



FDV IN COVID-19

For people experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV), being safe is no simple or single decision or task. The COVID-19 measures compound these complexities. We're all experiencing the technical and logistical challenges associated with staying connected to one-another under social-isolation and social-distancing measures.

For those experiencing DFV, there are additional challenges; these measures will exacerbate the physical isolation, placing individuals experiencing DFV in an almost constant and close proximity to their abuser. Perpetrators of DFV intentionally isolate victims from others to increase their control over the victim and to minimise the victim's resistance to the perpetrators abuse and violence. It is highly likely abusers will exploit this period of enforced isolation to increase their use of violence during this period.

Often victims/ survivors of DFV disclose their concerns about assaults, abuse and coercive control to their trusted friends and family members before making reports and disclosure to police and human services. However sometimes family members and friends hold concerns about DFV and sexual assault without the person experiencing violence mentioning their distress and fears. Whether or not DFV has been directly disclosed to you, many friends and family members of those experiencing DFV feel uncertain as to how to respond. Following is a guide of how to support a family member or friend that might be experiencing domestic violence.

Friends and family members are best placed to offer meaningful social responses that uphold the dignity of victims. Meaningful social responses include:

- Believing the victim and taking their accounts of abuse and violence seriously
- Respecting their competencies, strategies and choices



If you feel overwhelmed or stressed, remember to contact the EAP service on 1300 878 379.

For more information, visit our website at www.veretis.com.au or see further information at www.veretis.com.au/psych-up



Your role as a friend or family member to someone experiencing violence is vital to sustaining a supportive connection through the dangerous constraints of control and isolation enforced by perpetrators of violence. With this in mind, here are some tips to help you support friends and family during this time:

DO:

- Assume that the perpetrator of violence can hear, see and/or monitor all communications you have with your friend or family member
- Ask your friend or family member what channels they prefer to be contacted through. Keep checking as this may change.
- Ask your friend or family member if there are better and worse times of day for you to contact them. Keep asking as this may change.
- Ask your friend or family member if there is anything you can do to make their lives easier e.g. shop for supplies, play games or activities with the kids via video call, or anything else allowed within government guidelines. Keep asking as this may change.
- Uphold the dignity of your friends and family members (including children) by honouring their competencies, strategies and choices in responding to perpetrators of DFV and their efforts to keep themselves and other safe

DON'T:

- Assume your friend or family member are safe
- Assume that if someone does not call that they are uninterested or ignoring you
- Underestimate the potential value of your friendship, kinship and familial support for connection, safety and meaning
- Assume that physically intervening will create safety. For example, knocking on your friend or family member's door and inquiring about their safety may inadvertently increase their risk of harm

SERVICES AND RESOURCES

Seek, and offer information for further specialised services. Domestic and family violence services are deemed "essential services" by all levels of Australian government and continue to operate through this time. Most services have moved to significantly reduce face to face contact but have increased remote methods of working. Where it's safe and appropriate to do so, you can continue to refer people to specialist services.

- Call 000 if you or someone you know is in immediate danger
- Call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 for 24/7 free counselling available through the National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service
- Call Lifeline on 13 11 14 for 24/7 crisis support
- Call Mensline Australia on 1300 78 99 78 for Support for men concerned about their own violent behaviour
- Call Relationships Australia on 1300 364 277 for further resources and supports