



How to support a friend or family member experiencing violence

If a crime is happening now or someone's life is in danger, call 911.

When someone's in an unsafe situation, it's often their family and friends who see the warning signs first. You may feel worried about their partner's behaviour or weapons in their home.

You may notice your friend or family member:

- being afraid around their partner
- having odd injuries that might not make sense
- being controlled by their partner
- withdrawing from friends, family, community, or other supports

Here's how you can help:

- listen without judgement
- take what they say seriously
- encourage them to use support services
- help them develop a safety plan
- respect their decisions and let them go at their own pace
- avoid blaming them for what happened or pressuring them to act

Remember that people who are being harmed may not be ready or able to leave their partner. This decision can be complicated and often involves emotions, finances, culture, and safety. You can support your friend or family member while also allowing them to take control of their own recovery.

Looking after your own safety

It's important to consider your own safety if you're supporting someone who's being harmed or at risk, especially if weapons are present. Avoid situations that could make harm worse, like confronting an abusive partner, and get advice from professionals where possible.

Limiting access to weapons

If you're worried about someone's mental health and possible access to weapons, you could consider an Emergency Prohibition/Limitations on Access Order. This can limit their access for up to 30 days, giving you time to put a longer-term safety plan in place. Anyone can apply directly to a judge for an emergency order. Learn more at stopviolence.ca/orders.

Rural living

The person you're supporting may have particular worries or challenges if they live in a rural area, like:

- **Weapons.** It may be more common to have weapons in the home. This is often for hunting, farming, or sport — but it can increase the risk of serious harm if their partner becomes violent.
- **Access.** Support services may be further away or harder to reach if there's little or no public transport.
- **Privacy.** They may feel worried about privacy if they live in a small community. This can affect what feels safe or possible for them.

Your support can make a big difference, especially when support services are far away. You may want to help them:

- find trusted people or safe places nearby
- access a phone or the internet safely and privately
- understand their legal options, like an Emergency Order which can limit access to weapons for up to 30 days while they make other safety plans (learn more at stopviolence.ca/orders)

Because of the challenges of rural living, the person you're supporting may need more time to leave or look for help. Let them move at their own pace and always respect their decisions.

You can get a detailed guide on how to plan for safety — especially in rural areas — from Lanark County Interval House and Community Support at lcih.org/safety-planning.

Support Services

If you're worried about violence or your safety, you can ask for help from support service organizations like:

Assaulted Women's Helpline

awhl.org

Luke's Place (Legal & Family Court Support)

lukesplace.ca

Ottawa Victim Services

ovs-svo.com

Lanark County Interval House & Community Support

lcih.org | 613-257-5960 (crisis line)

Hope for Wellness Helpline

(for Indigenous individuals)

hopeforwellness.ca

Immigrant Women Services Ottawa

immigrantwomenservices.com

Interval House Ottawa

intervalhouseottawa.org

You find more support services at ovs-svo.com/resources.

If you think someone's in danger right now, consider calling 911.

stopviolence.ca/redflag

