

A SAFE & TOGETHER™ MODEL COVID-19 QUICK PRACTICE GUIDE

A Mapping Tool Supplement

DURING THIS TIME OF CRISIS, ADAPTING OUR WORK WITH FAMILIES IMPACTED BY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATORS' BEHAVIORS IS A CRITICAL TASK.

The COVID-19 outbreak and the stresses of the social responses are affecting a wide swath of our societies including adult and child domestic violence survivors. The mandate to socially isolate, the reduction or loss of formal and informal support, the loss of employment, and many other factors may accelerate a perpetrator's ability to control and harm family members. Under stress themselves, child- and family-serving professionals need safe, effective and virtual tools to help intervene with families. The Safe Together Model's practice tools can be used in virtual home visits, supervision or case discussions. The following is a quick guide to supplement your existing Safe & Together Model tools. It will be updated and expanded in the coming days and weeks.

COVID-19 & Domestic Violence Perpetration

Coercive control is an attack on the liberty and well-being of others. The current environment is a breeding ground for increased control and abuse, putting adult and child survivors at greater risk right now.

- Fears and household changes related to COVID-19 is not an excuse for abuse and control. The pandemic does not suspend accountability for the perpetration of coercive control.
- The current context of COVID-19, the associated societal changes, and associated fears, give domestic violence perpetrators new opportunities to be abusive and justify coercive control.
- Survivors, because of trauma history, are more likely than others to have underlying health issues that might increase their fear, vulnerability to the virus and compound the ability of the perpetrator to control and harm them.
- Intersections and intersectionalities as it relates to domestic violence must be part of any assessment and case plan. This includes but is not limited to substance use, mental health problems, challenges related to poverty and the role of culture. Families who already face limited or poor health services, now, may be even more afraid and vulnerable to perpetrator's coercive control. Indigenous communities will experience unique challenges and vulnerabilities.
- Health (mental and physical) symptoms in adult and child survivors should be expected to increase.
- Survivors' protective efforts will adapt. Safety plans and case plans need to be reviewed and reworked for the current situation.
- Information is power: the more you can learn about the current resources and policies of agencies and systems, the more you can help a survivor in the face of increased attempts at control and manipulation. For example, perpetrators may try to convince a survivor that he cannot return a child due to mandates to socially isolate, when that isn't true.
- Actual illness and death will add another dynamic that will need to be assessed as the pandemic continues to unfold. Children may be left in the unsupervised care of the perpetrator when the non-offending is sick or passes away.

Mapping in a Time of Crisis

THE SAFE & TOGETHER INSTITUTE CAN HELP YOU USE OUR PERPETRATOR PATTERN MAPPING TOOL AS EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE DURING THIS CRISIS.

Additional Guidance when using our Mapping Tool:

- Map the perpetrator's pre-pandemic pattern of coercive control and actions taken to harm children. Understanding baseline behavior patterns helps to understand whose situation is deteriorating or improving in the current context of COVID-19.
- Review recent major pre-pandemic changes in the family's situation including, but not limited to, significant changes in the perpetrator's patterns, new intervention orders, separation or divorce, pregnancy, major changes in mental health or substance abuse for any family members.
- Use the mapping tool as usual with special attention to:
 - Is the perpetrator using the current situation to justify increased control?
 - Due to social isolation, is there increased monitoring, interfering with outside contact, and actual abuse?
 - Is there increased interference of the relationship between the other parent and the children?
 - How are survivors' protective efforts adapting to this new context?
 - Remain vigilant against assuming that the changes in the family functioning or solely related to the pandemic when they may actually be the result of the perpetrator's coercive control intersecting with the current context.
 - Are there changes in supports for any or all family members around mental health and substance abuse?
 - How is the perpetrator reacting to specific health related vulnerabilities of the adult and child survivors?
 - How are oppression and privilege issues playing out in this new context?

Assess how the family's circumstances have changed since the pandemic began. This includes, but is not limited to, where family members are living; who is in the home; the impact of school closing; changes in the day to day routine; their physical and mental health; their caring responsibilities; employment; loss of informal and formal supports.

Practice Questions to Aid Assessments & Case Planning:

- What are you most worried about for the family?
- How do you partner with the survivor in the current situation?
- What interventions are possible with the perpetrator?
- What kind of support do the children need?
- What assistance can the family's support network offer at this time?

A Checklist to Help with Danger Assessments

COVID-19 SPECIFIC SET OF CONSIDERATIONS OF FACTORS THAT MIGHT BE RELEVANT TO A DANGER ASSESSMENT

This list doesn't replace other risk and danger assessment processes. In domestic violence-informed practice they would be answered within a larger framework of partnering with survivors and keeping a focus on intervening with perpetrators as parents.

- ✓ Do any of the household members have health issues that make them particularly vulnerable to COVID-19?
- ✓ How has the pandemic changed the perpetrator's ability to entrap, control or monitor family members' movements and activities (in and out of the house)?
- ✓ Is there any known escalation in the perpetrator's pattern of violence, sexual abuse or threats?
- ✓ Has the perpetrator's mental health or substance use changed since the pandemic began and how has this impacted his pattern of coercive control?
 - Consider any increase in depression, anxiety, suicidality. Ask about behaviors associated with these changes. Increased depression, suicidality in people with histories of coercive control (with or without physical violence) should be taken as an increased risk for danger and lethality to others.
 - Consider the perpetrator's loss of access to support services that might have been increasing safety, e.g. perpetrator intervention program or substance abuse treatment or monitoring by probation.
- ✓ What critical formal or informal supports have been lost in the current situation, e.g. courts are closed; family members cannot visit the house or are police not enforcing intervention orders?
- ✓ How has the pandemic undermined key elements in the survivor's safety plan or protective efforts? How might changes in service delivery or response impact on her plans?
- ✓ How has the perpetrator's pattern of coercive control, since the pandemic began, caused or exacerbated the survivor's substance use or mental health, or impact on the children's wellbeing? Is the perpetrator actively interfering with virtual or other service delivery efforts?
- ✓ What are the adult and child survivors' current hopes and fears? These may have changed since the pandemic started.
- ✓ Are there any factors related to the current situation that have reduced the immediate risk of danger, e.g. the perpetrator is now working more due to the needs of his employment or new family members living in the house are acting as a buffer?

COVID-19 RELATED BLOGS, PODCASTS, WEBINARS, RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

The Safe & Together Institute is committed to doubling its efforts during this time to provide critical and useful information and virtual options for training and support during this time of crisis. Visit www.safeandtogetherinstitute.com to learn about our Virtual Academy, COVID-19 Podcasts, Virtual Practice Support Group, Facebook Live events, and more.