



COVID-19 Immediate Response Considerations for Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Programs When Conducting Services for Families Experiencing Domestic Violence in a Time of a National Health Crisis

*Released on Monday, March 16, 2020 - please be advised that new information is being released to the public very rapidly, and updates to these considerations may need to be taken into consideration. Please be mindful that these are considerations and not programming requirements.

Due to the rapidly evolving and uncertain developments with COVID-19, we at [Inspire Action for Social Change](https://www.inspireactionforsocialchange.org), in partnership with the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), are committed to the health, welfare, and care of each of you and your communities and take our responsibility for supporting you and your programming seriously. The COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) situation is rapidly evolving, with new information becoming available frequently.

Every state and community will have varied and ever-changing response protocols. Please be advised that there is not a universal response that is currently recommended or mandated for supervised visitation programming. We encourage you to look to your local public health response for advice in your location. With that said, we are encouraging programs to take protective measures and consider possible programming modifications during this time of uncertainty.

First and foremost, we encourage you to be mindful of maintaining a culture of care and wellness for you, your program participants, employees, volunteers, and community partners.

Reminders of how you can support the well-being of staff and the families you serve:



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- Lead with care and compassion.
- Prioritize a culture of care and well-being.
- Avoid assumptions and do not express judgment.
- Be authentic and genuine in every interaction.
- Show compassion and dignity to every person who enters your doors.
- Be transparent about roles and expectations.
- Be flexible.
- Connect with your local domestic violence program. This is going to be an even more difficult time for survivors and their children. Survivors may be faced with new and challenging choices that weigh safety beyond staying away from their partners.
- Know what resources are available for families in need so you can connect parents and children to those resources.
- Create regular time--by phone or otherwise--to connect with staff and see how you can support one another during this time. Social distancing will be difficult for many of us, so any opportunity to maintain the love and connection you all have will be an important strategy to get through this uncharted territory.

Think creatively about ways your program can temporarily restructure your service delivery but ensure that all creative solutions are still grounded in the OVW SV&SE Guiding Principles and do not compromise the safety of adult victims and their children in any way.



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Prevention Considerations

- Ask staff, volunteers, and program participants to take precautions and self-quarantine if they have been exposed to someone who has a confirmed or presumed case of COVID-19.
- Tell program participants, staff, and volunteers to not come to the program if they are ill or experiencing symptoms. Refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for a [List of symptoms](#) and refer to “[What To Do If You Are Sick](#)” for more information.
- Encourage staff and program participants to conduct frequent [handwashing](#), avoid close physical contact, cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, and throw used tissues away immediately.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces regularly. Refer to [OSHA.gov](#) for guidance and assistance in creating a uniformed cleaning response checklist.
- Post information widely. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has several free printable handouts and posters available in multiple languages. [CDC Handouts & Posters](#)

Initial possible program modifications could include:

- Complete all initial paperwork and registration forms with program participants over the phone or videoconference.

The following platform options have been recommended and vetted by The National Network to End Domestic Violence:

<https://www.resourceconnect.com/>

<https://www.gruveo.com/>

<https://www.cyph.com/>



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The following services offer free options but have not been vetted:
[Zoom](#) or [Avaya Spaces](#).

- Conduct adult program participant check-in appointments over the phone or videoconference.
- Reorganize schedules to reduce the number of families utilizing your services at any one time.
- Conduct services in very contained areas and reduce the use of any shared space to single-family use only (e.g., shared kitchen areas, craft tables, game areas).
- Restructure schedules to ensure that you can clean and sanitize between each family utilizing services.
- Consider limiting the number of hard-to-clean items from your visitation space (e.g., stuffed animals, puzzles, pillows).
- Temporarily limit the number of people attending visits with the visiting parent.
- Ease the burden of healthcare facilities during this time. Lift any requirements for documentation from a healthcare provider to cancel appointments and work with your courts if they are issuing orders that require healthcare provider documentation of illness.
- Plan your internal and external communication if temporary service closure is required or recommended in your jurisdiction.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership as we carefully work to navigate during this uncertain and ever-changing time collectively.



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Additional and Ongoing Support

Do not hesitate to reach out to your Inspire point of contact or your OVW program manager. We are all here to support you to think creatively and safely during this time. Inspire staff is available - please feel free to email, call, or text us anytime (weekends and evenings included):

Beth McNamara / beth@inspireactionforsocialchange.org / 406.558.9339

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For all Office on Violence Against Women funded programs, please reach out to your OVW program specialist if you have questions regarding the temporary changes in delivering services. Additional information will be provided from OVW.