 

**COVID-19 PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR POLICE AND JUSTICE**

**During the Covid-19 measures, the role of the police in tackling domestic violence and child abuse becomes even more important than it was before the crisis. As a result of the measures, the police is almost the only official body that can carry out checks on a family site in the event of an (imminent) escalation of violence. Employees of agencies such as Youth Care, Advice and Support Centers and other relevant organizations are very limited due to the measures and the limitation in home visits and face-to-face meetings with victims and their family members..**

Some practical guidelines for the Police:

* Take all reports of (imminent) domestic violence and/or child abuse very seriously and always draw up a complete Official Report, even if no criminal offenses are immediately reported. Threats and other signs of risk in possible escalation of violence are as important to register and document to keep victims and families safe.
* Always talk separately with victims and perpetrators.
* If the victim does not speak the language, always interrogate with an interpreter.
* Avoid delayed hearings.
* Contact the victims (and other family members) again after a few days.
* Ask neighbors, social contacts of the family and other possible witnesses as much as possible about their experiences.
* Take photos of injuries and damage.
* Discuss the options for maximizing the safety of minors and victims.
* Separate family members if the situation is not safe (by example barring order).
* Provide a barring/restraining order or outplacement of the perpetrator if escalation threatens.
* In the event of criminal offenses, always notify the Public Prosecution Office.
* Call in victim support and victim assistance.
* Within multidisciplinary cooperation, call in the help of the police to check a security plan (if available). The police can speak with the family on the spot after a few days or in case of concern or disconnection. Always speak to family members separately under given circumstances.
* Expands (if available) the Aware system to situations where families with domestic violence and/or child abuse are forced to stay under one roof and safety is not guaranteed.

**The judicial measures to stop domestic violence and child abuse and to install security is greater than ever under COVID-19 measures, due to the restriction on other resources to install and monitor security. The signal to perpetrators from Justice in times of the Covid-19 crisis must be**

**very clear: domestic violence and child abuse are not tolerated and the situation under Covid-19 is not a safe-haven for a lesser follow-up! An important measure is the outplacement of perpetratorsaway from home (barring/restraining order) in order to limit the impact on victims and children as much as possible, and to make perpetrators responsible for aggressive behavior.**

Some practical guidelines for Justice:

* The outplacement of perpetrators away from home can be applied in various forms (barring/restraining order) and can provide a situation of safety in the family, provided that the placement of the offenders is checked and followed up. Involve the police in a strong follow-up of the barring/restraining order and take immediate action in case of violation of the barring/restraining order and the imposed measures.
* If possible, allow the barring/restraining order to be accompanied by electronic supervision so that breaking the barring/restraining order can be quickly detected and followed up.
* In the event of serious offenses (non-compliance with the prohibition on contact and recidivism) pre-trial detention is required.
* If court hearings are postponed due to the Covid-19 measures, make an exception for domestic violence and child abuse and apply quick-justice if possible. The safety of victims, adults and children is immediately endangered, and a zero-tolerance policy is recommended to ensure safety.