

FACT SHEET



SAFE
HOMES
FAMILIES
COMMUNITIES

Family and Sexual Violence and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a major impact on all Tasmanians. While it is critical to stay at home and save lives, for many Tasmanians, particularly women and their children, home is not a safe place.

Public health measures introduced to reduce the spread of COVID-19, such as social distancing, isolation and quarantine, means families may be at home with someone who chooses to use violence.

Isolation, financial insecurity, stress, concern, family disruptions, changes to roles and routines may compound or increase the risk, severity and frequency of violence. However, they are not the cause of family and sexual violence.

COVID-19 does not cause, justify or excuse violent and abusive behaviour. Everyone deserves to live free from fear and violence.

The person engaging in family and sexual violence is responsible for their abusive and violent behaviour.

Visit www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au for more information about COVID-19.

If you think you might have COVID-19 call the Public Health Hotline on **1800 671 738**.

COVID-19 as a tactic for abuse

People engaging in family and sexual violence may use COVID-19 as a reason, excuse or tactic for abuse. For example, they may:

- Withhold essential items such as food, medicine, hand sanitiser or disinfectants.
- Use misinformation about COVID-19 to control or frighten.
- Use the pandemic as an excuse to gain total or increased control of the family's finances.
- Prevent those experiencing violence and their children from seeking appropriate medical attention.
- Further isolate those experiencing violence and their children in the home by restricting their movements within the house.
- Increasingly monitor personal communication devices such as mobile phone, email, online messaging.
- Use COVID-19 to excuse, blame or justify their abusive and violent behaviour.
- Use COVID-19 in their attempt to reconcile or enter or live in the family home.

What is family violence?

In Tasmania, family violence is defined by the *Family Violence Act 2004* (Tas). It includes a range of violent behaviours including assault, sexual assault; threats; coercion; intimidation; verbal abuse; abduction; stalking; or an attempt to do any of these things.

Family violence is more than physical violence and includes economic abuse, emotional abuse, intimidation, breaching any existing orders relating to family violence; and property damage.

In Tasmania, family violence occurs in marriages or significant relationships between two adults, or between two people where one or both are aged 16 to 18 years.

What is sexual violence?

Sexual violence includes a wide range of unwanted, non-consensual, traumatic and harmful sexual behaviours, including sexual harassment; touching, coercion; and sexual assault including rape.

Sexual violence perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner is considered family violence.

What causes family and sexual violence?

While the causes and contributors are complex, family and sexual violence is driven by gender inequality.

Other factors, such as those resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, may interact with, or reinforce, gender inequality, contributing to increased risk, severity and frequency violence, but do not drive violence in and of themselves. For more information visit www.ourwatch.org.au.

Support services

Specialist family and sexual violence services remain open and are available to provide support and information during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**IN AN EMERGENCY
ALWAYS CALL 000**



Safe at Home Family Violence Response and Referral Line

1800 633 937

Available 24 hours. Note: After hours calls are directed to Tasmania Police

Statewide Sexual Assault Support Service
(1800MYSUPPORT)

1800 697 877

Available 24 hours

1800RESPECT: *National sexual assault, domestic, family violence counselling service*

1800 737 732

Available 24 hours

www.1800respect.org.au

Men's Referral Service

1300 766 491

Available 24 hours

www.ntv.org.au

Family Violence Counselling and Support Service

1800 608 122

Monday to Friday: 9am – midnight;

Weekends and public holidays: 4pm - midnight

Safe Choices

1800 806 189

Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm

www.safechoicesttas.org.au

Engender Equality

(03) 6278 9090

Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm

engenderequality.org.au

Australian Childhood Foundation

1300 381 581

Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm

www.childhood.org.au