

Tip sheet for Churches



Understanding and responding to Domestic Abuse during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

In times of natural disaster, rates of domestic abuse are known to increase, with women and children being most significantly at risk. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we are sadly likely to see this same increase.

Heightened personal and family stress is not the primary cause of violence, but it is likely to increase its frequency and severity. Social isolation may limit a person's contact with their support networks and place them in closer contact with the perpetrator of abuse.

This may increase the risk of emotional, verbal and physical abuse. The pandemic may be used as an excuse for greater monitoring and social control or financial abuse. More time together may see a rise in abuse of children or sexual abuse of a partner.

How can you help?

- Remind everyone in the church community of the realities of domestic abuse and where to get help: use the Diocesan information and resources
<https://knowdomesticabuse.church/>
<https://safeministry.org.au/domestic-family-abuse/>
- If you are currently supporting someone you know is experiencing domestic abuse, carefully check in to see how they are doing: make your enquiry general until you are sure the perpetrator is not in the vicinity.
- If possible, set up an agreed code word that can let a designated friend or pastoral carer know if they need help in an emergency – when police will be called.
- Be aware that social control may be happening by monitoring electronic communication.
- Check that they have access to enough food and personal care essentials – that these are not being withheld.
- New disclosures or concerns about domestic abuse, should not be minimised as “just the stress everyone is under” – take it seriously and connect with professional support services. Follow the Flow Chart when responding to disclosures.
<https://safeministry.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Domestic-Abuse-Charts.pdf>

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- Support separated families managing shared parenting arrangements: help the children stay in touch with both parents if that is the agreed arrangement.
- Check with a Family Relationship Centre or Community Legal Service for advice if difficulties arise.
- Those who are isolated and dependent on a carer may be at greater risk of abuse during this health crisis.
- Encourage them to keep in touch with service providers who can check on their wellbeing.
- For further training and information on recognizing and responding to domestic abuse refer to online KNOW Domestic Abuse training – <https://courses.safeministry.training/know-domestic-abuse-course/>

Support services

Anglicare Counselling: 1300 651 728

1800 RESPECT National Helpline: 1800 737 732

NSW DV 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

E-safety women: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/women>

May the God of hope and peace sustain each of you in the coming days.

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