

# **Supporting Individuals Experiencing Family Violence**

**A guide for the public**

**October 2021**

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**Created by:**



**In collaboration with:**



## **COVID-19 and family violence**

Family violence is a major public health and social issue that crosses all economic, cultural and age boundaries. The continued COVID-19 pandemic poses additional complications such as isolation, financial struggles and added stress. This brings awareness to the need to continue learning and talking about family violence. To learn more about these complications due to the pandemic, read Cameron (2020), "Family Dynamics During the Pandemic - Series One: Closeness-Distance Cycle."<sup>1</sup>

### **What is family violence?**

Family violence is the attempts by one person in an intimate relationship or other trusting relationship to dominate and control the other. It may include a single act of violence, or several acts forming a pattern of abuse using assaultive and controlling behaviour. This pattern of abuse may include:<sup>2</sup>

- Psychological/Mental Abuse
- Physical/Threat of Physical Abuse
- Verbal Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Spiritual Abuse
- Social Abuse
- Cultural Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Intellectual Abuse
- Financial Abuse
- Using Children
- Abuse of Pets and Property
- Using Social Media

When children are exposed to abusive behaviour, whether directly (being abused themselves) or indirectly (witnessing the abuse), this can result in lasting, developmental damages for the child. The abuse that children witness or experience themselves has an impact on their brain chemistry and composition, and in certain cases, this can result in long-term social and health consequences such as development of high-risk behaviours, chronic health conditions, and early death.

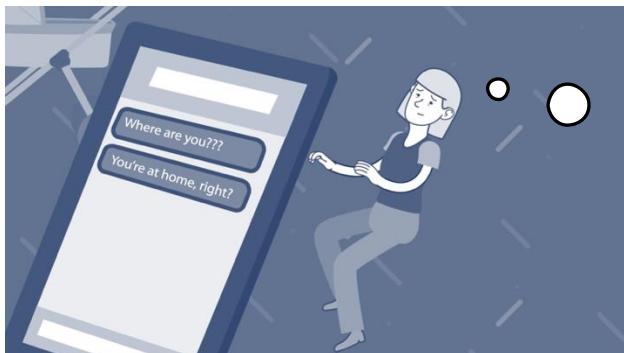
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<sup>1</sup> Cameron, J. K. (2020). *Family Dynamics During the Pandemic – Series One: Closeness-Distance Cycle*. North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response. <https://nactatr.com/news/files/Closeness-Distance.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.asafeplace.ca/learn/about-abuse/am-i-being-abused>



**"He is always angry and yelling and with the baby now he's even worse."**



**"I have to text him pictures so he knows we are at home."**



**"Sometimes when people stop by he tells them I am out."**



**"He took my car keys, he says because of COVID."**

*Strathcona County FCS recognizes that each individual family situation is different, and the information on this page does not depict all forms of abuse. If you need assistance or have questions about abuse within your personal living situation, please reach out to Strathcona County FCS at 780-464-4044.*

## **What can I do if I think my neighbours, friends or family are experiencing family violence?**

### **Things to remember during this time:**

If you are concerned that someone you know is experiencing family violence, there are a few simple things you can do to help:



- Check in and find out how the person you are concerned about is doing.
- Share messages of support and empathy when someone discloses fear or experiences of family violence. Believe them, even if you haven't seen it and even if you know/care about the person harming them. How you respond to a disclosure of family violence will have a significant impact on their ability to reach out and trust others.
- Beyond your supportive listening, refer them to professional supports (see Appendix I for a list of supports). Do not take on the role of "protector" for someone in this situation. It is important to use the expert supports as family violence can quickly escalate, particularly when the victim is contemplating leaving.
- If the individual experiencing family violence is not ready to take action respect this and assure them they can reach out for supports at any time.



From shelter services, to police and social supports, there are many resources to help those in need. Strathcona County Family and Community Services (FCS) line is here to support you. The social supports team provides a safe channel to talk about family violence concerns or experiences and the resources and supports available to anyone in need. Individuals who contact FCS regarding family violence can expect to have their story heard, be supported to create plans for safety, and be connected with appropriate resources which may include a safe place to stay, counselling services, or supports to meet basic needs.

Now more than ever, we need to look out for one another. We are physically distancing, but we are not alone. If you or someone you know needs support, please call. By supporting each other, we can build a safe, supported and connected community.

## Appendix I: Community Supports and Resources for Family Violence

Organization	Description	Phone Number
<b>Family and Community Services</b>	Strathcona County Family and Community Services are available by phone to connect residents to appropriate supports.	<b>780-464-4044</b>
<b>A Safe Place</b>	A Safe Place's crisis line is open 7 days a week 24 hours a day, including holidays and weekends. Counselors are available to listen, answer your questions, provide support, and provide directions to the shelter if needed.	<b>780-464-7233</b>
<b>Family Violence Information Line</b>	Get help anonymously 24/7 in more than 170 languages. Webchat available on website.	<b>310-1818</b>
<b>Child Abuse Hotline</b>	Support line for reporting children being neglected, abused or sexually exploited. If you believe a child is at risk, you must report it. Help is available in multiple languages 24/7.	<b>1-800-387-5437</b>
<b>Strathcona County Victim Services</b>	Victim Services works in partnership with the RCMP to assist victims of crime and trauma within Strathcona County. Staff and Volunteer Advocates are trained to offer support and agency referrals in a caring and non-judgmental manner.	<b>780-449-0153</b>
<b>SAFFRON Sexual Assault Centre</b>	SAFFRON Centre Ltd. is a non-profit organization working to support the healing and empowerment of those who have been affected by sexual violence.	<b>780-449-0900</b>
<b>AltView</b>	The altView Foundation for Gender Variant and Sexual Minorities' provides resources and support to sexual minority and gender-variant persons in Strathcona County and surrounding regions.	<b>780-666-5428</b>
<b>Strathcona County Elder Abuse Line</b>	The Strathcona County Elder Abuse Line provides 24-hour confidential support for Strathcona County seniors experiencing abuse and those concerned for the well-being of a senior.	<b>780-464-7233</b>
<b>Alberta Supports</b>	Alberta Supports can help residents to access more than 30 programs and 120 services for seniors, people with disabilities, job seekers, parents and families, homelessness, financial assistance, abuse, and family violence prevention.	<b>780-644-9992</b>
<b>Protection for Persons in Care</b>	Protection for Persons in Care requires the reporting of abuse of adult clients receiving care in publicly funded facilities.	<b>1-888-357-9339</b>
<b>Abuse Helpline</b>	If you suspect an adult or child is being abused or neglected, the provincial abuse helpline will connect you to resources, supports, services and referrals to address your concerns. Callers can remain anonymous.	<b>1-855-4HELPAB 1-855-443-5722</b>