

COVID-19 & Domestic and Family Violence

*This factsheet is not legal advice. The legal information contained in this document is current as **at 14 April 2019.***

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How can the COVID-19 virus be used as a power and control tactic?

During this period, perpetrators can use COVID-19 as a power and control tactic in various ways, including:

- Increasingly monitoring your personal communication devices such as mobile phone, email and online messaging;
- Threaten or prevent you and your children from seeking appropriate medical attention if you have symptoms or hide your Medicare card;
- Further isolate you or your children in the home by restricting your movements within the house, forcing you or the children into specific spaces in the house;
- Use COVID-19 to excuse, blame or justify their abusive and violent behaviour towards you and the children;
- Increase their criticism of your parenting, such as blaming you if the children 'misbehave' or are upset;
- Withholding necessary items such as food, medicine, hand sanitizer or disinfectants;
- Use the pandemic as an excuse to gain total or increase control of the family's finances.

2. How do I stay safe at home?

If you are living with someone who is violent, it is important to think about developing a safety plan. This can involve:

- Areas of your home where you can escape safely;
- Packing an emergency bag;
- Having your phone sufficiently charged at all times with important contact numbers;
- Confiding in a family member, friend or neighbour about your situation and working on a plan if you need help;
- Keeping your car fuelled and parked in a position where you can drive away easily;

If you have children, you may also need to think about:

- Agree to a code word so they know that they need to leave immediately;
- Teach them how to call a family member, friend or neighbour;

- Teach them how to call 000 and practise what they need to say.

For assistance in developing a safety plan, you can contact our [Domestic and Family Violence Support Service](#) (DFVSS).

3. What if I have to leave home?

The NSW Government has determined that accessing domestic violence services - and avoiding injury, illness or risk of harm - are reasonable excuses to leave your home.

Police and paramedics continue to work to keep our community safe, meaning your safety is their priority too. They are our first respondents if you are in immediate or serious danger.

If things escalate at home and you are in an emergency, please call 000. If you are sick or have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus, please notify these services when you call them.

4. What do I do once I have left home?

Once you have left your home, there are additional steps you can take to ensure the safety of you and/or your children:

- Ensure your location settings on your mobile phone are turned off on all of your applications;
- Obtain a new mobile phone number, set it up so it shows your calls as “Private” and keep it with you at all times;
- Alter or suspend your social media accounts, including your children’s, or change your privacy settings so it restricts the perpetrator’s access to your account. Think about mutual family or friends who may share your whereabouts intentionally or accidentally;
- Create an email account that is difficult to trace back to you, avoid using any identifying information in the address name;
- Arrange for a post office box for important correspondence to be sent to. If not, use an address that is different from your current place of residence;
- Alert the services, utility businesses and agencies you use – including any professionals involved in your children’s lives – about your privacy concerns;
- Request to become a silent elector with the Australian Electoral Commission;
- To increase your sense of security and prevent contact from the perpetrator, explore whether you are able to install security devices at your home.

You can find more information about this from our [Domestic and Family Violence Support Service](#).

5. What is the process of getting an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO)?

Depending on your circumstances, you may want to make a report to the Police and ask whether an ADVO can be made to ensure you and/or your children's protection.

If the Police do this, this is considered a provisional order and it commences once the Police serves it on the perpetrator (also known as the date of service).

As protection measures from COVID-19 increase, the law has been amended to ensure all provisional ADVOs are now valid for 6 months before it is mentioned at court.

6. If I have an ADVO matter at court, what should I do?

Please speak to your local police Domestic Violence Liaison Officer (DVLO) or nearest Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (WDVCAS) if you are required to attend your court date. You can also call the Court Services Centre on 1300 679 272.

7. How can I get help from Marrickville Legal Centre's Domestic and Family Violence Support Service?

The Domestic and Family Violence Support Service (DFVSS) at Marrickville Legal Centre (MLC) can support you by facilitating referrals, advocacy, risk assessments and safety plans based on your needs. If you are facing any legal issues, the DFVSS can refer you to one of MLC's solicitors so you can receive further advice and assistance.

MLC staff can work from anywhere and continue to provide a high level of service through secure telephone and IT systems. We will continue to review our position based on government advice and will advise if there is a likely impact on how we work together.

MLC's services are still operational and will be offered via telephone so we can continue to meet your legal and support needs. If an in-person meeting is essential, we are required to screen you for any risks relating to the COVID-19 virus. Please refer to [our website](#) for up-to-date information about decreased face-to-face services.

You can call us on (02) 9559 2899 or submit a web enquiry [here](#), whichever is safer for you.

8. Important contact numbers for additional help and information

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| Emergency Services | 000 | If you are in immediate danger |
| 1800 RESPECT | 1800 737 732 | National 24/7 Domestic Violence Hotline |

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| NSW Domestic Violence Line | 1800 656 463 | NSW 24/7 Domestic Violence Hotline |
| NSW Rape Crisis Line | 1800 424 017 | NSW 24/7 Hotline for those who have experienced sexual assault, sexual violence or rape |
| Staying Home Leaving Violence Program | Redfern: (02) 9699 6036 | Click here to find more details |
| WDVCAS | 1800 938 227 | NSW Support service for women with ADVOs |
| Victims Services Access Line | 1800 633 063 | Information for victims of crime in NSW |
| Family Relationship Advice Line | 1800 050 321 | National telephone service for people experiencing relationship or separation issues |
| Relationships Australia | 1300 364 277 | National service providing counselling, mediation and education support |
| Link2Home | 1800 152 152 | NSW 24/7 Homelessness Hotline for information and support |