

## Domestic and Sexual Violence Incidents During COVID-19

With the added need for precautions and physical distancing necessitated by COVID-19, many people living with violence at home are left without a place to go. For some, the ability to leave to go to school or a workplace provided a respite from the abuse which is occurring at home. In the current pandemic this respite is likely not available.

Working or attending school from home may mean that individuals in the George Brown community will have to negotiate to share limited resources (e.g. workspace, shared computers or technology) with a person who is abusive.

Those isolating with an abuser may have limited privacy or be over-scrutinized or observed. It is very common for abusers to demand access to computer, telephone, and social media passwords. Many people are hesitant to disclose that they are facing violence at home for a wide variety of reasons. Due to physical distancing during COVID-19, it may be extremely difficult for someone isolating with an abuser to speak safely about what is happening.

### Red Flags

Power and control are the foundation of all abusive relationships. Be aware that abusers may be monitoring communication, so here are some things to be aware of with students or employees logging on from home:

- ⇒ A partner or person is too present during communication with students or staff; perhaps they can be seen or heard taking an interest in the conversation.
- ⇒ A partner or person who appears to be demanding attention or behaving in a way which is controlling.
- ⇒ The employee or student is showing signs of increased distress, strain, or anxiety.
- ⇒ A sudden change in an employee or student's demeanor or academic/work performance that correlates to the period they have been working from home.

### Recommendations

If a student or employee discloses violence at home, be sure to respond in a supportive way. Remember to respect their confidentiality; do not disclose any details to anyone without permission. Let the employee or student know, you want to support them by connecting them to the right resources who can help look at their options and safety planning.

Connect them with the **Sexual Violence Response Advisor (SVRA)** at [SVRA@georgebrown.ca](mailto:SVRA@georgebrown.ca) or **Public Safety and Security (PSS)**, at 416-415-4000, or 0.

Everyone at George Brown should be aware of, and familiar with, the **Violence at Home Signal** for help (see below), as well as be prepared to offer assistance if seen.

