



COVID-19 and Family Violence for LGBTIQ+ people

As we prepare ourselves for physical distancing and self-isolation, we need to remember home is not always the safest place.

For some in our community – job losses and insecure housing can mean that we are forced back to other homes with family or friends which can be highly conflictual and for others unsafe.

Research shows the rates and severity of Family Violence increase significantly following natural disasters and periods of isolation. This is not because all people suddenly become violent, but because people who have used violence previously are in circumstances which enable greater access to their partners and family and can have more opportunities to use violence. There are also often reduced resources, community support services and police availability during times of crisis.

What this means is we need to prepare and do what we can to support ourselves, our families and our communities. The most important thing is to be aware of what resources and supports are available to those experiencing family violence and how to access them.

Supports and Services

Police

If you are unsafe **contact police** on **000**. Police are responding to urgent matters regardless of physical distancing and isolation.

Safe Steps 24/7

Family Violence Crisis Response Service available to women and children.

Phone 1800 015 188 | 24 hrs, 7 days a week (free call)

If you cannot phone safely phone this number **email safesteps@safesteps.org.au**

Website <https://www.safesteps.org.au>

WithRespect

WithRespect is a family violence and intimate partner violence service supporting LGBTIQ+ communities and their families.

WithRespect offers a service model which can respond to both the person impacted by violence and the person using violence. WithRespect is not a crisis response service.

Phone 1800 542 847 | Monday – Friday 9am -5pm

Website <https://withrespect.org.au>

After Hours Support, Referral, and Telecounselling is available on Wednesday, between 5pm and 11pm, and on Saturday and Sunday, between 3pm and 10pm.

Services working with LGBTIQ+ communities

Services working with LGBTIQ+ communities, can refer people for Intake and Referral for support via **1800 542 847**, or **fax 03 9639 3363**

Queerspace

Queerspace provides counselling, case management, flexible support packages, referrals and recovery programs for LGBTIQ+ victim/survivors of family violence and

- programs for LGBTIQ+ people using violence with the goal that they stop using violence and abuse.
- referrals to and support accessing appropriate local services.

Queerspace face-to-face client contact and outreach services are currently provided via digital platforms including phone and video. This will expand to online groups, seminars, community education and resources.

Phone 03 9663 6733 | Monday to Friday, 9am –5pm

Website <https://www.queerspace.org.au>

Thorne Harbour Health

Thorne Harbour Health provide counselling, casework, brokerage and behaviour change support for LGBTI community members either experiencing family violence or using violence in their relationships. Currently these services are provided remotely via telephone and video conferencing.

Phone 9865 6700 | Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Website <https://thorneharbour.org>

Men's Referral Service

Men's Referral Service a men's family violence telephone counselling, referral and information service for:

- Men who use controlling behaviour towards a partner or family member
- Women seeking information about men's use of family violence
- Friends, family or colleagues of people who may be using or experiencing family violence
- Professionals wishing to support a client who is using or experiencing family violence

Phone 1300 766 491 | Monday to Friday 8am - 9pm, and weekends 9am - 5pm.

Live chat is available through the website <https://ntv.org.au> | Monday to Friday 8am - 9pm and weekends and public holidays 10am - 3pm

QLife

QLife (Switchboard) Is a phone counselling and online chat service for LGBTI community members.

Phone 1800 184 527

Chat via the **website** at <https://qlife.org.au> | 6pm and midnight everyday

1800RESPECT

1800RESPECT is a confidential information, counselling and support service

Phone **1800 737 732** | 24 hrs, 7 days a week

Website <https://1800respect.org.au>

InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence

Case management support to clients via phone, and teleconferencing and phone support for clients at four courts across Melbourne. Legal and migration support to existing and new clients via phone and teleconferencing. **Please note inTouch is not a crisis service.**

Phone **1800 755 988** (toll free number)

Website contact form: <https://intouch.org.au/contact-us> (responses within 1 to 2 business days).

Victims Support Agency

Victims of Crime helpline

Phone **1800 819 817**

Website <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/contact-us/victims-support-agency>

WIRE – Women’s Information and Referral Exchange

WIRE – Women’s Information and Referral Exchange offers telephone support and referral options for women and female-identifying, and non-binary people. This is not a crisis service. There is an online chat facility available.

Phone **1300 134 130**

<https://www.wire.org.au/about/what-we-do>

Lifeline

24-hour phone counselling service

Phone **13 11 14**

Housing Support Services

DHHS has a list of housing and crisis support services

Phone **1800 825 955** (free call) or **(03) 9536 7777** | State-wide After-Hours Service

<https://www.housing.vic.gov.au/crisis-emergency-accommodation>

Resources and Information

With Respect has several resources and fact sheets regarding Family and Intimate Partner Violence within the LGBTIQ+ communities, and their family or friends, who are affected by family violence. <https://www.withrespect.org.au>

Food and material aid during coronavirus

Victorians self-isolating due to coronavirus (COVID-19) with no access to food and essential supplies will receive emergency relief packages under a program introduced by the Victorian Government. For more information phone the coronavirus hotline on **1800 675 398** or visit <https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

Ask Izzy has a list of emergency type aid such as food supplies searchable by postcode. Organisations here will each have their own responses to COVID-19 that are being updated <https://askizzy.org.au/food>

Interpreter services for non-English speakers

This service is available to any individual or organisation in Australia, enabling non-English speakers to independently access services and information over the phone. TIS National's immediate phone interpreting service (24 hrs, 7 days a week) **131 450**

Safety Planning: Family Violence Safety planning during Covid-19 Coronavirus

- It is important to consider the safest way to seek information or assistance. Identify when and how it may be safest to phone or email a family violence service.
- If you are self-isolating and physical distancing it is important to consider if there are other friends and family who could stay with you during this time. Consider reaching out to these people now to plan.
- Consider identifying and reaching out to a trusted friend, co-worker, or family member who could check in with you about your safety and support needs, if you need to self-isolate at home.
- **Make a “go bag”**
This should include some clothes, ID, phone charger, medications, an extra set of keys, important items for children and bankcards (if you don’t have these then some cash).
Be aware many places are not using cash due to the potential spread of coronavirus. Sometimes it is safe to keep this bag at home to take if you need to leave the house, or it may be safer to keep it at a trusted friend or family member’s home.
- **Develop a relationship with neighbours**
It may be appropriate to ask neighbours to call police if they hear concerning noises. You may feel comfortable to ask them if you could go to their house if you feel unsafe at home.
- **Develop a code word or phrase with two friends or family members**
Sometimes it is helpful to have different code words which relate to different requests (“I’m going to the shops” may mean call the police)
- Try to keep your mobile phone with you at all times. Have a back-up plan if you cannot get to your mobile.

- Plan where you will go if you need to leave (even if you don't think you will need to).
 - Include others in the plan so they can make arrangements and prepare themselves and their family.
 - Consider how you will get there if you need to leave (car, taxi, walk)
 - Keep car keys in an easily accessible location not known by the person using violence
 - Consider alternatives if public transport and other methods of transport are not available
 - Think about your exit route from the house and practice leaving safely if you can

Warning: points ahead may be triggering, keep reading if you are concerned for your immediate safety

- If the person's behaviour is escalating and you can't safely leave, try to keep your back towards an open space, not a corner
- Try to avoid the kitchen, bathroom, garage, being near weapons or any place that has sharp or heavy items (we acknowledge we don't always have control over where these incidents occur)
- If a person is using violence towards you, try to run away from any children as they may harm them as well
- Plan for occasions when you can't leave your home
 - Make a 'safe room'. Consider which room in your home you can secure that has mobile reception. A safe room will allow you to wait in until the police or another person who can help arrives
 - Identify safe areas of the house where there are no weapons and there are ways to escape. If arguments occur, try to move to those areas
- Plan with children and identify a safe place for them, such as a room with a lock or a neighbour's house where they can go for help. Reassure them their job is to stay safe, not to protect you
- Plan with friends, family or trusted worker if they can look after your pets and how you can arrange their transport