

When “Safer at Home” Isn’t: Domestic Violence during COVID-19

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Across Canada, crisis lines, shelters, and transition homes have reported spikes in usage since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Measures to protect from COVID-19, such as physical distancing, staying home and reducing travel, may contribute to gender-based violence which may include domestic violence. PHSA staff shared their experiences of coping during COVID-19. For those working from home, the first 2 weeks were a challenge that for most, turned into a productive and well supported routine. We also heard about loneliness, isolation and domestic violence.

Domestic violence refers to a range of violations that happen within a domestic space. Although women are disproportionately affected by domestic violence, it is important to recognize that domestic abuse also happens to men and occurs in same-sex relationships. Children and their mothers are particularly vulnerable to intimate partner violence, child and elder abuse.

B.C. Human Rights Commissioner [Kasari Govender says](#) that “Family violence rises in times when families are in close contact and experiencing great economic pressure and uncertainty”. Now is the time to be vigilant regarding this [shadow pandemic](#). We all have a role to play to better understand, identify, and address the impacts of domestic violence.

Interested to learn more how you can help? Register for the free four-course learning series called [Gender-Based Violence: We All Can Help Improving the Health Sector's Response](#) on the Learning Hub.



Advocates are encouraging victims and anyone concerned about someone to contact service providers.

- VictimLinkBC is available 24-7 in 130 languages, including 17 Indigenous languages. It can be reached toll-free by calling 800-563-0808 or emailing VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca. The service is confidential and available across B.C. and Yukon.
- Children experiencing violence can also call the Helpline for Children at 310-1234. No area code is required. That line is also available 24-7, and children are not required to give their names.
- For Status First Nations Peoples, there are mental wellness and counselling support through First Nations Health Authority. Please call Health Benefits at 1-855-550-5454.

- **KUU-US Crisis Line is available to support Indigenous peoples including First Nation (Status and Non-status), Inuit and Metis.** This is available 24/7 and can be accessed toll-free: 1-800-588-8717, Youth Line: 250-723-2040, Adult Line: 250-723-4050

Additional Resources:

- [Poster: Help Is Available During COVID-19 - Ending Violence Association of BC](#)
- [EVA BC COVID-19 Resources - Ending Violence Association of BC](#)
- [Addressing Domestic Violence in the Workplace: A Handbook for Employers](#)
- How to [talk to an employee](#) who might be experiencing domestic violence
- [Learn about the national hand symbol to silently signal for help in a video call](#) from the Canadian Women's Foundation
- "Are you co-quarantined with your abusive partner?" – Join in the facebook, twitter, and Instagram campaign to [support](#) women and families
- [BC Women's webpage lists resources to find help \(ie. Sexual assault service, anti-violence services, transition homes, safety plan\)](#)
- BC government's webpage of virtual mental health supports [during](#) COVID-19

Looking for information and resources to support you during COVID-19?

Visit PHSA's [Supporting Our Workforce page](#) for articles, resources, and tools that provide psychosocial support during COVID-19.

- Don't hesitate to call Homewood Health, PHSA's [Employee & Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) provider, to speak with a clinical counsellor at 1-800-663-1142 or www.homeweb.ca. Homewood Health offers free and confidential coaching and counselling services for staff through video, phone, private online chat, or private messaging.