



ALLEGHENY COUNTY

ALWAYS INSPIRING

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County Highlights Elevated Risks of Abuse in Pandemic, Shares Resources

PITTSBURGH – Allegheny County today highlighted the elevated risks of abuse during the stay-at-home orders issued as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and reminded residents that resources are available to them.

Violence in homes tends to increase when families spend more time together. This is typically the case during holidays or summer vacations, but also applies to the stay-at-home order too. That violence is often more frequent, more severe and more dangerous. COVID-19 can put additional pressure on already vulnerable children, youth and families. Whether you are a victim, or a friend or family member of someone who may be abused, there are resources available.

Child Abuse or Neglect

If you have concerns about the well-being of a person under the age of 18, please call 412-473-2000 or 1-800-932-0313. These numbers answer 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When you call to report your concerns, you may be asked the name of the child, the child's home address, the age of the child, the name of the child's primary caregiver, and the concerns that you have that led you to make the call. The call can be made anonymously. You do not have to give your name or contact information.

Domestic Abuse

If you need to speak with an advocate or be connected to local services, you can contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline anytime day or night at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). You can also log onto www.thehotline.org or text LOVEIS to 22522 if you're unable to speak safely. For information about finding safe shelter, or to be referred to a shelter, call the Allegheny Link at 1-866-730-2368.

Older Adult Abuse

If you have concerns about the well-being of a person over the age of 60, please call 412-350-6905 or 1-800-344-4319. Those numbers answer 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When you call to report your concerns, you may be asked to provide your name, the victim's name, demographic data, a description of allegations, the name of the alleged perpetrator, and the physical/emotional health of the victim and any safety concerns. The call can be made anonymously. You do not have to give your name or contact information.

Victims may not be able to pick up the phone and call somebody for help because the abuser is in the home or in the room with them. Residents of Allegheny County have the ability to use text to 9-1-1 in situations where it is unsafe to speak on the phone. Enter the numbers 9-1-1 in the "to" field on your cell phone and, using simple words without abbreviations or slang, communicate the location of the emergency (including municipality) and the type of help you need (fire, ambulance, police, etc.). Be prepared to answer additional questions if you can and follow instructions from the 9-1-1 operator.

Similarly, incidents of drug and alcohol abuse and mental health crises are also on the rise at this time as additional stresses are added to those already struggling.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, call 9-1-1 for an immediate emergency response. If you need immediate help due to a drug-related crisis, contact the DDAP Crisis Hotline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357). The hotline is staffed 24/7 by persons who provide screening and referrals immediately.

If you need support or information because of a mental health or drug or alcohol crisis or concern, contact the resolve Crisis Response Network at 1-888-796-8226.

Finally, the Pittsburgh Poison Center is reminding residents to keep medicines, cleaning products, cosmetics, yard chemicals, and other potential poisons up and out of the reach of children. Adults are also at risk for poisoning.

The Poison Center has seen an increase in hand sanitizer exposures as products typically contain large amounts of alcohol. Accidental exposures can be dangerous, particularly in children, for stomach irritation, vomiting, gastrointestinal bleeding, and alcohol intoxication with associated complications and injuries. Homemade sanitizers also run the risk of skin irritation if not manufactured properly. While hand sanitizer use is absolutely encouraged, it should be supervised use and the potential risks known.

Additionally, the Poison Center has seen an increase in reported exposures to toxic alcohols with liquor stores closed. Many individuals who struggle with alcohol use will look to alternatives when their primary source is not available. This has included drinking of household liquids that can be dangerous including antifreeze, windshield washer fluid, cooking oils, rubbing alcohol and even hand sanitizer as a substitute. Understanding that these are very risky and potentially life-threatening is critical. Residents who live with or who know someone who struggles with alcohol use should be aware of these issues as well.

Please contact the Pittsburgh Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 as a resource for any questions related to substance exposures, toxicity and more.

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