



Domestic Violence Community Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Domestic violence rates have increased three fold in China and other jurisdictions just a few weeks and months ahead of Alberta's current COVID 19 outbreak.

Domestic violence rates increase during and following natural disasters and economic downturn, we are currently experiencing both. For example, after Hurricane Katrina, violence between partners rose 98%.

Given our current COVID-19 Public Health Emergency this research points to the need for increased awareness and services related to domestic violence during these crises.

While some victims of domestic violence will choose to leave an abusive partner only 8% of victims ever choose to access shelter supports. As seen through a 2011 Canadian population based study most female domestic violence victims (80%) used their informal networks for support. (Barret & Pierre 2011) Friends and family, by their very nature, know an individual better than formal domestic violence program staff (Goodman & Smyth, 2011; Latta & Goodman, 2011).

During times of social distancing and self-quarantine/isolation most people who have been managing the domestic violence in their lives through the support of friends and family will be left with limited or no access to stabilizing supports and resources¹. (Parkinson & Zara, 2013).

Under the current state of public health emergency individuals experiencing domestic violence may have no choice but to rely on abusive partners to keep themselves and their children housed and relatively safe (Fothergill, 1999; Fothergill, 2008; Houghton, 2009; Jenkins and Phillips, 2008; Phillips, *et al.*, 2009).



What Can We Do:

- Continue and where possible increase screening for domestic violence:
 - Recognize domestic violence
 - Empathize with the person experiencing

¹ In a research study after the wildfires in Australia in 2011 women spoke about the immense pressure from family members, friends, and even health professionals to deny or forgive men's violence. The women interviewed spoke of inadequate response from health professionals and inappropriate referrals, with some reporting that they were effectively stopped from seeking support by the person they confided in



- Ask what they need and how we can help them
- Listen to what they want for support and find ways to stay connected even in times of social distancing and isolation
- Engage in online training of how to support community based clients during social distancing and social isolation
 - <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/real-talk-tickets-100425054040>
- Connect people impacted by domestic violence to community supports that can help them manage the violence they are experiencing and build safety plans
 - Sagesse: programs@sagesse.org or 403-234-7337 ext. 100
 - **Family Violence Information Line: [310-1818](tel:310-1818)**
- Support people in your community who are acting as informal supporters for those experiencing domestic violence.