

# RESOURCES AND ACTIONS TAKEN TO HELP WITH FAMILY VIOLENCE SURGE DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC



WONCA SIG on Family violence contact:  
[SIGfamilyviolence@wonca.net](mailto:SIGfamilyviolence@wonca.net) [sigfv.news@gmail.com](mailto:sigfv.news@gmail.com)

## UK

Prof Gene Feder shared the following information for GPs from the Royal College of General Practitioners:

[Summary of approach to safeguarding during the pandemic:](#)

[Guidance on end of life care and domestic violence:](#)

## SPAIN

Dr. Sarah Simons - Spain has passed legislation to provide for hotel rooms for victims of gender violence if shelters are full. BRAVO ! [Igualdad lanza una campaña de información a las víctimas de violencia de género durante la crisis del COVID-19](#)

**A new guide for women – emphasizing some important points (available in above link):**

- No sanctions will be taken against a woman that goes outside (when prohibited due to the current special situation) when she's asking for help because of DV.
- Instant chat/messenger services are now provided for support to women.
- If a woman has to flee home and has no place to keep her pet – there will be special places where she can leave the pets.
- 24/7 Hotline with reply in 52 languages, and adapted also to people with disabilities.
- An application ALERTCOPS enables the woman to send an instant call for help

## PORTUGAL:

Domestic violence victims can contact and **ask for help via SMS** to a free number 3060  
[Criado número para vítimas de violência doméstica pedirem ajuda por SMS](#)

## BELGIUM

Pascale Franck reports:

We have worked-out an adapted multidisciplinary model focusing on direct safety during lock-down, we are translating it to English and will make it available very soon.

The FJC quickly turned into a digital multidisciplinary team. We do outreach a lot with several measurements and often creative things.

Now working on extra safe beds for women and children in a trainings center of the local authorities which can host 78 people in a safe way. All trainings and seminars are cancelled so we can use this accommodation in the meantime to help victims of DV

## **SLOVENIA:**

Dr. Nena Gucek Kopcovar Co-chair SIG FV –reports:

Concerning the possibility of family violence escalation, these measures were taken:

- one of the main Slovenian radio stations hosts a psychologist for practical advice and counselling every day at 18.45 for 15 minutes;
- several **helplines** are opened, 24/7
- expert counselling sessions are organized for the healthcare workers (by the employers)

## **MALAYSIA:**

Dr. Sajaratulnisah Othman - Flyer regarding domestic violence. Will be shared later

## **ISRAEL**

Dr. Hagit Dascal-Weichhendler:

- National hotlines for DV victims – increased personnel /availability
- Information on resources, including legal urgent support etc – made available to staff
- DV centers – continue working during lock down mainly by phone consultations
- There has been a request to increase # of beds available in different shelters as well as to consider funding hotel rooms if necessary for DV victims
- In my HMO and region – I wrote a letter to staff alerting them to the possibility and what we can do:

### **What can health care providers do to prevent/help when there's FV during Covid-19 pandemic & lock down?**

1. Listen and support – this may be done also by phone, remembering that there may be a problem of privacy! When you know of a past history of DV- keep in touch with patients, consider initiating contact. Listen carefully for hints of distress and if possible - and you are sure the conversation is private - ask patients gently about it.
2. Look at the whole family.
3. Children, elders and other dependent people – are now at increased risk of abuse and neglect due to increased caretaker stress and burden. Try to contact, assess and support caretakers at risk periodically.
4. Recommend resources/activities to help patients, and especially children, to fill time. Recommend resources/activities at home that may reduce stress (e.g. music, relaxation, exercises/dancing).
5. When needed prescribe medications to reduce anxiety/dep
6. When there is a history of a mental health disorder – the primary care physician should try and contact the psychiatrist/therapist.
7. Tell patients that whenever there's an immediate threat they should contact the police.

8. Refer to hotlines and DV centers – primarily working by phone now.
9. Remember CONFIDENTIALITY – when patient asks for our help in contacting other agencies/services/professionals – whenever possible obey the local laws. Ask clearly for permission and document if it was granted on a phone conversation.
10. Consult colleagues, Family Violence Committee and other collaborating agencies, don't stay alone with the case!