## **Introduction**

Due to COVID-19, people may be required to stay in their home due to a lockdown or quarantine. This might be due to an outbreak in the community or because a family member has tested positive to COVID-19. In addition, community service providers may have a limited service due to movement restrictions or staff shortages.

## Websites and communications

There is extensive advice available for people regarding their health, mental health and movement restrictions during a COVID-19 lockdown or quarantine. However there is very little advice available regarding family and domestic violence (FDV) in the home. This is a concern, as it is acknowledged that the response to COVID-19 can impact on family functioning, and FDV can continue to occur during this time and can increase in severity and frequency. The impact of increased FDV is even greater when services are restricted, as neither victim-survivors, nor perpetrators are able to access supports easily.

Most community services providers have prepared communications on their websites and social media included information about changes to their services, as well as health and social distancing advice. However, very few have included information about how to prevent FDV in the home during a lockdown or quarantine.

To address this need, SFV has prepared some draft text which individual agencies may wish to use on their own website during the pandemic period alongside other service information or health information.

## Operational planning

In addition, although most community service providers have prepared operational plans to adjust to changes in the COVID-19 situation, not all have considered the impact on FDV. It is important to ensure that when preparing an organisational response to COVID-19 (e.g. the response to lockdowns, quarantines, service restrictions, movement restrictions, vaccine requirements, check-ins and other) that the potential for increasing FDV, and the service response to FDV is also considered.

Non-FDV-specialist services may not be aware that specialist FDV services and families rely on them to provide accountability for perpetrators and safety for adult and child victim-survivors. For example, when children experiencing FDV attend school or daycare, they receive some respite from violence and safety, as well as increased wellbeing due to others considering their welfare. Where there are issues and concerns, these are reported or responded to, which creates accountability for FDV perpetrators. In the case of children not attending school due to lockdown, these supports and accountability mechanisms are no longer in place, which can impact on their safety.

To address this, SFV strongly advocates that all community services include a plan for addressing family and domestic violence within their broader COVID-19 response plan. This plan should consider whether any new COVID-19 policies, or changes or reduction to their service delivery will impact on the safety and wellbeing of adult and child victim-survivors, or whether it might impact on informal accountability mechanisms that support men not to use violence.

## **Draft website text**

## *Instructions for use*

*The following text has been prepared as a template for community services providers to use on their own websites. It is anticipated that each organisation will adjust the text to suit their their own style, website templates, or space restrictions. Please note that hyperlinks have been provided next to the text, to aid in interoperability with a range of websites, however it is suggested that these are embedded in the final website text. It is also suggested that organisations consider including a ‘quick exit’ button on the page that contains this information.*

## Family and Domestic Violence – Being Safe in your home during quarantine or lockdown

Due to COVID-19, people may need to stay in their home due to a lockdown because of an outbreak in the community or due to a quarantine because a family member has tested positive to COVID-19. In some locations, there may be reduced services due to movement restrictions or staff shortages. This can cause difficulties for some families as they try to meet their responsibilities while they are feeling unwell or are worried about their situation or feeling uncertain about the future. Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) can continue to occur during this time and may even increase in severity and frequency.

Please find below some information you can use to help you if you are experiencing family violence, or you are using, or are at risk of using, violence in the home.

## What is family and domestic violence?

Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) refers to violence or threats of violence, or any of a range of behaviours undertaken by a person towards their family member, including partners and children, that coerces or controls the family member or causes fear.

More information about FDV can be found on the following websites.

* Centre for Women’s Safety and Wellbeing <https://cwsw.org.au/what-is-domestic-and-family-violence/>
* No to Violence <https://ntv.org.au/about-family-violence/types-of-abuse/>
* Anglicare WA <https://www.anglicarewa.org.au/docs/default-source/get-help/parenting-support/relationship-with-family-members/dv-and-abuse.pdf?sfvrsn=346e7b3c_2>

## Support for keeping safe from others in your home in lockdown or quarantine

Are you worried about experiencing family and domestic violence from someone in your home during lockdown or quarantine?

* If you need immediate help, or you are in danger, call 000.
* Trust yourself, your instincts, and judgements when you make decisions about safety for you and your children.
* Work with someone to help you create a safety plan.
* Remember, it is always the responsibility of the person causing harm to stop the violence.
* Also remember that you are strong, and everyone deserves a good life and to feel safe in their home.

If you need more information or support to help you stay safe from others in your home during lockdown or quarantine, there are many resources available to you.

* You can find support services for your local area using the Centre for Women’s Safety and Wellbeing service directory <https://cwsw.org.au/directory/>
* Stopping Family Violence has created a brochure which includes some suggestions of things you can do to stay more safe from others in your home during a lockdown or quarantine <https://sfv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/SFV-Kimberley-COVID-19-Women-A.pdf>
* Relationships Australia WA have developed a Tip Sheet for women living with family and domestic violence during COVID-19 <https://www.relationshipswa.org.au/relationshipswa/media/documents/covid-19%20general%20tip%20sheets/tip-sheet-covid19-supporting-women-living-with-family-and-domestic-violence-060520.pdf>

Other information on what you can do if you are experiencing FDV:

* Centrecare - Top Ten Tips <https://www.centrecare.com.au/assets/uploads/resources/ten-top-tips/Ten-Top-Tips-when-women-want-to-reclaim-control-of-their-lives.pdf>
* No To Violence – helpful resources <https://ntv.org.au/about-family-violence/are-you-experiencing-family-violence/>
* Specialist FDV services at Relationships WA <https://www.relationshipswa.org.au/Services/Family-Domestic-Violence>
* Communicare - women’s support services <https://www.communicare.org.au/Family-Violence-Justice-Services/Women’s-Support-Services>
* Women’s Legal Service WA - guide to creating a safety plan <https://www.wlswa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/20200320-WLSWA-Safety-Planning-Booklet.pdf>
* You can call the following numbers, where someone can assist you
  + Women’s DV Line (WA): (08) 9223 1188 or 1800 007 339 1800
  + 1800 Respect: 1800 737 732
  + Crisis Care 24/7 (WA): (08) 9223 1111
  + DVassist: 1800 080 083  
    Lifeline: 13 11 14

## Support for being safe to others in your home during lockdown or quarantine

Are you worried about causing harm to others in your home during lockdown? Does someone else have worries that your behaviour or violence is causing harm to others? Do you need some advice on what you can do differently to help with the safety and wellbeing of your family? If you feel like you are controlling someone, or you feel you might harm someone or yourself, or you are feeling too angry, there are things you can do.

* Remember, you are responsible for your words and actions towards others.
* Also remember that everyone deserves a good life and to feel safe in their home.
* You can find ways to stay mentally and physically healthy.
* If you are controlling someone, or feel you might harm someone or yourself, you should act quickly to calm yourself, distract yourself and seek some support from a counsellor.
* Try to prepare a plan in advance for what to do if you feel you might harm someone or yourself.

If you need information on how to be safe to others in your home during lockdown or quarantine, there are many resources available to you.

* You can find support services for your local area using the CWSW service directory <https://cwsw.org.au/directory/>
* Stopping Family Violence has created a brochure with suggestions of things you can do to avoid causing harm to others in your home during a lockdown or quarantine <https://sfv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/SFV-Kimberley-COVID-19-Men-A.pdf>
* Relationships Australia WA tip Sheet supporting men: domestic and family violence response <https://www.relationshipswa.org.au/relationshipswa/media/documents/covid-19%20general%20tip%20sheets/tip-sheet-covid19-supporting-men-family-and-domestic-violence-response-070520.pdf>

Other information and services for people who use violence.

* CWSW – information about men’s programs and supports <https://cwsw.org.au/directory/men-who-use-violence-programs/>
* Communicare – Men’s Support Services <https://www.communicare.org.au/Family-Violence-Justice-Services/Men’s-Support-Services>
* Centrecare – top 10 tips when men want to stop being abusive <https://www.centrecare.com.au/assets/uploads/resources/ten-top-tips/Ten-Top-Tips-when-men-want-to-stop-being-abusive.pdf>
* No To Violence – Get Help Page <https://ntv.org.au/get-help/>
* Stopping Family Violence (SFV) <https://sfv.org.au>
* White Ribbon <https://www.whiteribbon.org.au>

## General support for families living and working from home during COVID-19

* Relationships Australia WA have developed resources to support families working from home during COVID-19 <https://www.relationshipswa.org.au/resources/coping-with-covid-19>
* Centrecare have tip sheets for improving your relationships
  + When people in relationships want to communicate more effectively <https://www.centrecare.com.au/assets/uploads/resources/ten-top-tips/Ten-Top-Tips-when-people-in-relationships---communicate.pdf>
  + When you want healthy relationships <https://www.centrecare.com.au/assets/uploads/resources/ten-top-tips/Ten-Top-Tips--when-you-want-Healthy-Relationships.pdf>