**COVID – 19 Update on Family Violence Shelters –** The Manitoba family violence emergency shelters remain open during the pandemic and expect a surge in domestic abuse as self-isolation continues.

*Winkler****,*** *Canada – April 6****,*** *2020* -The Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters Inc. (MAWS)

Those experiencing violence or abuse in the home should feel safe in reaching out for help even during the pandemic.  The message to stay home does not apply if you are experiencing abuse. It may be safer to leave your present situation than to remain in place.

Currently DV shelters are fielding reduced calls and have fewer families in shelter than usual. People may be weighing the risks of staying where they are against the risks of seeking shelter in a communal environment.

Family violence shelters are open and following protocols to keep clients safe during the pandemic. A central resource where someone with expertise in family violence can provide the connection or navigation support a person requires is available 24/7 through the provincial Domestic Violence Help Line, at 1-877-977-0007, which is supported by the closest shelter in the region you are calling from.

The risk of domestic abuse increases during stressful times as well as when family members are in sustained close contact with one another. Being in constant close quarters may also impede the ability of a person to reach out for help, especially if their privacy is being monitored.

The public should be aware that:

* Provincial DV shelters are open and although the vacancy rate changes on a daily basis, most shelters currently have available space.
* The Help Line is always available, 24/7 for questions, support, safety planning and intake to shelter services, 1-877-977-0007
* Shelters are taking measures to ensure the safety of residents and staff during this pandemic.
* Shelters, with the support of their communities, are preparing for an eventual surge in the need for shelter space as the pandemic continues as well as the need to safely isolate those in need of a safe space if they or their children are infected.

Family violence emergency shelters are located across the province in Winnipeg, Selkirk, Steinbach, Winkler, Portage la Prairie, Brandon, Dauphin, The Pas and Thompson.

There are five domestic violence shelters in First Nations communities, each with their own local number.  First Nations shelters are accepting only residents who are currently in the community.  These shelters are Norway House Cree Nation in Norway House, Mamawehetowin Crisis Centre in Pukatawagan, Fisher River Healing Centre in Koostatak, Wechin Waskigan Crisis Centre in Shamattawa and Nisichawayasihk Women’s Shelter in Nelson House.

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***About Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters Inc. (MAWS)***

*The Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters consists of ten provincially funded women's shelters and ten affiliate members in the province. MAWS is the central body to facilitate communication & support in the family violence community.* [*www.maws.mb.ca*](http://www.maws.mb.ca)