximity to their abuser more frequently, an abuser can use any tool to exert control over their victim, including a national health concern such as COVID-19. In a time where companies may be encouraging that their employees work remotely, and the CDC is encouraging “social distancing,” an abuser may take advantage of an already stressful situation to gain more control.

Definitions

COVID-19 is caused by a new virus. There is much to learn about the [transmissibility, severity, and other features of the disease](#). Everyone can do their part to help plan, prepare, and respond to this emerging public health threat.

Recommended Actions

Here’s how COVID-19 could uniquely impact intimate partner violence survivors:

- Abusive partners may withhold necessary items, such as hand sanitizer or disinfectants.



- Abusive partners may share misinformation about the pandemic to control or frighten survivors, or to prevent them from seeking appropriate medical attention if they have symptoms.
- Abusive partners may withhold insurance cards, threaten to cancel insurance, or prevent survivors from seeking medical attention if they need it.
- Programs that serve survivors may be significantly impacted – shelters may be full or may even stop intakes altogether. Survivors may also fear entering shelter because of being in close quarters with groups of people.
- Survivors who are older or have chronic heart or lung conditions may be at increased risk in public places where they would typically get support, like shelters, counseling centers, or courthouses.
- Travel restrictions may impact a survivor’s escape or safety plan – it may not be safe for them to use public transportation or to fly.
- An abusive partner may feel more justified and escalate their isolation tactics.

If any of the above sound like they may be happening to you or someone you love, here are a few suggestions for survivors that may make this uncertain time feel a little bit safer:

- Create a safety plan
 - A safety plan is a personalized, practical plan that includes ways to remain safe while in a relationship, planning to leave, or after you leave. The National Domestic Violence Hotline can help victims, friends, family members, and anyone who is concerned about their own safety or the safety of someone else create a safety plan.
 - You and your partner may be told by either or both of your employers to work remotely to limit social interaction. Having a safety plan laid out can help you to protect yourself during this stressful time. You can learn more about [safety plans here](#), and you can find an [interactive guide to safety planning here](#).
 - Because there may be limited shelter availability due to COVID-19, consider alternatives such as staying with family or friends, staying in motels, or sleeping in your vehicle. Be extra mindful of good hygiene practices if you’re leaving as well – wash your hands regularly, avoid touching your face, minimize contact with surfaces that other people have had contact with, etc.
- Practice self-care
 - COVID-19 is causing uncertainty for many people, but getting through this time while experiencing abuse can feel really overwhelming. Taking time for your health and wellness can make a big difference in how you feel. To learn more about how to build in self-care while staying safe, you can learn more [here](#).



2019 Novel Coronavirus [COVID-19]

cdh.idaho.gov/dac-coronavirus | cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

- If you're a friend or family member of someone experiencing abuse, you may not be able to visit them in person if you live in an area where there are COVID-19 cases. Seeing someone you care about being hurt is stressful. Remind yourself that you can't make decisions for someone else, but you can encourage your loved one to think about their wellbeing, safety plan and practice self-care while they are in their home.
- Reach out for help
 - While people are encouraged to stay at home, you may feel isolated from your friends and family. Even if you are isolated, try to maintain social connections online or over the phone, if it is safe to do so, and try to stick to your daily routines as much as possible.
 - For any victims and survivors who need support, the National Domestic Violence Hotline is available 24/7. Call 1-800-799-7233 or 1-800-799-7233 for TTY, or if you're unable to speak safely, you can log onto thehotline.org or text LOVEIS to 22522.

Resources

[CDH Coronavirus Monitoring](#)

[IDHW Resources for the Novel Coronavirus](#)

[Environmental Cleaning & Disinfection Recommendations](#)

[How & When to Wash Your Hands](#)

[Higher Risk Populations](#)

[Printable Resources](#)

CDH Call Center (208-321-2222 M-F 8:30-4:30)

Sources:

CDC, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>

National Domestic Violence Hotline, Staying Safe During COVID-19, <https://www.thehotline.org/2020/03/13/staying-safe-during-covid-19/>