



West Island Women's
Shelter

FAMILY & FRIENDS OF VICTIMS OF CONJUGAL VIOLENCE

Do you think that your friend, your mother, your sister or your neighbour is a victim of conjugal violence?

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUPPORT HER...
BUT DON'T KNOW HOW?

HOW TO RECOGNIZE,
PREVENT AND INTERVENE

Because conjugal violence is insidious and occurs predominantly behind closed doors, it can be difficult to identify the abuse.

VIOLENCE

takes various forms and when it manifests itself in ways other than screaming, punches and injuries, identifying it can become more difficult for those close to the victim.

The forms of violence are: physical, psychological, economic, verbal and sexual violence.

When an abusive man weaves his web of control around his victim, in general, he will use subtle tactics aimed at isolating and gradually removing power from the victim.



Then, as the relationship develops, he may start to use different means to ensure that he maintains his power over his partner.

In some cases, the manifestations of physical violence will occur later and often only when the abuser tries to maintain his power over his spouse.

Over the past few decades, women's rights have evolved, thereby improving the status of women.

Western societies are modernizing, but unfortunately conjugal violence and its consequences on women and children persist.

Faced with a greater awareness of conjugal violence and the risks that its victims face, FRIENDS AND RELATIVES often wonder how to help them.

According to the latest statistical data from the National Institute of Public Health of Québec:

2014



17% of women still suffered conjugal violence



34% of women had been sexually assaulted or beaten, strangled, threatened with a gun or knife



40% of women had been physically injured by their abusive partner

Many seek to recognize the warning signs of violence, because they often only became aware when control is well established and the violence had begun to escalate.

Experts in conjugal violence increasingly realize that episodes of physical violence were not

necessarily present in relationships where the abusive man ended up committing femicide.

This is why it is essential to know how to recognize the presence of coercive control and its warning signs.



Coercive control is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten a victim. It is a complex dynamic that develops between the abusive spouse and his victim. In short, it allows the aggressor to establish a set of rules to follow, implicit and explicit, allowing him to maintain his control, even in his absence.

In isolation, these behaviours can seem inconsequential, even banal. But in creating this pattern of controlling tactics, added to the violent behavior, the victim finds herself caught in a downward spiral, forcing her to obey her abusive spouse.

The concept of coercive control, as it will be presented later, is a way to assess whether a relationship is marked by conjugal violence. It also can help determine the possible risks to the safety of women and children.



But before looking at the dynamics imposed by the violent man in an abusive relationship, let's first look at the "red flags" that can signal that your friend or loved one could be in an abusive relationship.

2

INDICATORS TO OBSERVE

SOME EXAMPLES OF INDICATORS THAT MAY BE OBSERVED IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

(Note that these signs are for guidance only. Not all of them may be present, and you may not be able to identify them or you may not witness them. Beyond these examples, it is important that you listen to your intuition).

BEHAVIOURS OBSERVED IN

MY LOVED ONE

She has a tendency to isolate herself and her life seems to be centered on her romantic relationship;

She erases her conversations on her social networks and deletes her internet search history;

She seems to avoid talking to men so as not to make her partner jealous or uncomfortable;

During our outings, she receives many text messages and calls from her spouse;

In the beginning stages of their relationship, things progressed very quickly
(eg.: they moved in together after a few weeks / months of dating);

In the beginning stages of their relationship, she constantly talked about the
fact that her new partner is extraordinary;

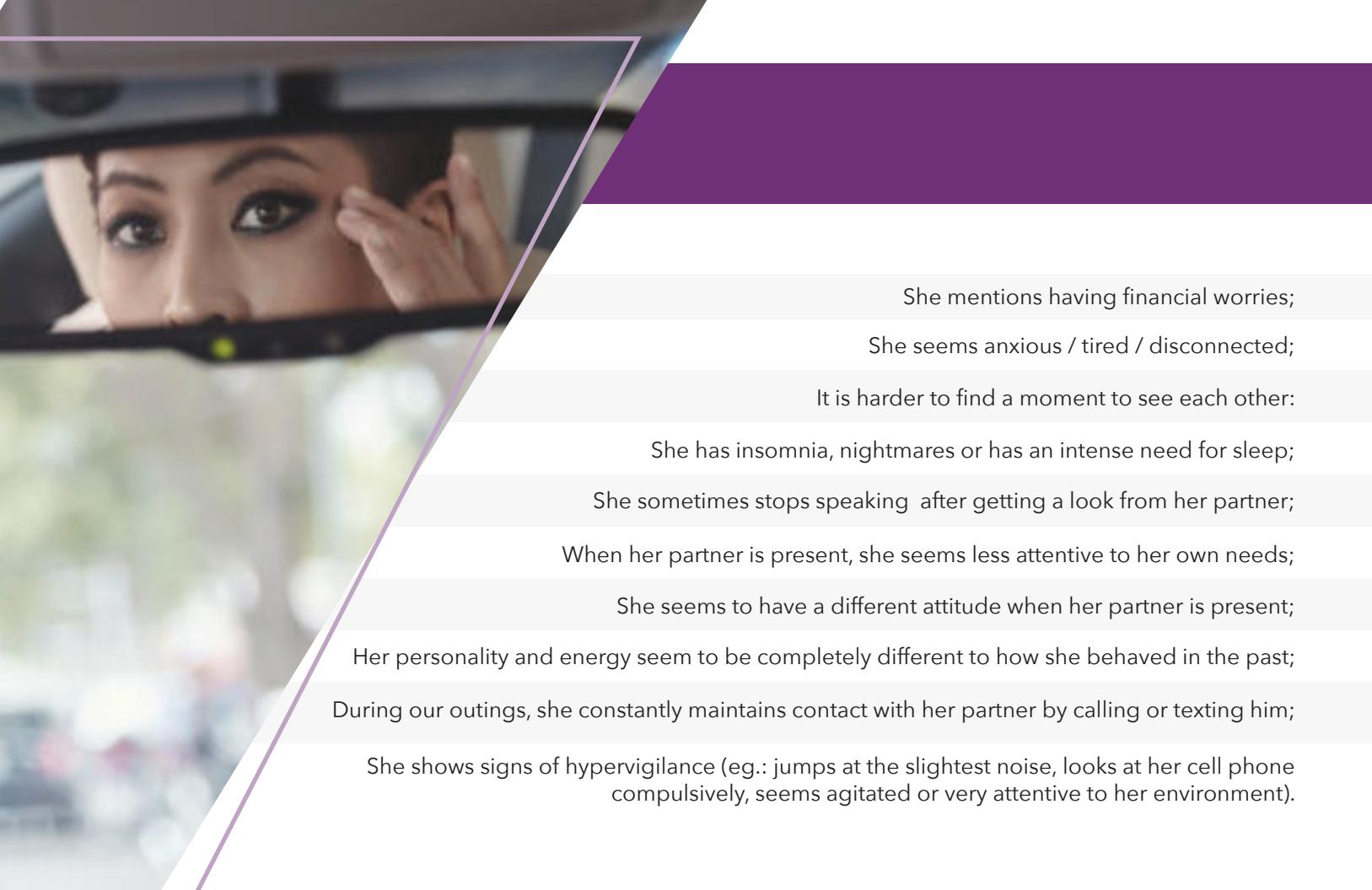
When they met, your friend/loved one was in a vulnerable state;

During our outings, she seems in a hurry to get home;

She seems to be solely responsible for the children;

She cancels our plans at the last minute;





She mentions having financial worries;

She seems anxious / tired / disconnected;

It is harder to find a moment to see each other:

She has insomnia, nightmares or has an intense need for sleep;

She sometimes stops speaking after getting a look from her partner;

When her partner is present, she seems less attentive to her own needs;

She seems to have a different attitude when her partner is present;

Her personality and energy seem to be completely different to how she behaved in the past;

During our outings, she constantly maintains contact with her partner by calling or texting him;

She shows signs of hypervigilance (eg.: jumps at the slightest noise, looks at her cell phone compulsively, seems agitated or very attentive to her environment).

BEHAVIOURS OBSERVED IN

HER SPOUSE

Her spouse is almost always present during our activities, even when not planned;

He monopolizes most conversations;

He seems to have exaggerated expectations of his spouse when it comes to daily tasks;

He says he prefers that his spouse does not work and that she stays at home;

He abuses alcohol or drugs;

He offers to do all the shopping to prevent her from going out or says it is to protect her;

He cuts her off when she speaks and he says, for example, that it is to "help her better formulate her idea";

He asks his spouse to share her location at all times, to know, for example where she is in case of an emergency;



He makes disparaging comments about his spouse's expenses, her clothing, her way of educating the children, etc.;

He picks her up and drops her off to each activity (even if she has her own vehicle);



He will openly share his distaste for violent men;

He frequently makes promises that he does not keep;

He seems to have sexist opinions towards women in general, and makes misogynistic comments or jokes;

He has a bad relationship with his ex-spouse or makes derogatory comments about her;

He may have a history of conjugal violence and say that he has been falsely accused, or that he has repented/reformed;

He can seem intimidating when upset;

He shows an almost exaggerated generosity or devotion, which can make you uncomfortable, or make his partner feel indebted;

He seems to have strong ideas about the stereotypical roles of men and women;

He is jealous / possessive;

He seems to believe in double standards (eg.: she can go out once in a while, but he goes out at every opportunity possible).

3

COERCITIVE CONTROL

SOME COERCITIVE CONTROL SCREENING INDICATORS

As we mentioned in the introduction, identifying the presence of coercive control in a relationship can be the key element that allows those around them to better understand the situation in which their friend or loved one finds themselves. Here are some signs that may be present.

IN THEIR

RELATIONSHIP

ROMANTIC

Is he jealous?

Does he scream a lot?

Does he insult her?

Does he make threats (towards her, the children, relatives, pets)?

Does he threaten to call the authorities (child protection services, immigration, social services, mental health services, etc.)?

Does he damage or destroy her belongings?

Is she afraid to make him angry?

Does she feel like she's walking on eggshells in fear of triggering his anger?

When he is dissatisfied with her behaviour, does he refuse to talk to her or ignore her for long periods of time?

Does he accuse her of caring only for the children and never for him?

Does he accuse her of having other lovers?

Does he drive dangerously when he's mad at her?

Does he block access to the doors during their arguments?

Does he prevent her from sleeping during their arguments?

Does he ever attempt to scare her by standing over her?

Does he threaten her with objects?

Does he physically attack her and then ask her how she hurt herself?

Does he prevent her from getting treatment at a clinic or hospital?

IN THEIR

COMMUNICATION

If he texts or calls her, and she doesn't answer him, is she afraid of his reaction?

Does he call her frequently at work?

When he is out, does he constantly maintain contact with her and make her feel like she needs to respond to him immediately?

Does he monitor her social media?

Do all new activities on her social networks trigger an interrogation?

Does he insist on having the passwords for all her social networks?

Does he pose as her on social media?



IN THEIR

RESPECTIVE TASKS

Are his expectations of housekeeping so high that she never has time for anything else?

Are his expectations for housekeeping so unrealistic that she has difficulty balancing it and her job or caring for the children?

Did he make her quit work or school?

If the chores around the house are not done, is she afraid of his reaction?

Does he do all the shopping to keep her from having to go out?

Did she lose her job or was her academic year impacted because of him?



IN MANAGING THEIR INCOME

OR IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Does he require that her income be deposited into his account or into the joint account?

Does he refuse to allow her to have her own account or does he demand access to her personal account?

Does she have to account for all the money she spends?

Does he get angry when he is restricted in his own spending?

Does he seem to keep their financial situation a secret?

Does he tell her that she doesn't have to worry about money matters and that he will take care of everything?

Does she have to ask him for money every time she goes shopping for the family?

Does he get angry if she goes over budget?

Does she have access to money if she wants to buy things for the children?

Does he request that family allowances be deposited in his account or in the joint account?

Does she have access to money if she wants to buy things for herself?

Has she had to borrow money from friends or family to pay for her needs or those of her spouse?

Has he asked her to borrow money on his behalf from the bank?

Does he steal her money or sell property that belongs to her?



Does he keep in his possession her ID/important papers, as well as those of the children?

Did he steal or keep in his possession her ID or other important papers, or those of the children?

A close-up photograph of a woman's face. She is holding a white smartphone to her ear with her right hand. Her left hand is raised to her mouth, with her fingers touching her lips, suggesting she is trying to keep quiet or is nervous. She has dark hair pulled back and is looking slightly upwards and to the side with a concerned expression.

IN HER

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Is she afraid of his reaction when she is late?
Does he accompany her wherever she goes?
Does he verify her location through tracking apps?

Does he limit her right to go out?
Does he limit the time she gets to go out for?
Does he limit the frequency of her outings?

Does he show up at her work often to check up on her?
Does he force her to take the children on all her outings?
When she returns home from an outing, does he ask her about everything that happened?

Does he make her feel guilty when she goes out without him?
Does he make her feel guilty when she goes out without the kids?
Does he drop her off and pick her up, for example at work, to prevent her colleagues from "getting any ideas"?

Does he ask her to turn on her GPS when she's not with him?
Does he react strongly when she goes out for longer than he would like?
Does he tell her he doesn't like her going out without him because he worries about her when she does?



IN HER

RELATIONSHIP

WITH HER FRIENDS
AND FAMILY

Has she lost contact with relatives due to her relationship with him?

Does he make her feel guilty when she sees friends or family without him?

Does he talk to those close to her without her knowing?

Does he frequently call relatives, bosses or colleagues to check on her?

Does he call those close to her to check on how she behaves with them?

Does he accuse her of being a lesbian when she is hanging out with her female friends?

Is he accusing her of flirting with any man in her presence?

Does he ask the children to keep an eye on her?

Does he flirt or attempt to seduce the women in her social circle?

IN HER

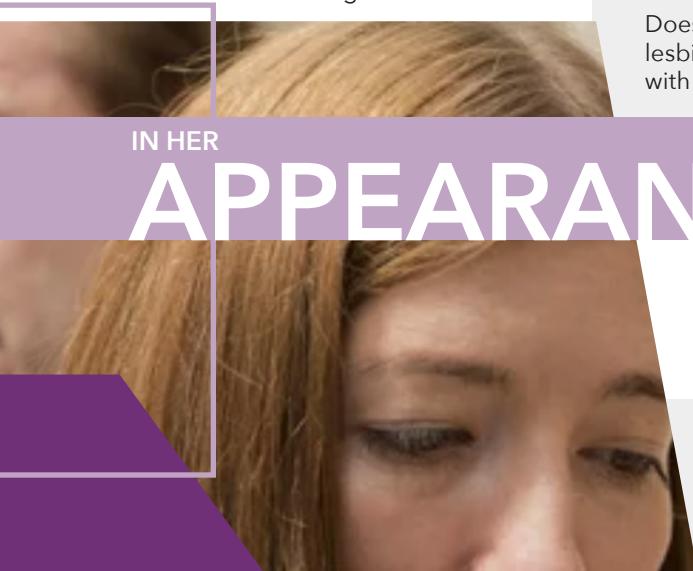
APPEARANCE

Does he choose her clothes because he wants her to look flawless?

Does he make her change her clothes because he finds them too provocative?

Does he force her to wear sexy clothes or clothing that makes her feel uncomfortable?

Does he demand unattainable aesthetic standards from her or compare her to other women?



IN THEIR
RELATIONS
SEXUAL

Does he insist on performing sexual acts that make her uncomfortable?

Does he make sexual jokes that diminish her in front of the children or other people?

Does he insult or criticize her for her attributes or sexual acts?

Does he insist that she send him pictures or videos that make her uncomfortable?

Does he share her intimate photos or videos without her consent?

Does he make sexual comments about her on social media?

If she refuses to conform to his sexual desires, does he insult, threaten or ignore her?

Does he insist on performing sexual acts in front of or with other people without her consent?



4

HOW TO HELP

NOW THAT YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED THAT YOUR FRIEND/LOVED ONE IS A VICTIM OR IF SHE HAS CONFIDED IN YOU HERSELF:

SUGGESTED

THINGS NOT TO DO

It is not easy for a woman victim of conjugal violence to open up. There are several reasons behind this protective behaviour including feelings of shame or fear of being judged, fear and threats from one's spouse, hope for improvement, acceptance of one's condition, fear of retaliation against her and the children, etc.

Telling her that these things are none of your concern or should remain private;

Questioning what she's saying or doubting what she is telling you;

Judging the fact that she remained in the relationship;

Threatening to no longer support her when she makes decisions that you do not approve of;

Telling her what to do and when to leave;

Telling her to make more of an effort or how she can improve the situation;

Talking to her in a condescending or superior tone, which would confirm what her partner has been telling her for years - that she is inferior to others;

Forcing solutions on her by telling her that this is what you would do in her situation;

Suggesting that she speak to her spouse to sort things out;

Telling her to stay with her spouse for the sake of the children;

Measuring her success by whether or not she leaves her partner.



A photograph showing three women. One woman in the foreground has her hands clasped and is being comforted by two other women, one from each side. They appear to be in a home setting.

It takes a lot of courage for a victim to open up about her situation, and most of the time she does so to someone she trusts. It is a cry for help that must be taken seriously. It is therefore important to be prepared and open to what she has to share. By being a supportive, welcoming presence, a friend or loved one can prevent the victim from completely shutting down and falling entirely under the control of her abusive partner. Here are some thoughts to keep in mind and things to say when talking to her:

Help her understand that she is not responsible for the violence and she is not to blame;

Let her know that ambivalence is a process that all the victims go through;

That violence is not a loss of control, but about power and control;

Continue to respect her choices and give her time to make her decisions. Recognize her needs and encourage her to focus on them to help her make decisions;

Tell her that she is not alone in this situation, that you can help her, that there are resources that can help her and where she will be safe with her children;

That apologies and promises do not stop the violence;

Explore safety planning if necessary;

Give her the phone number of the Shelter (514-620-4845) and tell her that she can call 24/7 and in complete confidentiality.

SUGGESTIONS OF

WHAT TO SAY

5

HOW TO HELP A CHILD

WHAT TO DO IF A CHILD DISCLOSES ABOUT CONJUGAL VIOLENCE OR SEVERE CONFLICT AT HOME?

If a child close to you confides in you about violence in their home, here are some suggestions of things you can explore with them.

Note that the word violence is used if the child can already identify what is happening in the home as violence. Otherwise it is better to use a milder term so as not to alert the child to unhealthy dynamics of which they may not yet be aware of.

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS TO HELP EXPLORE

THE CHILD'S EXPERIENCE

All families quarrel and have differences of opinion. What happens at your house when your mom and dad (your stepfather, your mom's partner) don't agree? Does it sometimes lead to screaming or hitting? How do you feel when this happens?

Are you ever afraid that your mother will be hurt? Has this ever happened in the past? If it has, what happened? What was the worst incident you've ever witnessed?

Do you ever get hit or hurt in your home? Do you ever feel threatened? Are there other serious things happening to you?

What do you do when violence (or conflict) happens? Have you ever called the police or tried to intervene? Have you ever been hurt?

Have the police ever intervened? Have you ever tried to get help? What did you do to get help?

Are there safe places where you can go when you fear a conflict or fear for your safety?

Let's talk about how to keep you safe the next time this happens.

Have you been asked to keep what is going on at home a secret? Do other people know what is going on? Would you be okay with me telling your mother about it?



6

SAFETY PLANNING

EXAMPLE OF STRATEGIES TO PROTECT VICTIMS

Sources: Children Exposed to Domestic and Family Violence: A Guide for Educators and Workers in Health and Social Services Prepared by Marlies Sudermann and Peter Jaffe for the Family Violence Prevention Unit, Health Canada.

Try to talk to the mother of the child, but in a way that does not compromise her safety.

Try to contact her when the abuser is away.

If the child has been the victim of physical or sexual violence, contact children aid services immediately.

If the situation does not improve and the child shows consequences of violence or signs of trauma, encourage the mother to contact children's aid herself. If the child has suffered serious emotional harm, you can contact this service yourself. If you are not sure you should report it, you can call anonymously without mentioning the child's name and CAS will evaluate.



Inform the mother about community resources: SOS Violence Conjugal and helplines, shelters for women and child victims, external services (without accommodation) to meet a worker specializing in conjugal violence, police.

Plan safety strategies with the mother, or refer her to another organization or agency that can help her do so.

If it appears that the mother or child is in imminent danger (eg.: death threats, attempts by the man to enter the dwelling, threats to abduct the children), you should encourage the woman to immediately contact the police. If she refuses to do so, you should take the initiative yourself. In the event of harassment, whether criminal or not, the woman should also be encouraged to contact the police.

7

PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE

RESOURCES THAT HELP WOMEN VICTIMS OF CONJUGAL VIOLENCE:

If your friend or loved one wants to talk, confide, or get advice, here are some resources you can refer her to:

CRISIS LINES AND EMAIL SUPPORT



They are confidential (and often anonymous), free, secure and they can offer support and advice, without judgment, specialized in conjugal violence, 24 hours a day. If the line is busy, a message can be left and the counsellor can return the call, when there is no risk to the safety of the victims. It is also possible to communicate by email with a counsellor if this is more secure.

EXTERNAL SERVICES WITHOUT SHELTER



These services offer individual and group meetings for women, mothers and their children. External services offer the possibility of being accompanied without accommodation and of benefiting from support and advocacy from a counsellor specialized in conjugal violence. These services also offer legal support to victims in order to support them through the various stages of their legal proceedings.

ACCOMMODATION

If your friend or loved one needs a place to rest and recharge their batteries alone or with their children, in complete safety, several services are available to them.

1

WOMEN'S SHELTER



A SAFE, WELCOMING, SHORT-TERM LIVING ENVIRONMENT

- Help with social and legal procedures (obtaining income / child support, recovery of personal effects, separation, legal custody, etc.)

- Support / advocacy
- Help with safety planning
- Specialized intervention for children
- Post-shelter follow-up and advocacy

2

SECOND STAGE HOUSING



FOLLOWING A STAY IN A SHELTER OF AT LEAST ONE MONTH

- Partially subsidized medium-term housing
- Post-shelter follow-up and advocacy
- Individual and group intervention
- Support in the development of post-shelter scenarios

- Specialized intervention for children
- Support for relatives of victims and professionals working with victims
- Specific training upon request for companies and academic institutions (offered in certain shelters).

3

SOCIO-LEGAL SUPPORT



INFORMATION

- Advocacy
- Follow-up in legal procedures
- Court accompaniment

NB: The services offered vary from one shelter to another. In many cases it is safer to go to a shelter that is located in a different area than the home of the victim of conjugal violence or that of her spouse.



PROTECTIVE MEASURES TO SUGGEST

BEFORE LEAVING

Here are some tips that you can suggest to your friend/ loved one if they choose to leave

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS TO SECURE, AWAY FROM THE HOUSE

- Birth certificates, hers and those of her children;
- Marriage contract;
- Passports and immigration documents;
- Life insurance policies and investments;
- Valuables and receipts for her property;
- School reports and diplomas.

KEEP IN HER HANDBAG, AT ALL TIMES

- Credit cards and cash (at least enough money to be able to take a taxi);
- Driver's license;
- Health and vaccination booklets (hers and those of her children);
- Her social insurance card (and those of the children);
- Her Medicare card, and those of the children;
- House keys;
- Keys to safety deposit boxes, if applicable;
- The shelter's phone number, placed in her wallet.

OTHER MEASURES TO CONSIDER

- Make a list of important phone numbers to keep it in a place that is easily accessible and can be taken with her when she needs it;
- Ask a neighbour to call the police when they witness the onset of a violent episode;
- Explain the situation to the children and teach them what to do when the violence starts (eg.: go to a neighbour's house and call the police).

SAFETY SCENARIOS

EXAMPLE #1 WITH AN ABUSED WOMAN:

You can come up with a:



with your friend or loved one which will alert you to a potential danger she is facing.

For example if she texts you this phrase or says it on the phone, you will know to call the police immediately ("I can't come for coffee.")

EXAMPLE # 2 WITH AN ABUSED CHILD:



Explore with them where they can take shelter or hide in a situation that feels unsafe;

TEL #

Always have their phone number on them or practice it with them, so that they remember it by heart in an emergency;



Teach them to call 911

Practice with them what to say. ("My name is X, I need help, someone is hurting my mom. My address is: X. My phone number is X.")

SCENARIOS

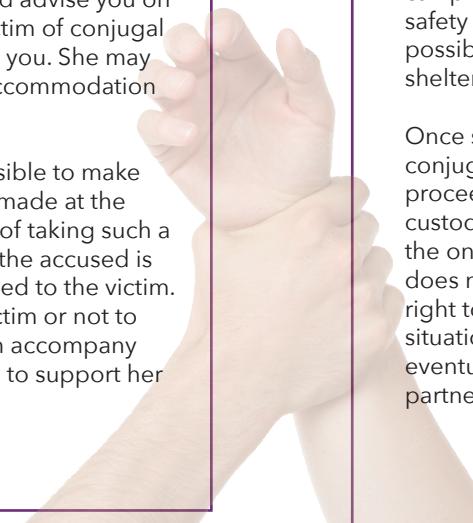
When it comes supporting victims of conjugal violence, the steps may differ from one situation to another. However, we have highlighted some scenarios we believe to be the most frequent and provide some possible solutions as to how to proceed when it comes to supporting women who are victims of conjugal violence.

1

A family member is a victim of conjugal violence and fears for her safety, what can I do?

When her security is not immediately compromised, we strongly suggest that you contact a crisis line to inquire about her rights and options before taking action. A worker can then better assess the risk involved and advise you on the best way to preserve the safety of a victim of conjugal violence and prepare some scenarios with you. She may also refer you to a shelter for temporary accommodation (usually for a few months at most).

When a victim fears for her safety, it is possible to make a police complaint. The complaint can be made at the time of the events or after. The advantage of taking such a step is that if this complaint is upheld and the accused is arrested, he will then have conditions related to the victim. For example, to not cohabit with the victim or not to communicate with her. If you wish, you can accompany your friend/loved one to the police station to support her through this process.



2

A friend of mine, is a mother and a victim of conjugal violence. She would like to leave home with her children. What can she do?

Contact a crisis line to get advice on how she can properly plan her departure, preserve her safety and that of her children and / or assess the possibilities of temporary accommodation in a shelter.

Once safely in an accommodation, the victim of conjugal violence can be assisted in her legal proceedings by a lawyer in order to establish legal custody of her children. Just because the victim is the one who left the family home with the children does not mean that she will no longer have the right to reside there. Depending on her particular situation and with the help of a lawyer, she could eventually return to the family home, without her partner, if she feels safe enough to do that.

SCENARIOS

3

The abusive partner controls all of the family income. The victim has no money of her own, but wants to leave, how can she do so?

When a woman enters a shelter, she and her children receive accommodation and meals free of charge, at a confidential address. These services can assist in reducing the financial stress related to their basic needs. This will allow her to concentrate on her socio-legal procedures and take charge of her personal finances. The counsellors on site will be able to support her in doing so.

Once safely sheltered, the workers will help her with her legal procedures. It may be possible for her to obtain sufficient financial resources to meet her needs. From a legal standpoint, her marital status could enable her to obtain certain forms of economic support, such as alimony, division of property or compensation.

During and after leaving the shelter, the counsellors can support women victims of conjugal violence in regaining power over their lives and exploring with them the possibilities of regaining a certain level of financial autonomy depending on their situation.

4

A relative of mine is a victim of conjugal violence, she is currently sponsored by her spouse and awaiting permanent immigration status in Canada. Can she leave her abusive partner without it affecting her request?

Yes, the law provides for this kind of situation and leaving her abusive partner will not affect the immigration application.

New accelerated measures are even being put in place to make it easier to obtain certain statuses and permits for this type of situation.





SOS conjugal violence 1-800-363-9010

Telephone referral service for shelters. The worker can refer you to a shelter in your neighborhood or with accommodation available.

Educaloi <https://www.educaloi.qc.ca/>

Public information service on the law which describes their rights and obligations in a clear and efficient manner (separation and divorce, crimes and contraventions, health, wills, etc.)

La boussole juridique <http://boussolejuridique.ca/>

Tool for finding free or low-cost legal resources allowing citizens and the counsellors who support them to orient themselves.

Centre de justice de proximité 514-227-3782

Free and confidential legal information services allowing citizens to understand the different legal realities and the various legal resources available, and to obtain the help of a lawyer to fill out various legal forms

Just solutions legal clinic 514-844-9128, poste 204

Telephone line offering legal information on immigration law.

Inform'elle 450-443-8221 / Centre de ressources familiales du Québec 514-593-6997

Telephone lines offering legal information on family law

Women's Y legal clinic

514-866-9941, poste 293

Women's Centre legal clinic

514-842-4780

Mile-End legal clinic

514-507-3054

Concertation femmes

514-336-3733

Legal clinics

Trousse Media sur la violence <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/violence-conjugale/cadre-legal/code-criminel>

Legal information on criminal offenses in the context of violence conjugual violence and on the support offered to victims



24/7 Crisis line:
514-620-4845

The West Island Women's Shelter
www.wiws.ca