

COVID-19 and Home Visiting INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

With the shift to virtual home visiting due to COVID-19, it may be difficult or unsafe to screen families for intimate partner violence. Recommendations for staying at home, social distancing, working from home, school cancellation, and layoffs, result in families experiencing increased stress, isolation, and danger. Home Visitors should keep in mind that the lack of privacy for conversations around IPV and the inability to evaluate the home environment for potential violence will require different strategies when talking with caregivers about IPV during virtual visits.

- **Keep in mind the barriers to accessing reliable modes of communication.** Caregivers may have reduced ability to make phone calls, access to internet, and other types of communication during this time.
- **When scheduling or confirming a virtual visit, encourage the caregiver to select a time when they will have access to a quiet, comfortable, and private spot where other people will not be able to overhear the conversation.**
- **Be prepared to offer suggestions for gaining privacy for the conversation.** For example, go outside while maintaining social distancing; take the call in their car, bathroom, garage and other private places; reschedule the chat for a more convenient time with more opportunities for privacy. Trust your gut feelings about the "right time" to discuss.
- **Always ask: "Is this a good time to talk? What is the best way to connect?"**
- **Consider coming up with a "code" word (or hand gesture for video calls). You can introduce the code word as "if you ever need me to know that your really need some extra help, but you just can't go into all the details, just use that word."**
- **Provide general IPV information to all caregivers during this time.** "Because of the COVID-19 outbreak and the changes to our visits, we are providing information to all our families about intimate partner violence and sharing some additional resources."
- **Talk about healthy and unhealthy relationships and share resources.** This allows you to give the caregiver resources without asking them to disclose IPV. It also reduces the feelings of isolation. You can follow your home visiting model recommendations or find more information at thehotline.org.
- **Remind them of your confidentiality.** "Everything you share with me is confidential. This means what you share with me is not reportable to anyone, including state or federal agencies. There are just two things that I would have to report - if you are suicidal, or your child(ren) are being harmed. The rest stays between us and helps me better understand how I can help you and your child."
- **At this time, staying connected or even increasing connections with caregivers experiencing violence is vital.**
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline is available 24/7 at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or by texting LOVEIS to 22522**

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TALKING TO FAMILIES ABOUT INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV)

- **People who are surviving violence in their relationships and families may be experiencing increased isolation and danger caused by social distancing measures during the Coronavirus pandemic.**
- **Abuse is a pattern of behavior that one person uses to gain power and control over the other. These behaviors can include:**
 - **isolation**
 - **emotional abuse**
 - **controlling the finances**
 - **physical and sexual assault**
- **Abuse is about power and control.** When survivors are forced to stay in the home or in close proximity to their abuser more frequently, an abuser can use any tool to exert control over their victim, including a national health concern such as COVID-19. In a time where companies may be encouraging that their employees work remotely, and the CDC is encouraging “social distancing,” an abuser may take advantage of an already stressful situation to gain more control.
- **Here are some ways that COVID-19 could uniquely impact intimate partner violence survivors:**
 - Abusive partners may withhold necessary items, such as hand sanitizer or disinfectants.
 - Abusive partners may share misinformation about the pandemic to control or frighten survivors, or to prevent them from seeking appropriate medical attention if they have symptoms.
 - Abusive partners may withhold insurance cards, threaten to cancel insurance, or prevent survivors from seeking medical attention if they need it.
 - Programs that serve survivors may be significantly impacted -- shelters may be full or may even stop intakes altogether. Survivors may also fear entering shelter because of being in close quarters with groups of people.
 - Survivors who are older or have chronic heart or lung conditions may be at increased risk in public places where they would typically get support, like shelters, counseling centers, or courthouses.
 - Travel restrictions may impact a survivor’s escape or safety plan - it may not be safe for them to use public transportation or to fly.
 - An abusive partner may feel more justified and escalate their isolation tactics.

If any of the above sound like they may be happening to you or someone you love, talk with your home visitor or contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or text LOVEIS to 22522.

THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
HOTLINE
1.800.799.SAFE (7233) WWW.THEHOTLINE.ORG