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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SPIKES DURING COVID-19



Oregon Domestic Violence Cases

Oregon's statewide stay-at-home order during the coronavirus outbreak has led to a very disturbing unintended consequence: for people that are living with domestic violence, staying at home and being isolated with an abuser is potentially putting them at a greater risk.

Portland police are reporting a spike in the number of domestic violence cases as more people spend extended periods of time at home during the coronavirus pandemic. Law enforcement officials and domestic violence advocates in Oregon are concerned that the number of domestic violence incidents will continue to rise because victims are in a uniquely vulnerable position due to stay-at-home orders and isolation.

Not only are these increases occurring in domestic violence cases where there has been a history of violence, but also in cases where there isn't a history of violence. The loss of employment, increased financial difficulties, being ordered to stay inside and a natural fear of becoming sick work together to increase family stress. When confined to a small space, people tend to lash out far more than usual. There is no opportunity for abuser and victim to separate from each other to cool down, and as the restrictions tighten - not being allowed to go to work, children not allowed to go to school - this ends up creating a "pressure cooker" environment.

In addition to physical abuse, instances of mental, financial, and psychological abuse are also expected to surge over the coming weeks and months. These methods of abuse and control, while leaving no physical marks, are equally dangerous and destructive.

The coronavirus may also be producing other situations that abusers can use to take advantage of their victims:

False Information

Abusive partners may share misinformation about the pandemic to control or frighten survivors, or to prevent them from seeking appropriate medical attention if they have symptoms.

Control Over Insurance

·Abusive partners may withhold insurance cards, threaten to cancel insurance, or prevent survivors from seeking medical attention if they need it.

Programs are Impacted

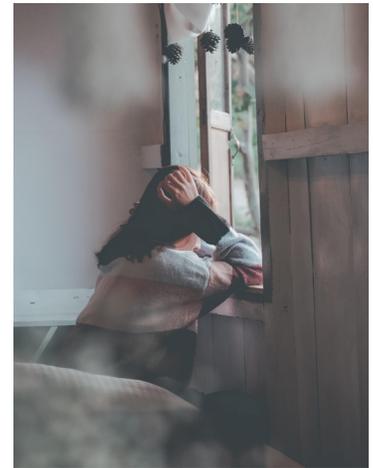
Programs that serve survivors may be significantly impacted -- shelters may be full or may even stop intakes altogether. Survivors may also fear entering a shelter because of being in close quarters with groups of people.

High-Risk Isolation

Victims who are older or have chronic heart or lung conditions may feel at increased risk in public places where they would typically get support, like shelters, counseling centers, or courthouses. An abusive partner may feel more justified and escalate their isolation tactics.

Travel Restrictions

·Travel restrictions may impact a survivor's escape or safety plan - it may not be safe for them to use public transportation or to fly.



While leaving an abuser can be dangerous,

and difficult during these times, there are some actions and precautions that a person can take to ready themselves for doing so if needed.

Create a safety plan:

- Call a women's shelter or domestic violence hotline for advice. Make the call at a safe time — when the abuser isn't around — or from a friend's house or other safe location, such as a local park.
- Pack an emergency bag that includes items you'll need when you leave, such as extra clothes and keys. Leave the bag in a safe place. Keep important personal papers, money and prescription medications handy so that you can take them with you on short notice.
- Know exactly where you'll go and how you'll get there.



*"Never forget that walking away from something unhealthy is brave, even if you stumble a little on your way out the door."
-Unknown*



An abuser can use technology to monitor your telephone and online communication and to track your location. To maintain your privacy:

Use Phones Cautiously

Your abuser might intercept calls and listen to your conversations. He or she might use caller ID, check your cellphone or search your phone billing records to see your call and texting history.

Use Computer Cautiously

Your abuser might use spyware to monitor your emails and the websites you visit. Consider using a computer at work, the library or at a friend's house to seek help.

Remove GPS

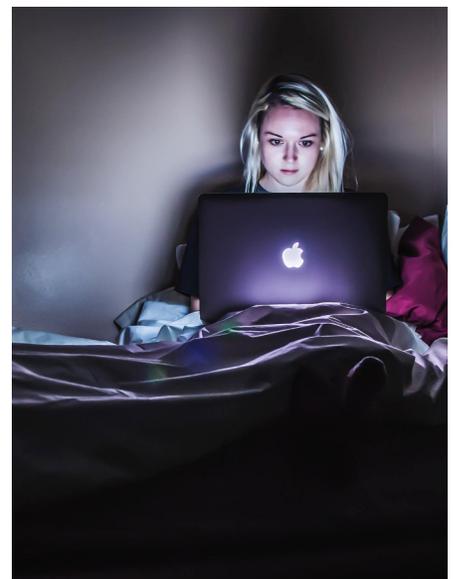
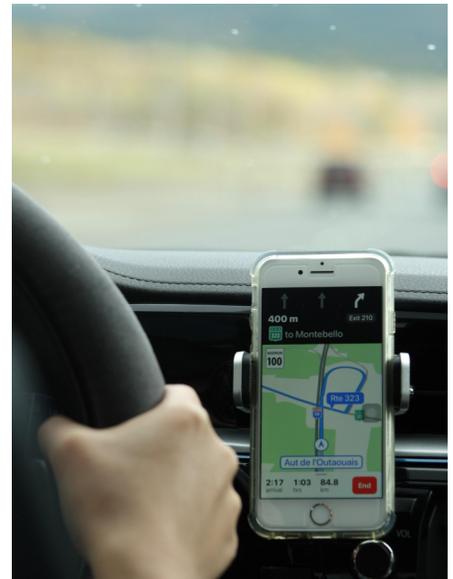
Your abuser might use a GPS device to pinpoint your location. Most phones have a settings option to remove GPS satellite.

Change Email Passwords

·Frequently change your email password. Choose passwords that would be impossible for your abuser to guess.

Remove Browser Searches

·Clear your viewing history. Follow your browser's instructions to clear any record of websites or graphics you've viewed.





The Courts Are Hearing Cases

It is important to know that, even in these times of business closures and reduced access to services, there are still venues available for you to get help.

Even with the restrictions on what types of cases that courts are hearing, they are still open and hearing cases for people who are being abused or in danger of it happening.

If you are a victim of domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault, you may qualify for a protective order, which can require your abuser to stay away from you and your family, and to stop contacting you.

In Oregon, there are four protective orders that you may be able to get, depending on your situation:

Family Abuse Prevention Act Restraining Order (FAPA)

Pursuant to the FAPA, a victim can file a Petition with the court requesting a restraining order if the abuser is a spouse, former spouse or a person with whom you are cohabiting or have cohabited. You can also petition for a restraining order if the abuser is a person with whom you have had a sexual relationship within the past two years.

Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities Abuse Prevention Act Restraining Order (EPPDAPA)

An elderly or disabled person who is being abused can apply for a restraining order by filing a civil action for abuse of the elderly or disabled.

Stalking Protective Order (SPO)

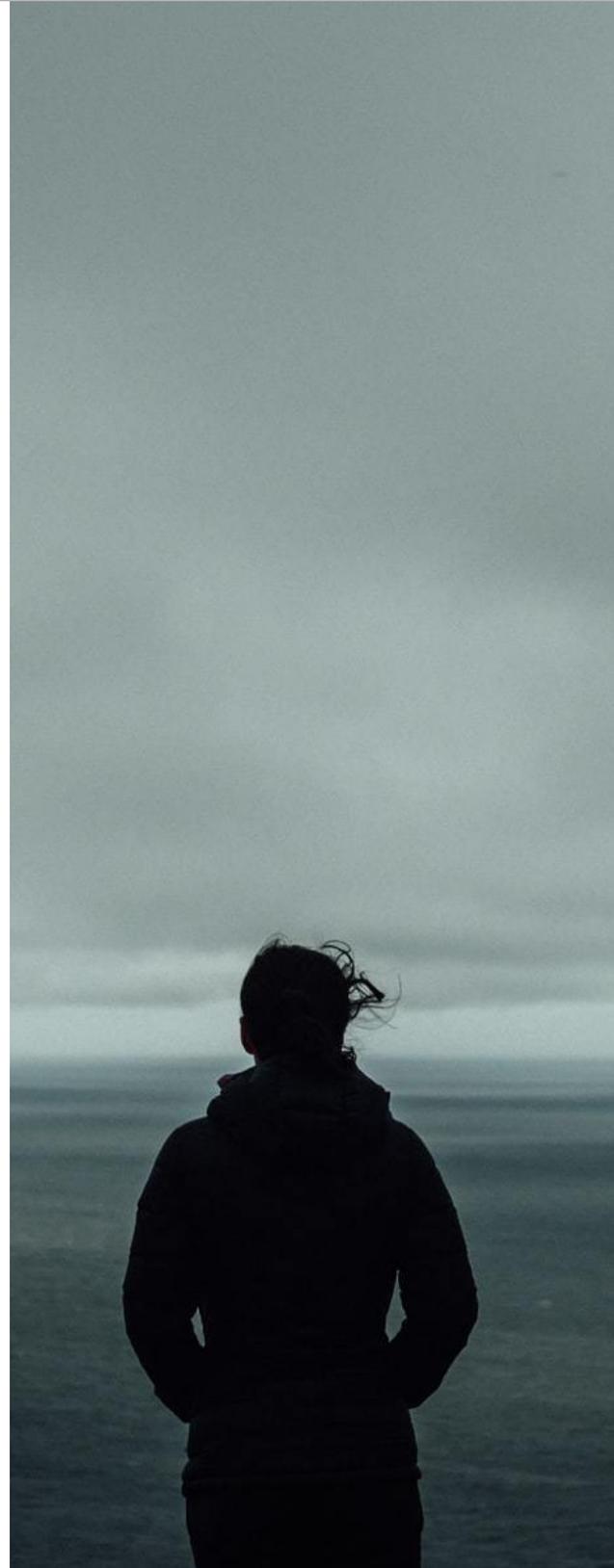
Stalking protection orders provide protection from someone who is stalking you or your immediate family or household member.

Sexual Abuse Protective Order (SAPO)

A sexual abuse protective order is a civil order that provides protection if someone who is not your family or household member sexually abuses or sexually assaults you.

If you are the victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking, and you are renting in Oregon, you also have the following rights:

- In some circumstances, you can break your lease early without having to pay a lease break fee.
- If you qualify for a protective order, you can ask the judge to order the person abusing you to move out of your home.
- You can ask your landlord to terminate the tenancy of your abuser without terminating your tenancy





Landerholm Family Law Can Help

Domestic abusers appear in many forms, and victims often worry their story will not be believed if they come forward. If you fall under any of these categories, please know that our firm has significant experience in representing clients who have survived the unimaginable, *and we will never silence victims of domestic abuse*. Rather, we are passionate about fighting for justice and providing a voice for those who have been made to feel that they don't have one.

Do not wait to take action against your abuser, and know that you have not been forgotten during this time—domestic violence is a priority, **and courts are still accepting cases for those who are in danger and need help**. Attorneys at Landerholm Family Law can support you and encourage you to have the confidence and strength to take action to protect yourself and your children.

If you are someone you know has been abused, contact our firm today at (503) 227-0200 for the help you deserve.



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"At any given moment, you have the power to say that this is not how the story is going to end." -Christine Mason Miller

