

SOUTHWEST PA SAYS

NO MORE

TOGETHER WE CAN END
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & SEXUAL ASSAULT

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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**WITH SURGE IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING PANDEMIC,
LOCAL AGENCIES CALL ON COMMUNITY TO SEEK HELP FOR VICTIMS**

PITTSBURGH – With [reports](#) of a worldwide surge in domestic violence, the [United Nations](#) is calling for urgent action for governments to put women’s safety first as part of their response to the pandemic.

Locally, domestic violence agencies and advocates want the public to know that help is available. As essential service providers, agencies and shelters across southwestern Pennsylvania are open. While complying with social distancing measures, they are working to both reach and support victims of abuse. These agencies offer 24-hour helplines to provide support and information, safety planning, assistance with filing Protection from Abuse (PFA) orders, emergency safe housing, and resources for families and individuals. They are also launching a communications campaign to grow community awareness.

Abuse is shockingly common; as many as one in three women experience violence at the hands of a partner. “Stress does not cause domestic violence. But when someone is already controlling their partner, added stress - like losing a job or worrying about bills - can escalate emotional or verbal abuse into physical and sexual violence,” says Kristy Trautmann, executive director of FISA Foundation. “Social distancing is critically important to mitigate the spread of Covid-19 and keep individuals and families safe, but it also means that severe forms of abuse can occur with no one knowing or being in a position to intervene. I’m very worried.”

In fact, requests for help have decreased for most local domestic violence agencies.

“It’s very concerning,” says Nicole Molinaro, CEO of Women’s Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh. “Victims are trapped in their homes with an abuser and may be unable to seek help – they can’t go out and many can’t even safely call a domestic violence program. This is a time when we need to pull together as a community. Everyone – concerned family members, neighbors, co-workers – need to find a way to safely check on each other through calls, texts and messages. If you’re worried that someone is unsafe, you can call a local hotline for help and advice about what

you can do safely to help. It's important to consult with experts to develop a plan that won't make the situation worse."

Free, confidential support is available 24/7. For a full listing of agencies serving the 10-county area, visit: <https://southwestpasaysnomore.org/help/>.

If it's not safe or possible to make a call, text LOVEIS to 22522 or log in to thehotline.org to chat or text confidentially with a domestic violence expert.

About Southwest PA Says No More

Southwest PA Says NO MORE is a growing community of organizations and individuals who are working to end domestic and sexual violence. FISA Foundation, in partnership with The Heinz Endowments and United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, developed Southwest PA Says No More to showcase the important prevention-focused work happening in this region, and to make it easier for individuals and organizations to take action to stop gender-based violence. More than 25 organizations across the region have partnered with Southwest PA Says No More, including Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Action Against Rape, Blackburn Center, Domestic Violence Services of Southwestern PA, and UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh.

IMAGE

WORRIED ABOUT
A LOVED ONE WHO
IS TRAPPED AT HOME
WITH THEIR ABUSIVE
PARTNER? CALL US.

Women's Center & Shelter
of Greater Pittsburgh
wscanhelp.org/covid

412-687-8005

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#NOMORE

Domestic violence agencies across Southwestern Pennsylvania launch community awareness campaign. Shown is one of six announcements in the series.