



COVID-19: Increases in Domestic Violence

Self-isolation and quarantine are essential in slowing the spread of COVID-19. Unfortunately, home is not the safest option for individuals and families experiencing domestically violent relationships. As quarantine measures continue, many experts and statistics show domestic violence is increasing.

Victims are experiencing intensified environments with growing frequency as many are confined at home with their abusers. Separate from physical violence, abusive relationships often involve isolation from friends, family and co-workers. Victims are subjected to constant surveillance; strict behavioural demands; and restrictions to necessities. Many resources are becoming overwhelmed with increased calls and many shelters have reduced capacities, as they've had to implement physical distancing protocols within their facilities.

Government reaction

The Canadian Government is providing up to \$50 million to women's shelters and sexual assault centres. This additional support will help community organizations across the country to stay operational and accessible to victims. Many shelters are working with community partners and police to find safe spaces for those suffering from domestic abuse.

The breakdown of this funding, according to the Government of Canada is as follows:

- Up to \$10 million will be provided to Indigenous Services Canada's (ISC) and their existing network of 46 emergency shelters on reserves to support Indigenous women and children fleeing violence.
- \$40 million will go to Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) with up to \$30 million assigned to address the immediate needs of shelters and sexual assault centres. (1)

Increase in domestic violence calls

It has become harder for women to leave unsafe situations. “Vancouver’s Battered Women’s Support Services says their staff have seen a 300 percent increase in calls over the last three weeks.” (2)

Added to these complex and difficult scenarios is the presence and potential for children to witness domestic abuse as school closures have been extended until further notice.

Support for mental health

Potentially, without physical access to normal resources and support systems such as other family members, victims of abuse will have to adjust for necessary support. If you or someone you know needs help, reach out to local crisis centres or one of the support services below for assistance.

Support services

There are many support services for individuals experiencing domestic violence – with the increase of calls during COVID-19, the lines may be busier than normal.

Here are victim helplines or crisis centres depending on your provincial or territory location.

Alberta

Family Violence Info Line - 780-310-1818

British Columbia

VictimLink BC - 1-800-563-0808

Manitoba

Provincewide Family Violence Helpline - 1-877-977-0007

New Brunswick

Domestic Violence Outreach, Saint John - 506-632-5616 or 506-649-2580

Newfoundland

Hope Haven Transition House Crisis Line - 709-944-6900

Northwest Territories

NWT Help Line - 1-800-661-0844

Nova Scotia

Transition House Association of Nova Scotia - 1-855-225-0220

Nunavut

Nunavut Kamatsiaqtut Helpline - 867-979-3333

Ontario

Victim Support Line - 1-888-579-2888

Prince Edward Island

P.E.I. Family Violence Prevention Services - 1-800-240-9894

Quebec

Domestic Violence Hotline - 514-873-9010

Saskatchewan

24-hour Crisis and Abuse Line - 1-800-214-7083

Yukon

Yukon Victim Services - 867-667-8550

As the pandemic continues, victims are more likely to experience increasing episodes of violence as households face potential job loss and financial setbacks. In many instances, isolation has broken existing support networks, making it more difficult for victims to get help or escape. If you find yourself in immediate danger, call 911.

References

1. Government of Canada (2020). Source: <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/fun-fin/shelters-refuges-en.html>
2. Daya, Rumina & Azpiri, Jon (2020). Source: <https://globalnews.ca/news/6789403/domestic-violence-coronavirus/>

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