

# Important Information for Women Regarding Domestic Violence and COVID-19 (Coronavirus)



Help!



PAVEE POINT  
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

# Why is this time more dangerous for women and children who live with domestic violence?



**To stop the spread of COVID-19, people are asked to stay at the safety of their homes and keep distance from other people. But for women who live with domestic violence, home is not always a safe place to be.**

Women are now trapped in a house or a trailer with their abuser with little way to connect with the outside world and not knowing if the Gardaí, refuges or courts services will still help them. With the abuser in the house all the time, it is difficult for women to call their sister, mother, cousin, friend or a domestic violence service as he might overhear her talking to them.

During times when abusers spend more time at home, abusers often become more controlling. Emotional, physical, financial and sexual violence can start to happen more often and can become worse.

## **IMPORTANT TO NOTE:**

**COVID-19, drug or alcohol use, unemployment, money issues or any other issue that the abuser is having do not cause domestic violence. The cause of domestic violence is always about the abuser using power and control over the victim.**



# How might abusive husbands or family members use the COVID-19 crisis to control her?



## **Some things abusers might be saying and doing to women during the COVID-19 crisis are:**

- Trying to make her think that there is no help available during this time, for example telling her that Gardai won't respond to her call or that all services are closed
- Blocking her access to her phone, computer, TV, family and friends so that she cannot get information about the virus
- Refusing to wash his hands which can put her and her children at risk of getting the virus
- Stopping her from getting access to hand soap, hand sanitiser or cleaning products
- Telling her that he is infected and has infected her/Making her believe that if she leaves she will infect others
- Using the virus as a scare tactic to keep her away from her kids
- Threatening to kick her out on the street so that she gets the virus and gets sick
- Stopping her from accessing her social welfare payments
- Stopping her from accessing health care when she has symptoms of COVID-19



# How can women keep safe in homes with domestic violence during the COVID-19 crisis?



**Keeping herself and her children safe at home when the abuser is at home can be difficult. However, there are certain things she can do in order to try to keep herself safe:**



- If your life, or someone else's life, is at immediate risk call the Garda emergency number 112 or 999

## Code Word

- If you can trust your neighbour, someone parked at your yard, family member or friend, let them know your situation. Set up a code word or a visual signal so that they can call the Gardaí for you when you need them to
- Contact a domestic violence service for information, support and someone to talk to
- Figure out what are safe areas in your house where there are no sharp objects and there is a door to escape. If he becomes abusive, try to move to those areas
- If possible, have your phone with you at all times and know what numbers to call for help. Know the number to Women's Aid or local domestic violence service. If your life is in danger, call the Gardaí
- Keep you and your children safe. Plan a code word or a visual signal to let them know that they should get help or leave the house



- Plan for what you will do if your children tells your husband about the code word or visual signal, or if he finds out about it some other way
- Make a habit of backing the car into the driveway and keeping the petrol tank fuelled. Keep the driver's door unlocked and others locked - for a quick escape
- Try not to wear scarves or long jewelry that could be used to harm you
- Come up with many excuses to get out of the house/trailer



**WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH IS SUFFERING AS A RESULT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND/OR THE COVID-19 CRISIS?**

As a result of COVID-19, women might be experiencing added stress and pressure. Women in abusive relationships may be worried about their safety and the safety of the children.

It is important that women try to mind themselves during this time. Please see Pavee Point mental health resources on [Pavee Mental Health Supports and Keeping Travellers Well](#) and the HSE's webpage on [Minding your Mental Health During the Coronavirus Outbreak](#).

**IMPORTANT:**

If you have to leave your home make sure you wash your hands regularly and/or disinfect your hands with hand sanitiser, avoid touching your face, try not to touch surfaces that other people have had contact with, and stay at least 2 meters away from people.

If you have to cough or sneeze, do this to your sleeve or tissue. If you have children, make sure they do all of this as well. If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 call a GP.

You can also call or text a dedicated COVID-19 hotline for Travellers 083 100 6300.

For more information on COVID-19 symptoms and testing see the [HSE's website](#) or [Pavee Point's page on COVID-19](#).



# Want to talk to a victim of domestic violence over the phone but the abuser is at home?



**Isolating ourselves at home doesn't mean cutting ourselves off from our community. Now, more than ever, we need to look out for women who live with domestic violence. Be extra aware of women in your community and what they might be going through right now.**

## But how to do this in a way that is safe for her?

- It is a good time to check in with women who you know are impacted by domestic violence or who show signs of being impacted by it. Ring them to see how they are doing at this time and let them know that there are health services and domestic violence services available if they need help
- Be aware that the abuser is likely to be in the house and could overhear her talking to you
- If it is safe for her to talk when you call, listen to her and give her information:
  - Be aware that she could be interrupted at any time. Decide a code word that she can use if someone comes close enough to overhear her. For example, ask her to say to you, 'thank you for giving information about the coronavirus, we are ok for the moment' and to hang up - or some other similar message
  - Do not ask too many questions but listen and believe her
  - Let her know that services are still open and working during this time
  - Ask her to call **112** or **999** if she is ever in an emergency or feels her life or someone else's life is in danger

"Thank you..."

Women's  
Aid  
Helpline

**1800  
341  
900**

- Try to give her the phone number of a domestic violence services – whether the national free phone **Women's Aid helpline 1800 341 900** or a [local domestic violence service](#)



- Tell her that local district courts are still open and can support women to make applications for barring and safety orders. Only emergency cases are dealt with at the moment. Each local district court is working differently, so please call your [local district court](#) for more information rather than showing up in person. **Women's Aid Helpline 1800 341 900** or her [local domestic violence service](#) can support her with this
- Support her with creating a safety plan for herself. See section on 'How can women keep safe in homes with domestic violence during the COVID-19 crisis?'
- Do not give her 'advice' about what she should and shouldn't do but give her information about her options
- Ask her to think about where she can go to make a safe telephone call if and when she needs to
- Ask her if she has someone in the house, yard, next door, or a friend/family member she can trust to call the Gardaí
- If she ever needs to go to a refuge, give her the number of the local refuge(s). Ask her to call the refuge first before showing up as the refuge might be full at the time. Instead, if possible, call the refuge to see if they have space. If they don't have space they can call around to see if there is space in other refuges. If she is not sure what to do but she feels it is not safe to be around her abusive husband or family member call **112** or **999**
- If you think the abuser can overhear her:
  - Do not start asking questions about her situation
  - Tell her to say 'I'm sorry you got the wrong number – I am not Mary' and to hang up, or some other similar message
  - If you can, tell her that you are there to talk to her at another time
  - If you can and if she is good with using her mobile phone, tell her that if she is not able to talk over the phone Women's Aid runs an [online chat service](#) or you can email them at **helpline@womensaid.ie**

# WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE FOR WOMEN DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS?



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Remember that you are not alone during this time and both national and local services remain available to Traveller and Roma women.

## NATIONAL SERVICES

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### AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA

- In an emergency always dial **999 / 112**. You should use this service if a crime or incident is happening now or if anyone is in immediate danger
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### WOMEN'S AID

- **National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900** – open 24/7
  - **Text Service for Deaf and Hard of Hearing 087 959 7980** – available daily
  - **Online chat service ([womensaid.ie](http://womensaid.ie))** – available Monday, Wednesday & Friday from 7pm to 10pm
  - Support for women applying for domestic violence orders is continuing by phone **089 221 4636** Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 4.30pm
  - Women already linked in with a support worker will continue to be supported by phone
  - For more information see Women's Aid's website: [www.womensaid.ie/services](http://www.womensaid.ie/services)
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### COURT SERVICES

- Women can still make applications for barring and safety orders but only emergency cases are dealt with at the moment. Call your local district court for information rather than showing up in person.
    - **Women's Aid 1800 341 900** or a local domestic violence service can support women with court applications
    - To contact your local District Court: [www.courts.ie/offices](http://www.courts.ie/offices)
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## DUBLIN RAPE CRISIS CENTRE

- 24-hour free-phone **Rape Crisis Helpline 1800 778 888** – remains open to those who experience sexual violence and abuse during this time
- For more information see Dublin Rape Crisis Centre's website: [www.drcc.ie](http://www.drcc.ie)



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## MONEY ADVICE & BUDGETING SERVICE (MABS)

- Information for women who experience financial abuse during this time. Updated information on unemployment payments for those who are unemployed due to COVID-19.
- Helpline: 0761072000
- For more information see MABS website: [www.mabs.ie](http://www.mabs.ie)

## FREE LEGAL ADVICE CENTRE (FLAC)

- Telephone information and referral line is open during this time
- For legal information and advice contact **1890 350 250** or **01 874 5690**
- For more information see FLAC's website: [www.flac.ie](http://www.flac.ie)

## LOCAL SERVICES

For information about local domestic and sexual violence services and how they are operating during this time, please see Safe Ireland's website at [www.safeireland.ie](http://www.safeireland.ie) or call **Women's Aid helpline 1800 341 900**



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For any other information, please contact:  
The Violence against Women Programme by emailing [bridget.winters@pavee.ie](mailto:bridget.winters@pavee.ie) or calling **089 416 9042** during office hours and you will be directed to one of the programme workers.

*Information updated 11 May, 2020*



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