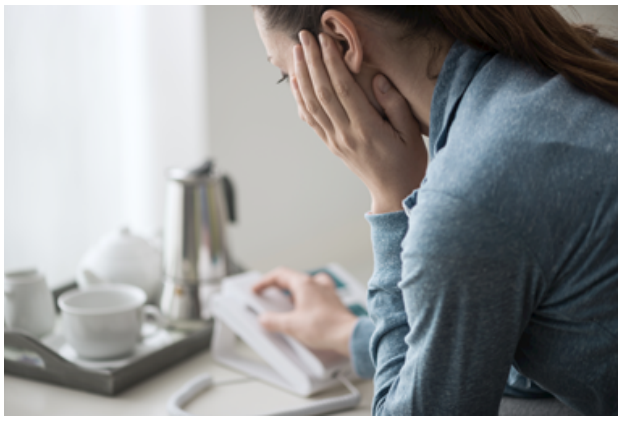


Family violence and support services during COVID-19

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Sadly, family violence (often referred to as domestic violence) is an unfortunate reality for some families. With ongoing COVID-19 restrictions and the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, there has been an even bigger need for those seeking assistance through therapeutic services, advocacy services or the courts. This article collates a number of services and resources available to people needing assistance with family violence, either during COVID or at any other time.

It's important to know that even during any Victorian lockdown periods, despite the restrictions imposed, people are allowed to leave their homes at any time to flee from family violence and go as far as they need to feel safe.

If you are in immediate danger, please dial 000.

What is family violence?

Family violence is behaviour that is physically, emotionally, sexually, economically or psychologically abusive, including behaviour that is threatening, coercive, controlling or dominating causing a family member to feel fear for their safety or another person.

It is a broad definition that also includes children witnessing any of these behaviours. For example, a child can witness family violence by hearing an incident or having to clean up property intentionally damaged by a family member.

Who is a family member also has a broad definition including someone who is or previously has normally or regularly resided with a person.

What services and resources are available for people facing family violence?

Services are still operating through the pandemic.

Family violence support services

- 1800RESPECT - 24/7 National Sexual Assault, Family and Domestic Violence Counselling Service
- WIRE (Women's Information and Referral Exchange) - Information, support and referral service
- The Orange Door - Free service for adults, children and young people experiencing family violence and extra support with the care of children
- Safe Steps - Statewide support service with 24 hour crisis telephone line, emergency accommodation and support service for women and children
- EDVOS - Case management, safety planning and contact support services
- The Men's Referral Service - Telephone service provided for men by men
- WAYSS - Support services with crisis accommodation, safety planning, advocacy and referral service
- MensLine - Telephone and online counselling service for men

LGBTIQA+

- Thorne Harbour Health – Flexible Support - Counselling services and referral service
- Qlife - Support and referral service
- Trans Gender Victoria - Referral service
- The Orange Door - Free service for adults, children and young people experiencing family violence and extra support with the care of children
- WAYSS - Support services with crisis accommodation, safety planning, advocacy and referral service

Culturally and linguistically diverse services

- InTouch Multicultural Centre against Family Violence - Specialist family violence support for women from migrant and refugee backgrounds
- Immigrant Women's Support Service - Domestic Violence Resource Centre – Crisis support, counselling and advocacy
- Victorian Department of Health and Human Services – Health Translations - Online library that enables health practitioners and people to easily find free translated health information
- The Orange Door - Free service for adults, children and young people experiencing family violence and extra support with the care of children

- EDVOS - Case management, safety planning and contact support services

Indigenous Australian services

- Elizabeth Morgan House – Aboriginal Women's Domestic Violence Service - Culturally safe, holistic family violence services for Indigenous women and their children and partners
- Dardi Munwurro – Men's Healing and Behaviour Change - Supporting men as they go on a journey of healing
- The Orange Door - Free service for adults, children and young people experiencing family violence and extra support with the care of children

Children's support services

- Kids Helpline - 24/7 counselling service for young people aged 5-25 years
- Drummond Street – Kids Talk - Child counselling and support

Financial support services

- National Debt Helpline – Financial counselling
- Financial Counselling Victoria – financial counselling referral service
- EACH Social &Community Health – financial counselling and referral service to financial assistance services

The Courts are open during COVID-19

The Family Law Courts and Magistrates' Courts are still operating.

The Family Law Courts (the Federal Circuit Court of Australia and the Family Court of Australia) established a specialist list for family law matters needing urgent assistance that are directly related to COVID-19. For example, parenting arrangements or changed financial circumstances.

The Courts also hear urgent matters with respect to parenting and financial matters not related to COVID, particularly where the safety of a person or child is at risk due to family violence.

The Magistrates' Courts deal with applications for Family Violence Intervention Orders with high-risk matters being prioritised. Applications can be made to the Police either online or in-person (by appointment) where it is safe for the person to do so.

How a family lawyer can help

We provide free initial consultations where we will give you advice about your situation, your options and provide the appropriate referrals.

Again, however, we stress that if you are in immediate danger, please contact Police on “000”.

Contacting Smith Family Law

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This blog is of a general nature and should not be relied upon as legal advice. If you require further information, advice or assistance for your specific circumstances, please contact us.