



FAMILY VIOLENCE DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC **TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS & FOR PATIENTS**

10 TIPS:

WHAT CAN HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS DO TO HELP WHEN THERE'S FV DURING PANDEMIC & LOCK DOWN?

- 1. Listen and support – this may be done also by phone, remembering that there may be a problem of privacy! When you know of a past history of DV- keep in touch with patients, consider initiating contact. Listen carefully for hints of distress. Direct questions can be asked only after assuring that it's safe for the patient to talk. More information – in links below.**
- 2. Tell patients that whenever there's an immediate threat they should contact the police. Explain about SILENT/TEXT options available (when calling is dangerous).**
- 3. Refer to hotlines and SPECIFIC FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES – primarily working by phone now.**
- 4. Consider informing on SAFETY PLANNING if specific family violence services are not available.**
- 5. Look at the whole family and the context. Children, elders and other dependent people – are now at increased risk of abuse and neglect due to increased caretaker stress and burden. Try to contact, assess and support caretakers at risk periodically.**
- 6. Recommend resources/activities to help patients, and especially children, to fill time. Recommend resources/activities at home that may reduce stress (e.g. music, relaxation, exercises/dancing).**
- 7. When needed prescribe medications to reduce anxiety/depression.**
- 8. When there is a history of a mental health disorder – of victim / perpetrator - the primary care physician should try and contact the psychiatrist/therapist (consider local laws on confidentiality/consent).**
- 9. Remember CONFIDENTIALITY – when patient asks for our help in contacting other agencies/ services/ professionals – whenever possible obey the local laws. Ask clearly for permission and document if it was granted on a phone conversation.**
- 10. Consult colleagues /other collaborating agencies, don't stay alone with the case!**



ENSURE PATIENT CAN TALK SAFELY

- **Before** addressing the issue of abuse:
 - *Is it safe for you to talk now ? Yes/no will do*
 - *Are you alone in the room ?*
- If patient answers “NO”:
 - *If you can't talk say “wrong number” and hang up.*
 - *When can I call so we can talk?*



ASK & LISTEN

- Possible questions if abuse is suspected:
 - *How are things at home right now ?*
 - *How are you coping with the extra stress ?*
 - *You seem worried. Is there anything you would like to discuss?*
 - *Sometimes stressful conditions at home may lead to violent reactions. Has anything like this happened ?*
 - *Does anyone at home try to control you, for example not letting you have money or go out of the house?*
 - *Has your husband (or partner) or someone else at home ever threatened to hurt you or physically harm you in some way? If so, when has it happened?*



ASSESS RISK & SAFETY

- After disclosure of abuse/if known previously:
 - *Is the abuse getting worse ?*
 - *Do you feel safe to stay at home ?*
 - *Are you in immediate danger ?*
 - *Are there any weapons in the house?*
- Assess – any children/vulnerable people at risk?
 - *Who else is in the house with you and are they at risk ?*
 - *Are you worried about the children?*

RESPOND & OFFER REFERRAL



- Validate patient's experience:
 - *I believe you*
 - *This is not your fault*
 - *You are not alone*
 - *Let's talk about what might help or what we can do*
- Express your caring/solidarity and offer advice:
 - *Do you have any support ? Who knows about this ?*
 - *Are you getting help from any specialized (FV) agency ?*
 - *I want you to know that even now during the pandemic services are available.*
 - *Would you like me to refer you to an agency that can help you ?*
 - *How can I help ?*
 - *If you are in immediate danger you must call the police*
 - *Would you like me to call the police for you now ?*

SAFETY PLANNING



- Detailed risk assessment and safety planning are best done by specialized family violence services when available. Some key issues to discuss with patients when necessary:
 - Safe place to go: *If you need to leave your home in a hurry, where could you go?*
 - Planning for children: *Would you go alone or take your children with you?*
 - Transport: *How will you get there?*
 - Items to take with you: *Do you need to take any documents, keys, money, clothes, or other things with you when you leave? What is essential? Can you put together items in a safe place or leave them with someone, just in case?*
 - Financial: *Do you have access to money if you need to leave? Where is it kept? Can you get it in an emergency?*
 - Support of someone close by: *Is there a neighbor you can tell about the violence who can call the police or come with assistance for you if they hear sounds of violence coming from your home?*

CONSULT / REPORT / RECORD



- Make sure you know whom to consult in your organization
- Keep updated information on available services & referral pathways
- Know local laws (Duty to report, confidentiality, information sharing)
 - *In many countries there is a duty to report/refer to safeguarding when children/other dependent people are in danger*
- Document according to local procedures. Due to safety consideration - consultation should remain hidden from online access
- Document if you are concerned, even if the patient has not made a direct disclosure

RESOURCES

WHO: COVID-19 and violence against women What the health sector/system can do
26 March 2020

<https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/emergencies/COVID-19-VAW-full-text.pdf?ua=1>

WHO: Health care for women subjected to intimate partner violence or sexual violence: A clinical handbook

http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/136101/1/WHO_RHR_14.26_eng.pdf

IRIS: Responding to domestic abuse during telephone and video consultations

https://pdfhost.io/v/gYvqnkHlr_IRISi_Guidance_for_General_Practice_teams_phone_and_video.pdf

IRIS RCGP: Guidance on DVA in the context of end of life care in the COVID-19 pandemic

https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/pluginfile.php/149351/mod_resource/content/2/Guidance%20on%20DVA%20in%20the%20context%20of%20EOLC%20in%20the%20COVID-19%20pandemic.pdf

UK GOV HOME OFFICE: Guidance Coronavirus (COVID-19): support for victims of domestic abuse

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse>

UK RCGP: COVID-19 AND SAFEGUARDING

https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/pluginfile.php/149180/mod_resource/content/2/COVID-19%20and%20Safeguarding%20%286%29.pdf

SAVELIVES UK: Domestic abuse and COVID-19

<https://safelives.org.uk/news-views/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19>

GBV AoR – Many resources including webinars on GBV and services, including on COVID pandemic.

https://gbvaor.net/thematic-areas?term_node_tid_depth_1%5B121%5D=121&field_thematic_resource_type_sec_target_id%5B112%5D=112

STANDING TOGETHER AGAINST DV: COVID-19: Guidance on how to respond to domestic abuse during lockdown for healthcare professionals

<http://www.standingtogether.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/COVID-19%20National%20Health%20Guidance.pdf>

FUTURES WITHOUT VIOLENCE: Implementing culturally-responsive and trauma-informed telehealth services and family-centered practice during covid-19

<https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/innovation-on-demand-part-1-telehealth-services-and-family-centered-practice/>

UNICEF: Not just hotlines and mobile phones: GBV Service provision during COVID-19

<https://www.unicef.org/media/68086/file/GBV%20Service%20Provision%20During%20COVID-19.pdf>

SPANISH GOVERNMENT: Guia de actuacion para mujeres que esten sufriendo violencia de genero en situacion de permanencia domiciliaria derivada del estado de alarma por COVID 19 (Guide for women emphasizing services, laws and resources - **IN SPANISH**)

<https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/serviciosdeprensa/notasprensa/igualdad/Documents/2020/260320-GuiaViolenciaGeneroCOVID.pdf>

Link to resources on family violence in different languages (general resources on family violence, not specific to COVID 19 situation)

www.hotpeachpages.net/lang/index.html

Identifying & Mitigating Gender-based Violence Risks within the COVID-19 Response
Last updated: 6 April 2020



https://mcusercontent.com/71bd9ea56bbca248596b57d79/files/6b4336bf-5cd7-4aa9-981d-763ea4672ef6/Interagency_GBV_risk_mitigation_and_Covid_tipsheet.pdf

End the Violence Epidemic – American organization with agenda to make violence a health issue

violenceepidemic.com/

COUNCIL OF EUROPE: Declaration of the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) on the implementation of the Convention during the COVID-19 pandemic

<https://rm.coe.int/declaration-committee-of-the-parties-to-ic-covid-/16809e33c6>

UN WOMEN: Violence against women and girls data collection during COVID-19

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/issue-brief-violence-against-women-and-girls-data-collection-during-covid-19>