



News Release

For immediate release
February 2, 2021

Community Partners Team Up for Domestic Violence Awareness Campaign

Violence Often Happens Behind Closed Doors. Our Doors Are Always Open

SARNIA-LAMBTON, ON – COVID-19's increased isolation and reduced public contact have inadvertently created a rise in domestic violence. Partners across the community are coming together to bring awareness, and provide assistance for those impacted by the growing presence of domestic violence, in particular for women and children.

"The pandemic has created unsafe environments for anyone experiencing abuse," said Angie Marks, Executive Director, Women's Interval Home. "Isolation, more frequent contact with their abuser, financial instability, and reduced access to supports like teachers, friends and family all contribute to an increase in the severity and intensity of domestic violence."

An Ontario survey of staff working with domestic abuse survivors shows that 82% have seen a rise in violence and frequency since March 2020. This does not include the violence going unseen.

"For some, home is not a safe place. The effects of violence are often seen in schools," said Dawn Flegel, Executive Director, Sarnia-Lambton Children's Aid Society. "When learning went virtual because of the pandemic, teachers had less opportunity to interact with children and see possible signs of child welfare concerns. Reports to the Children's Aid Society went down at a time when needs and worries went up."

Resources continue to be available during the pandemic. Domestic violence services continue to be deemed essential with precautions being taken for the safety of clients. Individuals are not breaking stay-at-home orders if they go to friends, family, neighbours or a shelter for help.

Support is available in Sarnia-Lambton through:

- Women's Interval Home – 1-800-265-1412

- Victim Services of Sarnia-Lambton – 519-344-8861 ext. 5238
- Sarnia-Lambton Children’s Aid Society – 519-336-0623
- Sarnia-Lambton Coordinating Committee on Violence Against Women – 519-786-4053
- Bluewater Health’s Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centre – 519-464-4522
- Réseau-Femmes du Sud-Ouest de l’Ontario (pour services disponibles en français) – 226-349-9907 or 1-888-946-3029
- Three Fires Ezhigowenmindwaa Women’s Shelter (Walpole Island First Nation) – 519-627-3635
- Sarnia Police Service – 519-344-8861 (911 for emergencies)
- Ontario Provincial Police – 1-888-310-1122 (911 for emergencies)

Family, friends and neighbours should continue to keep in contact with loved ones if there is a known history of abuse. Individuals should have a safety plan, including a safe word to identify that they are in danger and need police help.

The awareness campaign will educate the public on warning signs, ways to leave, and supports available through varied avenues, such as print, digital and radio.

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