

HELPING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING THE COVID-19 HEALTH CRISIS

Domestic Violence is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. Types of abuse include physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, financial, technological abuse, and stalking.

DURING THE COVID-19 HEALTH CRISIS:

Avoiding public spaces and working remotely can help to reduce the spread of COVID-19, but for victims of abuse, home is often the most dangerous place to be. Work, school, running errands and hobbies are often the only escape victims have to be away from their abuser. The abuser will now have more opportunities to exert power and control. Along with the ongoing abuse, abusers may also:

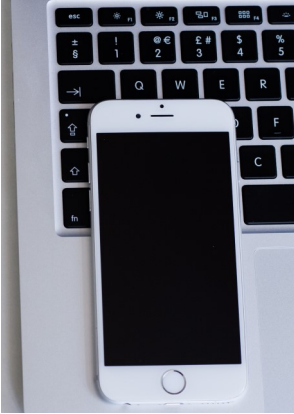
- Withhold necessary items, such as hand sanitizer or disinfectants
- Spread misinformation about the pandemic to control or frighten the victim
- Withhold insurance cards, threaten to cancel insurance, or prevent the victim from seeking medical attention if they need it
- Withhold phone or computer access to keep in touch with friends and family virtually
- Threaten to kick victim out of the house knowing they don't have a safe place to go



VICTIMS MAY NOT REACH OUT FOR HELP BECAUSE:

- They think that services are not available or closed during the pandemic.
- They may fear entering shelter because of being in close quarters with groups of people.
- Victims who are older or have chronic heart or lung conditions may be at increased risk in public places where they would typically get support.
- Travel restrictions may impact a victim's escape or safety plan.

RESOURCES

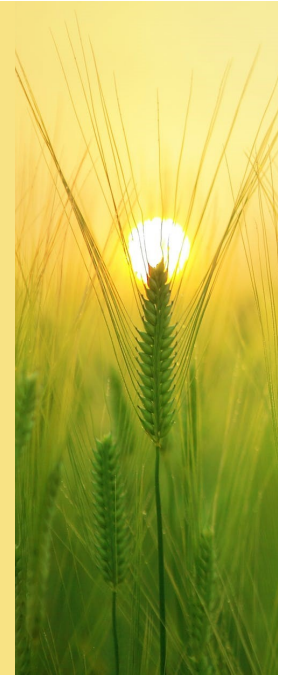


IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT SOMEONE WHO MAY BE EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

- Continue to reach out to them by phone/computer if it is safe to do so.
- Remind them that you believe them, it is not their fault and this is a very difficult and scary time.
- Help them create a safety plan.
- Tell them that services are still available.

HELP THEM CREATE A SAFETY PLAN:

- Identify safe areas of the house where there are no weapons.
- If possible, have a phone accessible at all times and know what numbers to call for help.
- Let trusted friends and neighbors know of the situation and develop a plan and visual signal for when you need help (code word sent in a text, turn lights on and off in the house to signal neighbors).
- Keep a bag packed with a change of clothes, medications and important documents.
- Teach children how to get help. Instruct them not to get involved in the violence. Plan a code word to signal to them that they should call 911.
- If violence is unavoidable, become a small target. Curl up into a ball with your face protected and arms around each side of your head, fingers entwined.



Services Available – At No Cost

**Family Justice Center – 240-773-0444 or safe@montgomerycountymd.gov
(Mon-Fri, 8:30 – 5:00 pm)**

Help with safety planning, protective orders, legal assistance, counseling.

Montgomery County Crisis Center – 240-777-4000 (24 hours)

Help with crisis situations, and shelter placement.

District Court Commissioner’s Office (24 hours)

191 East Jefferson St in Rockville - File Protective Orders

National Domestic Violence Hotline (24 hours)

800-799-7233

thehotline.org (to chat)

Text LOVEIS to 22522