



WE ARE CALLED

Sow Justice - Reap Peace

*Peace and Justice Network
Presbytery of the Grand Canyon*

THE CORONAVIRUS AND ABUSE:

CONCERN FOR FAMILIES AND VULNERABLE ADULTS DURING DISASTERS

As the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues in the United States, many people are not working, or are working from home. They also face quarantines and encounter disruptions to their daily activities. For the elderly, those with preexisting conditions or other health challenges, and other higher-risk individuals, the spread of the virus may also bring anxiety. And for individuals experiencing abuse and domestic violence, this public health situation can expose additional dangers.

Avoiding public spaces and working remotely can help reduce the spread of the virus, but for many survivors, staying home may not be the safest option. Any external factors that add stress and financial strain can negatively impact survivors, and their safety is further compromised.

Abuse is about power and control. When survivors are forced to stay in their home, an abuser may take advantage of an already stressful situation to gain more control. Examples include: Partner or caregiver may withhold disinfectants, share misinformation about the pandemic to control or frighten, prevent them from seeking medical attention, and withhold insurance cards. Survivors may find shelters are full or have stopped intakes, and there are increased health risks in these facilities, as well as in counseling centers and courthouses, if they are even open. Survivors who are feeling isolated should try to maintain social connections online or over the phone if it is safe to do so, and stick to daily routines as much as possible.

Hurricane Harvey hit Texas in August of 2017. It became evident in the aftermath that severe disruptions and job losses made domestic violence more likely or more severe. District Attorney offices noted there were increases in felony-level domestic violence offenses and increases in domestic violence-related murders compared to the previous year. Acknowledging youthful victims, The Texas Council on Family Violence stated, "Our domestic violence rate went up a lot, but so did a lot of our mental health issues. Kids have had a harder time this year, and those that were receiving services or needing services before the storm definitely have an elevated need now."

What can we do today? Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories and social media. Take care of your body: Stretch, meditate, try to eat healthy, get plenty of sleep and avoid alcohol and drugs. Find activities you enjoy. Connect with others. Call your healthcare professional if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days. Help your children through this crisis with activities and compassion to alleviate their stress.

Opportunities for Action:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services 1-800-985-5990

Domestic Violence Hotline (24/7) 1-800-799-7233, log onto www.thehotline.org ,or text LOVEIS to 22522. Para informacion.en espanol, visita la pagina “En Espanol”.

Sources used in this article:

National Network to End Domestic Violence, Texas Council on Family Violence, the National Domestic Violence Hotline, and the cdc.gov/coronavirus website.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO OFFER THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS,
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