

Family Violence help is available - COVID19 is no excuse for family violence

Protecting Victorians remains a top priority during the coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency. Family violence frontline services, including crisis accommodation, police and courts, **continue to operate** to support women, children, men and families during the coronavirus emergency.

All family violence support services are available via a phone call and the police response is 'business as usual'. Please seek help if needed.

STATE & NATIONAL SERVICES

Organisation	How to contact	When to call	Service provision during COVID-19
Police	000	24 hrs, 7 days a week	Victoria Police continue to address and prevent family violence as a priority. The police response remains unchanged, identifying risks and taking appropriate action to hold perpetrators to account and keep victims safe.
	1800 015 188	24 hrs, 7 days a week	Statewide access point for people who need to leave a violent situation and access crisis accommodation
1800RESPECT	1800 737 732	24 hrs, 7 days a week	National helpline and online chat / advice for people to speak with a trained counsellor who will listen to and support you; this includes making a safety plan if needed. Phone and webchat available.
Kids Helpline	1800 551 800	24 hrs, 7 days a week	This confidential phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 is still open to answer your call , email or WebChat .
Seniors Rights Victoria	1300 368 821	10 am – 5 pm Mon to Fri	The helpline will continue by telephone and other technology. Elder abuse is any act which causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust, usually a family member. The abuse may be physical, social, financial, psychological and/or sexual and can include mistreatment and neglect.
Magistrates' Courts			All Magistrates' Courts are open. Family violence matters—including Family Violence Intervention Orders—continue to be heard, with urgent and high-risk matters being prioritised. Applications for family violence intervention orders can be made via the Magistrates' Court Victoria website if it is safe to do so. Applications can still be made in person at Court if that is the safest option.

STATE & NATIONAL SERVICES cont.

Organisation	How to contact	When to call	Service provision during COVID-19
Men's Referral Service	1300 766 491	8 am–9 pm Mon to Fri, 9 am–5 pm weekends	Continues to provide help and support for men concerned about their own behaviour or people concerned about the behaviour of the men in their lives. Live Chat is also available
Djirra	1800 105 303	Business hours	Provides support to all Aboriginal women and, particularly, to Aboriginal people who are currently experiencing family violence or have in the past
Dardi Munwurro	1800 435 799	24-hour support	Aboriginal men's crisis support line: Family violence, parenting, communication, separation and relationship issues
InTouch	1800 755 988	9 am to 5 pm Mon to Fri	Offers free and confidential support services to migrant and refugee women living in Victoria who are experiencing or have experienced family violence. For services and support during COVID-19, see their online hub .
WithRespect	1800 542 847	9 am to 5 pm Mon to Fri + AH	Family violence and intimate partner violence service supporting LGBTIQ+ communities and their families . After hours support, referral and telecounselling is available

LOCAL SERVICES

During COVID-19 services are **always available to help you via a phone call** but are only making home visits in crisis circumstances due to social distancing restrictions.

Organisation	How to contact	When to call	Service area	Service provision during COVID-19
Centre Against Violence	(03) 5722 2203 (business hours); safe steps 1800 015 188 (after hours)	9 am – 5 pm Mon to Fri safe steps 24/7	Towong, Wodonga, Indigo, Alpine, Wangaratta, Benalla and Mansfield local government areas	For crisis support and accommodation . Services are being provided by phone as all staff are working from home. Direct crisis care remains available for clients at risk of serious harm from family violence or sexual assault and for clients living in refuges and emergency accommodation.
Centre Against Violence	(03) 5722 2203	9 am – 5pm Mon to Fri	Wangaratta, Alpine, Benalla and Mansfield local government areas	For family violence counselling and support . Available via phone with all staff working remotely from home.

LOCAL SERVICES cont.

Organisation	How to contact	When to call	Service area	Service provision during COVID-19
Gateway Health—specialist family violence services	(02) 6022 8888	9 am – 5 pm Mon to Fri	Wodonga and region plus Corryong, Tallangatta, Tangambalanga, Kiewa and Mount Beauty and surrounds	For non-crisis counselling and case management for women affected by family violence. Services continue to be delivered with workers now working from home. Referrals are received via Gateway Health's Intake workers on (02) 6022 8888 (Wodonga) or (03) 5723 2000 (Wangaratta). Secondary consults can also be accessed via these numbers. All group programs, face-to-face appointments and home visits are suspended.
Gateway Health—Men's Behaviour Change Program	(02) 6022 8888	9 am – 5 pm Mon to Fri		For men seeking to change abusive behaviour . These non-crisis group and case management programs are operational and continue to be delivered via phone. Referrals are received via Gateway Health's Intake workers on (02) 6022 8888 (Wodonga) or (03) 5723 2000 (Wangaratta). Secondary consults can also be accessed via these numbers. All group programs, face-to-face appointments and home visits are suspended.
Victims Assistance Program (VAP)—Hume region	1300 362 739			The program remains open and is still operational with case managers and intake workers all working from home. Clients who have experienced violent crime in Victoria and professionals can continue to refer in by calling 1300 362 739 or emailing VAPIntake@merrihealth.org.au. All non-essential client outreach has been cancelled and the VAP co-location at Benalla police station is temporarily suspended. Outreach deemed essential will be decided on a case-by-case basis.
Child FIRST	1800 705 211			Information, advice and referral to support children, young people and families . All services are available via phone contact—the Upper Murray Family Care office is closed to the public and community due to COVID-19.

Stay connected and have a safety plan

In case of emergency—call 000

- To protect against spreading coronavirus, we need people to stay at home. If it is not safe at home, talk to friends or family about staying somewhere else for a while. You may wish to check if anyone in that house is self-isolating. If this isn't an option, call **safe steps** 24/7 on **1800 015 188** or email **safesteps@safesteps.org.au** for support and advice about finding safe accommodation.
- If you can, stay connected to family and friends through social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Signal. Decide on a 'safe word' or signal to use with close friends or family so they know if you need help and to call the police or emergency services.
- If possible, talk through a plan that might help to increase your safety and protect children. **Have your friend or family member call safe steps on 1800 015 188** for help with safety planning for you and help setting up a safe word signal during the coronavirus outbreak.
- Pack an emergency bag with important papers, such as passports, and clothes in case you need to leave in a hurry. You may need to leave it at a friend's place.

Self-isolation and increased stress during COVID-19 may see an increase in family violence incidents because people will find themselves at home with an abusive partner and without access to their usual supports. There are a number of things you can do to try and keep safe. It is also important for people to keep in touch with friends or family members who may be in unsafe situations. For online advice, including an Escape Bag checklist and safety apps you can download, visit [1800RESPECT](#).

Further information

- For ongoing updates about family violence and COVID-19, please visit [The Lookout](#).
- For information and advice on how the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic impacts those experiencing family violence and their friends and family, visit the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria [website](#).
- For information about COVID-19 and family violence, including support services, safety apps, emergency services and emergency relief, visit the Ovens Murray–Family Violence Partnership information on the Upper Hume Primary Care Partnership [website](#).
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