



REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH



BC'S OFFICE OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSIONER

April 17, 2020

MEDIA RELEASE FROM REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER

British Columbia is currently marking Prevention of Violence Against Women Week (April 12-18). Never has this week been more important to mark than now, during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

“Family violence rises in times when families are in close contact and experiencing great economic pressure and uncertainty. One Vancouver service provider recently reported a 300 per cent increase in calls related to family violence during the pandemic,” said Human Rights Commissioner Kasari Govender. “We are deeply concerned that there are many others who, for reasons of safety, haven’t been able to make those calls,” she continued.

Social distancing measures – so essential to reducing COVID-19 transmission – can increase the likelihood of abusers exerting power and control.

“Social distancing means fewer ‘eyes on families’; fewer community members who can witness and report family violence; fewer places where people can go to safely reach out for help or escape violence; and increased pressures on shelters,” said Jennifer Charlesworth, B.C.’s Representative for Children and Youth.

“We encourage family and community members to stay connected to your loved ones, neighbours, students and others in your lives to provide support, compassion and encouragement for those who may be vulnerable to family violence. If you have concerns about anyone’s safety, reach out to local or provincial resources. They are open and available to help,” Charlesworth concluded.

VictimLinkBC is a toll-free, confidential, multilingual telephone service available across B.C. and the Yukon 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 1-800-563-0808 or sending an email to VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca. Children and youth in B.C. can also call the Helpline for Children at 310-1234. No area code is required. Children and youth can call at any time of the day or night and are not required to give their names.

The Representative and Commissioner are encouraging local media to share these critical resources and others with their audiences during this time.

As Independent Officers of the B.C. Legislature, the Representative and Commissioner continue to work with the Public Health Officer and across government to respond to the evolving needs of British Columbians during this challenging time. The Representative and Commissioner would like to express their deep appreciation for the front-line health

and social care workers who are helping people in B.C. stay well and safe during this difficult time – specifically those working in the anti-violence field who continue to provide services both in person and virtually throughout the province.

The Representative and Commissioner are available for comment as needed.

Media contacts:

- For Commissioner Govender, call Charlotte Kingston at 250-216-4534
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