

## COVID-19: Partnering with women and children who are experiencing domestic violence and with men who use violence.

Based on [emerging evidence from natural disasters](#) there is a risk that during the COVID–19 pandemic some men will use violence and control more frequently and severely against their partners and children.

This increased risk is likely due to:

- more physical isolation for women and children because of social distancing
- women having less access to resources, extended family and community
- family units staying home together and spending more time in contained spaces with men who use violence
- family stressors such as access to goods, services and financial impacts due to job insecurity
- use of coercive control tactics by men related directly to the pandemic.

Contact the [Clinical Issues Team](#) if you need some advice or assistance.

### What this means for your practice

Consideration	What to do
<p>The man using violence may withhold items such as medication, hand sanitiser, disinfectants or ration food. They may share misinformation about the pandemic to control and create further fear or prevent the mother from seeking medical attention if they or the child have symptoms.</p> <p>The man may also start to minimise the mother in the presence of her children creating fear for the children and raised anxiety for example ‘mum can’t even get you what you need.’</p>	<p>Men already know how to <i>not</i> be violent. They decide not to use violence every day.</p> <p><b>Listen</b> to his experiences, values as a parent and a partner.</p> <p><b>Acknowledge</b> his motivation to be a protective father and be curious about how he thinks his children experience his controlling behaviours.</p> <p><b>Ask</b> what his care can look like in providing access to items, information and medical services and how others would know if he is doing these thing.</p> <p><b>Share</b> with him some of his children’s fears and worries about Covid-19 and invite him in to help respond to this.</p>

<p>Access to services and social networks that help keep women and children safe may be less available and families may be isolated within their homes for extended periods.</p>	<p><b>Listen</b> to who and how they can identify and draw on their own support networks, while keeping everyone well.</p> <p><b>Ask</b> how we can support this to happen. Ask if she has phone credit and make sure she has enough for the weeks ahead.</p> <p><b>Explore</b> what it is she needs and how we can assist.</p> <p><b>Search</b> for services and supports that are available locally and negotiate how the family can access them.</p> <p>Partner with the woman about how to use <a href="#">her phone and internet safely</a>.</p>
<p>The usual actions and strategies that women and child use to keep themselves safe may be affected by isolation and other pressures from the pandemic.</p> <p>Every day, women try to act in the best ways they can to keep themselves and their children safe.</p>	<p><b>Listen</b> to what women have already been doing, build on their existing capabilities to create safety.</p> <p><b>Acknowledge</b> that her child's safety is inextricably linked to her safety as a mother.</p> <p><b>Partner</b> to create plans for safety that can be used over time. If she is isolated to the home with the man, or you are limited to phone contact, identify a safe word she can use to alert you she and the kids are not safe. Identify if there are safe network members who can be quarantined with the family. Give her the number to the Domestic Violence line: 1800656463</p>
<p>Children may not attend day-care or school and be 'less visible' to other safe adults.</p>	<p><b>Listen</b> to the child about what they are doing to resist violence and fear now they are home more.</p> <p><b>Use</b> tools like the <a href="#">three houses with the rickety shed</a>.</p>

	<p><b>Ensure</b> we are not sharing these acts of resistances or responses to violence with people in the home who are contributing to the danger and risk.</p> <p><b>Ask</b> who they identify as safe network members and what their worries are. Explore how she can make contact with them safely and how she can let them know if she or the children are unsafe. Build this into a clear safety plan. Work out together if it is safe to have the safety plan document in the house.</p>
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### Helpful links

[Womens Safety NSW](#) has outlined some key government changes in responding to domestic violence during the pandemic.

Use the [Domestic and Family Violence Practice Kit](#).

Follow all [DCJ Coronavirus advice and guidelines](#) during this time.