

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.

Need more information or assistance? All calls are completely confidential.

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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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