It seems most everything is closing down because of the Coronavirus, aka COVID-19, now considered a global pandemic. Schools, restaurants and other retail and service industries are temporarily suspending business to help curb the spread following the CDC’s recommendation of social distancing, advising any events with over 50 people be cancelled for the next eight weeks. Individuals are urged to stay at home as much as possible—work from home, order-in groceries, cancel nonessential doctor’s appointments and elective surgeries—basically, self-quarantine.

But for those trapped inside with an abusive partner, this strange new reality can bring with it the added horror of an uptick in abuse and a partner who may be purposefully misleading them to think help is no longer available. The reality is that the shelters we’ve heard from are all operating as normal, highly aware of the importance of keeping services accessible.

‘We Haven’t Gone Away … We’re Still Here’
Lead domestic violence advocate Dominique Scott at the YWCA Seattle Emergency Shelter tells DomesticShelters.org, “As of today, nothing has changed for us. We’re still here. We’re still working. We’re still screening.” The 48-bed shelter is still open to survivors needing refuge, their helpline is still being answered (mostly by Scott, who comes in 50 to 60 hours a week).

“I’m not going to let this scare me away from coming,” she says. “We’re just being a little more aggressive with our bleaching and sanitization.”

Scott admits what she is scared about is how the stress of a pandemic could affect those still with an abuser. With businesses shutting down, the economic strain will undoubtedly mean tensions rise and, as a result, more violence at home and fewer options for survivors trying to escape. Survivors who may have had an emergency cash fund saved up to leave an abuser might have to use it to support their family if they can’t work.

“We have women [in shelter] that work for the school systems, and they’re not able to work. How are they even supposed to progress to get out of here? I feel really bad for the whole demographic,” says Scott.

Denise Akapo is the shelter director at Family Rescue’s Rosenthal Family Lodge, a 36-bed domestic violence shelter in Chicago. Like the YWCA, she says it’s business as usual there. Their emergency hotline is open 24 hours a day and women and children at high risk are still being admitted. The only change has been telling volunteers to stay home, though Akapo is concerned for the staff still working with compromised immune systems.

“It’s going to be difficult and challenging …. [but] we haven’t gone away; we’re still here.”

A Surge of Violence Could Be Coming
In China, where COVID-19 was first discovered last December and where at least 3,200 people have died from it so far, advocates report three times as many domestic violence calls as compared to last year. One could point to fear and anxiety, along with financial strain from lost wages, as perpetuating the violence (though it’s important to remember plenty of people are afraid and anxious and aren’t abusive).

Families under mandated or self-imposed quarantine due to symptoms of the illness, a potential exposure, or the risk thereof may face economic and social stressors that are known to exacerbate the risk of abuse,” writes Lynn Fairweather, domestic violence threat assessment consultant.

She points to incidents like Hurricane Katrina in 2005 when researchers found a 98 percent spike in physical abuse toward women.

Advocates like Akapo worry that uptick could be coming.

“I imagine that’s a realistic possibility at some point,” says Akapo.

How Abusers Will Use COVID-19 Against Survivors
Abusers will likely exploit the COVID-19 pandemic to their own advantage. “This is another opportunity for an abusive partner to control their partner,” says Akapo.

(Continued on page 3)
SHRCC 2019 STATISTICS
Assisted 3,340 adults and 2,101 children traumatized by domestic violence and sheltered 330 adults and children

- Assisted 315 victims of sexual assault
- Provided 3,336 individual and 1,322 family therapy sessions for 555 people
- Provided 272 therapy/support groups which were attended by 217 individuals
- Accompanied 50 victims of sexual assault to the hospital
- Assisted 336 victims with filing order of protection petitions and attended 1,249 hearings with domestic violence and sexual assault victims
- We provided 675 education/prevention programs reaching 105,605 individuals

3,768 volunteers contributed 29,764.75 hours this year

United We Stand... Putting the Pieces Together
16th Annual Interpersonal Violence Conference
Featured Speaker
Lt. Mark Wynn (ret.)
Owner/Operator: Wynn Consulting
Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention Training and Consulting
Topics
- Making the Law Keeps Its Promise
- Finding and Helping the “Hidden Victims” – Responding to Children at the Scene
- Injuries, Ambush and Fatality: Assessing the Threats of Domestic Violence Perpetrators
- Stalking and Counter Stalking
- Leadership & Prioritization of Violence Against Women Crimes

Friday, October 2, 2020
8:30am – 4:00pm
Program begins promptly at 8:30 a.m.
Registration Fee: $75.00; $50.00 for Students
On-line Registration: https://attendee.gototraining.com/r/877042193569710594
Deadline to Register: September 28, 2020
Questions: Marlene Evans or Jennifer O’Shields at (864) 583-9803

Save the Date(s)
Auction for a Cause is going Virtual this year! We’ll still have tons of wonderful items to bid on. Beginning the week of November 1st, we’ll preview items with a few days to bid. Auction will close on Friday, November 6th.

All Proceeds to Benefit:
Bethlehem Center  Upstate Family Resource Center
Safe Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition  The Haven
Spartanburg Humane Society  Camp Sertoma
Survivors should be aware that abusers may....

- Manipulate survivors into believing there are no resources available for them or that police or paramedics won’t respond to their calls.
- Try to tell survivors that the abuser is infected, that they’ve infected the survivor, and if the survivor leaves them, they’ll put others at risk (a way to tray them at home).
- Forbid the survivor from seeing friends or family because of the risk.
- Downplay the risk and force the survivor to leave the house, or threaten to kick them out and expose them to the virus.
- Limit sharing critical information about the virus with survivors.

Make sure the information you’re receiving about COVID-19 and the response recommendations are correct by visiting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website. The CDC also lists the symptoms for COVID-19 and gives instructions for what to do if you suspect you are infected.

Katie Ray-Jones, chief executive officer of the National Domestic Violence Hotline, tells USA Today that a woman called the hotline to say an abusive partner doesn’t believe in medical treatment, so he’s forcing her to wash her hands each day until they’re raw. Another young girl called because she’s afraid of being quarantined with her mother and her mother’s abusive partner. She typically gets support from her school counselor, but now school is closed.

DomesticShelters.org posed the question on our Facebook support group: Are any survivors worried about a quarantine with an abusive partner in the home? The replies ranged from “Yes” to “That’s my biggest fear.” A survivor named “Abby” (name changed for protection) told DomesticShelters.org that she recently escaped a physically and verbally abusive partner of nine years. Even though she has her own home, the abuser has been trying to convince her and her children they should be staying with him right now.

“He’s ... not wanting me to leave his house. He’s telling me what I should do, and to stay at his house. I told him I want to stay the night at my house and he gets upset.”

Safety Planning for a Quarantine

Coming up with a plan of what you can do will take away some of the anxiety about the unknown. If you’re afraid of being trapped in a home with an abusive partner, walk through the possible scenarios and decide ahead of time what your response will be. DomesticShelters.org offers a multitude of articles on creating safety plans here, but you may also start by asking yourself these questions:

- Do I feel like my health and my children’s health will be put at risk if I’m quarantined with my partner?
- Is there anywhere else I can go where I will be safe for an extended period of time?
- Have I contacted a domestic violence advocate near me for options in my community?
- Is there a friend or family member I can stay with if shelters are full?
- If I’m afraid of leaving without my pets, can I find a safe place for them to go?

The National Domestic Violence Hotline warns that abusers may implement tactics such as withholding necessary supplies like medication, hand sanitizer, insurance cards or may prevent survivors from seeking medical care.

Also important to note: The shelters we spoke to said they do not discriminate against survivors who are sick, nor would they ask a survivor to leave if they became sick. Scott says the YWCA’s protocol would be to seek medical help while limiting the survivor’s contact with others, potentially housing them at a nearby hotel instead of in shelter. “We’d never kick them out,” she says.

At Family Rescue, Akapo says the shelter can hold a survivor’s bed for three days if they are hospitalized, and then work with the hospital to get the survivor situated somewhere once discharged.

Finally, even if survivors choose to stay with an abuser during a quarantine, self-care is vitally important. Stress can lower one’s immune system, making you more susceptible to viruses. Everyone should make sure they’re getting plenty of sleep, drinking lots of water, eating healthy and finding a support system in some capacity.

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Some landlords are taking advantage of the coronavirus outbreak, soliciting sexual favors in lieu of rent payments from economically vulnerable tenants, according to advocates.

Khara Jabola-Carolus, executive director of the Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women, said her office has received more reports of landlords sexually harassing their tenants in the last two weeks than it had in the two years since she started working there, including cases of landlords offering to move in with tenants and sending sexually explicit photos to them after they communicated concerns about paying April rent.

While the number of cases wasn't necessarily astronomical — the commission received 10 reports about nine landlords — Jabola-Carolus said they were especially notable given such cases go "vastly underreported."

"Landlord coercion has always been a reality, but we've never seen anything like this," Jabola-Carolus said. "The coronavirus creates the perfect conditions for landlords who want to do this because not only are people being instructed to stay home, but the virus has added to the economic stress with people losing their jobs, especially in Hawaii, which is driven by tourism."

Around 5 million more people filed first-time unemployment claims last week, bringing the total of unemployed Americans to nearly 22 million. While some states have enacted eviction and rent moratoriums, experts caution that these policies may not be enough to keep low- and middle-income renters in their homes. Only 69 percent of apartment tenants had paid their monthly rent by April 5, down from 81 percent the previous month, according to the National Multifamily Housing Council.

Advocates like Renee Williams, a senior staff attorney at the National Housing Law Project, suspect that as tenants continue to struggle economically, there will be heightened reports of sexual harassment enacted by landlords in the upcoming months.

"Landlords have all the leverage in the landlord-tenant relationship and in these types of situations, they especially prey on women who are vulnerable, who are housing insecure, have bad credit or who don't have anywhere to go," Williams said. "We've already seen that the pandemic is exacerbating a lot of systemic issues and sexual harassment targeted at tenants by landlords is likely to be one of these issues."

**Tenants have recourse**

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to uproot daily life, there may be added confusion about where tenants who may be experiencing such harassment can go with their claims, but advocates say tenants have recourse.

"Under the federal Fair Housing Act, sexual harassment by landlords is illegal," Sandra Park, senior staff attorney at the American Civil Liberty Union's Women's Rights Project, said. "Many states also have laws that ban sexual harassment and discrimination."

Tenants experiencing harassment can file a report with the Justice Department, which oversees an initiative to curtail sexual harassment in housing and has filed several lawsuits against landlords in recent years.

(Continued on page 5)
"DOJ is aware of these allegations and is working through its Civil Rights Division to investigate and bring to justice those landlords and other housing providers who engage in sexual harassment of tenants," a spokesperson for the DOJ wrote in an emailed statement.

Park also suggested that tenants should seek the help of local legal and social services, including human rights commissions.

"Many courts are closed right now, but getting involved with these organizations and having a lawyer from them call landlords could put landlords on notice that their behavior is unacceptable," Park said.

Yet Park and other advocates acknowledge that women who are most vulnerable — particularly women of color and immigrant and undocumented women — will not feel comfortable submitting a report or pursuing action against their landlords and that many times when they do so, they are often dismissed.

"I am do not think most of the women who submitted reports will go on to pursue action because they are so vulnerable," Jabola-Carolus said.

This is why she created a guide for those whose landlords may be pressuring them for a sexual arrangement.

"We want landlords to know we're watching them and that women who are dealing with this are not alone," Jabola-Carolus said. "It's really women who are holding every community right now. We're the majority of health care, elder care and child care workers and coronavirus is highlighting the silence of oppression of women in the U.S. I could not even envision a more gendered crisis."

**Stay-at-home orders can exacerbate harassment**

Compared to sexual harassment in the workplace, sexual harassment in housing has received much less attention, according to Park, whose first case with the ACLU was on behalf of an Alabama woman whose real estate manager tried to repeatedly coerce her into having sex with him and attempted to raise her rent when she refused. Though limited, the research on sexual harassment in housing suggests how prevalent the issue extends. According to a 2018 pilot study conducted by Rigel Oliveri of the University of Missouri’s School of Law, 10 percent of low-income women in Columbia, Missouri, had experienced significant sexual harassment by landlords.

While there are federal and state laws prohibiting sexual harassment in housing, many advocates call upon housing providers and public housing authorities that do not yet have these policies to institute them.

Isa Woldeguiorguis, executive director of the Center for Hope and Healing, also urges people to not discount the power of checking in on neighbors during this time, as staying at home not only can exacerbate sexual harassment, but other forms of violence and abuse.

"Reach out in whatever ways you can. We may not physically be able to be there, but we can call or walk by their homes," Woldeguiorguis said. "Survivors need us not to forget."
It’s an exciting age after graduating high school, but it’s also when you’re most at risk for intimate partner violence.

Fall brings with it not just cooler weather and pumpkin-spiced everything, but also a fair number of teary-eyed parents (or maybe secretly secretly empty-nesters) hugging their newly adulted children goodbye on college campuses around the country.

Of course, college is bound to look very different this fall compared to previous years. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, some universities are going fully remote while others are opening with caution. Regardless, in some form or another, your college-age kid is soon going to get a taste of what it’s like to be a legit grown-up and its mixture of freedom and responsibility. The big question is this: Are they prepared? We’re not talking highlighters and hot pots here, either—do they know how to stay safe? Beyond the don’t-drink-and-drive talk, which is of the utmost importance, teens should also get a how-to-say-no-and-mean-it talk as well.

College-age women, ages 18-24, are the most at-risk group to experience intimate partner violence and, possibly, the least prepared to realize it’s happening. Dating violence can start out so subtly most teens don’t even realize they’re being controlled, manipulated or in a situation that’s escalating toward violence.

Survivor Anna* told DomesticShelters.org that she felt swept off her feet at 18 when she met her 20-year-old boyfriend during college. He was over-the-top romantic, a common trait of abusers who groom a victim. A year later, they were sharing an apartment, and her boyfriend’s demeanor shifted to one of verbal abuse, control and sexual coercion.

“I always felt like physical abuse was my line, but that psychological abuse was forgivable, even though I know now the latter will do more damage.” She says she wishes she had learned earlier what a manipulative person looks like. “I’d never seen or heard of anyone like him before.”

Don’t Rely on Colleges to Cover Boundaries, Consent

Though well-meaning and still important, most college “safety” speeches talk about the dangers of a perpetrator you don’t know—the proverbial “man in the bushes” who can jump out and grab you on your way home from a party at night. They may cover the basics of drinking too much and how that can increase your risk for assault (important to note: rape is never your fault, no matter how much you’ve had to drink). Some will talk about the buddy system—go to a gathering together, leave together. The underlying message here: It’s going to happen anyway, so make sure you lessen your chances of being a target.

Snohomish, Wash., mom-of-two Marianne Counsell says her youngest daughter, who attends Eastern Washington University, was required to attend an online training about personal safety before orientation, with topics that Counsell said built on discussions she’d already been having years prior, like how to be aware of your surroundings and the dangers of walking home alone at night. But it did leave out something.

“I don’t recall anything about dating violence. It was more about what safety measures they have available on campus. I wish I could say they did talk about it though.”

Rachel Lindteigen is a Tucson, Ariz., mom whose 18-year-old stepdaughter will be starting Arizona State University (ASU) in the fall, living in the dorms. Lindteigen says the two have a “good, open relationship” and have talked about things like trusting your gut in sketchy situations, “and knowing that it’s OK to end things if something feels wrong.” But other topics like how to draw boundaries and spotting red flags in a new partner haven’t really come up.

“Maybe it should,” she admits.

Stephanie Thurrott, a writer for DomesticShelters.org from Emmaus, Penn., and mom of a college-aged daughter and son, says her safety talk included pointers like not walking alone at night and not putting

(Continued on page 7)
yourself in a situation where you’re alone with someone you don't know very well. But, she admits, "I haven't been as good talking about dating violence, trusting your gut ... or being with someone who discourages you from spending time with family or friends," a marker of control and manipulation in an abuser's arsenal of tactics.

Phoenix, Ariz., dad David Gallelo also just moved his daughter into the dorms at ASU. He says it wasn't just one talk with his kids, but "years of constant conversations about things like 'stranger danger' and what to look for in people." He enrolled his daughter in karate when she was young as a way to help facilitate the self-defense talks that would come later.

"[Karate] isn't going to prevent anything bad from happening, but it should at least give her the confidence to be able to deal with those situations when they arise. Sadly, they will arise. It's just a matter of when they do, I hope she is prepared for them."

His advice: "The minute you don't feel in control of the situation, do what you can to remove yourself from the situation or call for help."

Things Daughters and Sons Need to Know

The below talking points are not just for the girls, though they are the highest risk of intimate partner violence. College-age boys should also know how to avoid abuse and avoid crossing an abusive line with a partner. So, sit down your teen, get ready for the eye rolls and consider covering the topics below.

**Boundaries.** Avoiding dating abuse and intimate partner violence starts with learning how to set loud and clear boundaries—Read “Where Are Your Boundaries?” for a comprehensive list of the different types of boundaries one can set. It can be as simple as learning that "No" is a complete sentence. If you don't want to do something, go somewhere or date that person, you don't need to give a thousand reasons. "No" is sufficient. If someone doesn't respect that, it's a red flag.

"It takes a mature person to set boundaries and many people, especially kind and empathetic people, have trouble saying no because we don't want to disappoint or anger others," says Lynell Ross, certified health and wellness coach and founder of Zivadream.com. "Know your own value and self-worth and never let another person disrespect you."

Likewise, listen to others when they set boundaries. There's a very thin line between persisting and stalking.

**Consent.** If boundaries are the walls of your house, think of consent as the front door. You don't just let anyone walk in. Before entering into a relationship or taking things further physically, make sure you're asking for consent and/or are giving consent. According to LoveisRespect.org, simply asking "Is this OK?" or "Are you comfortable?" can be the difference between respect and coercion.

**Red Flags.** A red flag waving on the beach warns of serious danger in the water. Likewise, spotting a red flag when meeting someone new can mean serious danger if you keep going. Almost every survivor of domestic violence we've spoken to over the years admits they missed a red flag, which can be easy to do if you don't know what you're looking for, or if you get overwhelmed with feelings of being in love (also known as love-bombing). Red flags for dating abuse can include subtle control, guilt trips, ignoring your feelings, ignoring your boundaries, an excess of questions about where you were, attempts to isolate you from friends, having a constant victim mentality and admitting abuse in prior relationships. (Here is a list of other red flags.)

"Teens should know it's a major red flag for a partner to demand to go through their smartphone," says Olga Zakharchuk, founder and CEO of the parenting advice site, BabySchooling.com. “Having someone demand to go through your phone is a major red flag that they could have control issues.”

The same goes for asking for your social media passwords, the code or key to get into your building or your class schedule. Remember, if it feels off, that's your gut telling you something's not right.

Finally, make sure your teen knows that abuse is never their fault, and it's always OK to reach out and ask for help if they're in a situation that's making them feel uncomfortable. To learn more about how intimate partner violence can affect teens, see our Children and Teens section for a wealth of information and advice.

*Name changed for safety
SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition (SHRCC) provides services to victims of domestic violence in Spartanburg, Cherokee and Union Counties and victims of sexual assault in Spartanburg and Cherokee Counties.

SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition Mission

Our mission is to use our collective voice to address the impact of domestic and sexual violence by providing quality services to those affected and to create social change through education, training, and activism.

Vision:

We envision a community liberated from all forms of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Frontlines archives can be viewed on our website @ www.shrcc.org under About Us Newsletter Archive