



Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses

Tuesday March 17th, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Violence Against Women Shelters in the Face of COVID-19

Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses represents over 70 Violence Against Women Shelters funded through the Ministry of Children's, Community & Social Services, across Ontario. Our member organizations provide 24-hour services including shelter, counselling, crisis lines, and advocacy to thousands of women and children each year across the province.

Amidst the current pandemic of COVID-19, VAW Shelters in Ontario are also responding to the existing Gender-Based Violence Pandemic. We know that survivors of gender-based violence are most at-risk of violence in their own homes. We are facing a **complicated and unprecedented situation**, when **"Self-Isolating at Home"** is both the primary advice to respond to our **current public health crisis, yet the most common location of harassment, violence and lethality for women and children** experiencing and or at risk of gender-based violence.

"In the face of the changing and evolving crisis in Ontario, OAITH is working closely with our members, so that they can continue to do their very best to respond to those who need them the most, at a time when staying at home can significantly impact the safety of women and their children". -Marlene Ham, Executive Director

Communication lines are open between the shelters, with their associations, and with government as we find new strategies, develop new resources and build our collective capacity to address this crisis together.

All Violence Against Women Shelter's in Ontario have received directives from Public Health to create and implement screening plans. Each shelter in Ontario offer a range of services responding to the unique needs of their communities, that will need to reflect a new and changing context over the coming weeks. Shelters will continue to receive the advice of Public Health of Canada, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services and Local Public Health Units as we work through these unprecedented times and do our best to keep women and their children safe in Ontario.

Shelters may require support from their community over the coming weeks through donations of essential items to assist in their day to day operations. Please visit sheltersafe.ca to find the contact information for the shelter in or nearest to your community to find out how you can support them.

If you're seeking safety from a harmful situation, please reach out to your local Violence Against Women Shelter by visiting sheltersafe.ca or call 911 if you're in immediate danger.

To talk with someone immediately about your safety needs and safety planning you can also contact confidential and anonymous provincial crisis lines.

1. [Assaulted Women's Helpline](http://AssaultedWomenHelpline.ca) 1-866-863-0511
2. [Talk4Healing](http://Talk4Healing.ca) 1-855-554 HEAL
3. [Fem'aide](http://FemAide.ca) 1-877-336-2433

OAITH represents close to 80 VAW organizations including Violence Against Women Shelters, Second Stage Housing and Community Organizations. Together we work to ends all forms of violence against women and their children. We achieve this through advocacy, government relations, public awareness, research and training. To learn more visit [OAITH ONLINE](http://OAITHONLINE.ca)

Media Inquiries:

Marlene Ham, Executive Director

info@oaith.ca 416-977-6619 ext 103