

Who to ask for help?

You are not alone. If you have a concern but are not sure what to do, talk to your colleagues, your manager, a supervisor, or a Subject Matter Expert.

Resources to help you

Australian Red Cross [COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Department of Health [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) health alert](#)

Services Australia [Social and Health Payments and Services](#)

Australian Institute of Family Studies [Coronavirus Response: Resources for families](#)

SNAICC [COVID-19 resources for children, families, communities and services](#)

Beyond Blue [Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support](#)

Department of Social Services - [Family Safety Pack](#)

[Refugee Council of Australia](#)

[National LGBTI Health Alliance](#)

[People With Disability Australia](#)

[Lifeline](#) - 131 114

Australian Institute of Family Studies [Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect](#)

[1800ELDERHelp](#) - 1800 353 374

[1800RESPECT](#) - 1800 737 732

[Family Relationship Advice Line](#) - 1800 050 321

Safeguarding vulnerable people in the context of COVID-19

Individuals, families and communities are under significant stress at the moment. Many are facing social isolation, financial stress, unemployment, housing instability, food insecurity, additional caring responsibilities, health concerns for themselves and loved ones, disrupted routines, increasing anxiety and uncertainty. These additional stressors can contribute to escalations in family and domestic violence, alcohol and other drug misuse, offending behaviours, mental health concerns and other factors that increase risk of harm for individuals and families. Vulnerable people may be at particular risk of harm, and with less service involvement and social contact, this harm may go unnoticed.

There are many factors that may contribute to increased vulnerability, and it is important to keep in mind that everyone's experience is different, but groups and individuals to be aware of include: children and young people, older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, people living with a disability or mental health issue, newly arrived migrants and asylum seekers, people with uncertain visa status, people who identify as LGBTIQ+, people with a history of addiction issues, and anyone who is dependent on others to meet their needs.

So what can you do to help?

If you are working with families, groups or individuals with a history of complex risk factors, and/or responsibilities caring for vulnerable people, ask them how they are going? How are they planning to get everyone safely through the next few months? What is their plan if things start to get difficult? Who will they ask for support? Do they know about the support and resources available to help them? What is the plan if someone in the family goes into quarantine or is hospitalised? Offer to assist with referrals, and make a plan to check in regularly to offer support and see if things have changed. Remember that you may be the only contact someone has outside of their home.

Act on safeguarding concerns

If you have a concern for someone or their family, don't ignore it. At times like this - where people are social distancing and self-isolating, and have less contact with external supports - there is an increased risk serious issues will go unnoticed. If in doubt, report your concerns, and take appropriate steps to ensure the person is safe. Make sure you are clear on your reporting obligations, your organisation's reporting processes and the various mechanisms for reporting safeguarding concerns for vulnerable people in your jurisdiction. For support with this, talk to your manager.