 

**PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SOCIAL NETWORK OF SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THEIR CHILDREN**

**Due to the physical limitations as a result of measures within COVID 19, ranging from social distancing to a complete lock-down, important social networks for many families almost come to a standstill. As a result, seeking help in your own social environment, such as family, friends, school, (sports) clubs, etc., is considerably limited. This makes a possible and/or previously used escape route almost impossible. The message not to visit the older generations and vulnerable groups because of the risk of infection also separates grandparents from grandchildren and children. As a result, an important source of help and safety is excluded.**

Some practical guidelines for the social network of victims of domestic violence and their children:

* If possible, agree on codewords to report an impending crisis or when there is a disturbing situation within a family. By naming a codeword or a specific answer to a normal question agreed in advance, those involved can send a signal that things are not going well.
* As a professional, involve the social network as much as possible in the follow-up of the safety plan. This can be neighbors, family members, colleagues, friends, etc.
* If children and young people are involved, teachers can take up this task. A regular outreach to keep contact, if necessary, under the task of school task guidance, can be crucial.
* If there is a peer group, involve them in monitoring safety. Make buddies between victims and family members who contact each other every day by telephone, social media (chat, video calling, etc.). If possible, also use code words that can indicate a potentially dangerous situation. Ensure that peer group members have direct access to a counselor if they are concerned about their buddy.
* Media can convey the message that under Covid-19 measures victims of domestic violence and child abuse have been left even more to their own resources and that the role of bystanders (family, friends, neighbors, etc.) is now much bigger than in normal circumstances. Solidarity also involves concern and concern about (potential) victims of violence, children and adults.

**Working with emotion regulation is a common approach in tackling domestic violence and child abuse. Due to the COVID-19 measures, the minimalization of stress, rising tension, anger, etc. are greatly limited. The obligation to stay inside the houses, not being able to work, loss of social contacts, financial insecurity, constant children at home, and more are important risk factors in domestic violence and child abuse. As a result, different and creative forms of emotion regulation are needed during this time of crisis.**

Some practical guidelines:

* Agree with families how they can give each other enough space under the given circumstances. This mainly concerns giving each other permission and the opportunity to do so. Examples are separate practice of sport in your own space, working in different areas within the house. It is important to allow each other that space and respect the agreements
* If there is a possibility, give each family member their own place within the house and where the other family members do not enter during pre-spoken times. As a result, family members can create a work situation where you don't disturb each other.
* Agree a ‘Time-out’ within a family in case tension nevertheless arises. Within such a ‘Time-out’, the family members can do an activity that has a de-escalating effect. This is subject to the condition that the family members do not come close to each other during this ‘Time-out’. The physically restrictive measures within COVID-19, which make it impossible to always leave the house, make a ‘Time-out’ more difficult, but it is therefore not impossible. It does an appeal on everyone in the family to take responsibility, especially for adults family members.