C O V I D - 1 9
FAQ GUIDE

Answers to frequently asked questions regarding interpersonal violence, healthy relationships, and where to find resources
We want to make sure survivors who are impacted by COVID-19 know that they are not alone and support still exists. If you or someone you care about are experiencing violence, this guide will provide resources to find support and tools relating to interpersonal violence and healthy relationships during COVID-19. If you know of a FAQ you believe should be added to the list, please email it to Rae Chaloult at chaloult@upenn.edu.

**FAQ Response Guide**

1. Can I still access resources provided by the University of Pennsylvania?
2. Is Penn Violence Prevention still providing programming?
3. How do I find local resources that are available to me?
4. Are interim measures still available to me and or active at this time while I am not on campus?
5. How do I care for my mental health during COVID-19?
6. What is digital abuse and what resources are available to me?
7. What if I do not feel safe at home and what is a safety plan?
8. How can I stay connected to my partner(s) while social distancing?
9. How can I safely have sex during COVID-19?
10. Can I still get birth control during COVID-19?

*Information adapted from OneLoveFoundation, Loveisnotabuse.org, Planned Parenthood, and National Sexual Violence Resource Center*
Can I still access resources provided by the University of Pennsylvania?

At this time, Special Services remains open and available to support all students during this time. Special Services are physically in the office during normal business hours to respond to emergencies as well as available by phone, email, or other online video platform. Given the evolving situation with COVID-19, rather than coming in person, we encourage those who can to call and/or email to reach someone in Special Services. Further, while many physical offices for resources such as CAPS, LBGT Center, PVP, and PWC’s are closed, all departments are available to support remotely you during this time. Please see the department’s respective websites for availability. We also encourage you to view the resource list on our website.
Is Penn Violence Prevention still providing programming?

Yes! PVP staff are still here to support you. We are offering virtual workshops that can be requested through our website. In addition, visit our website and Instagram page for updates on additional programming offered to the Penn community. PVP staff are also offering daily office hours, weekly, at multiple times - feel free to drop in anytime.

How do I find local resources that are available to me?

Currently, we have a running list of Philadelphia and national resources that you can find on our website. If you are looking for local resources outside of the Philadelphia area, our PVP staff are happy to support you in finding available options with you. While resources outside of the Philadelphia area may be unknown to our staff, we are still here to support you find what’s best for you.
Are interim measures still available to me and or active at this time when I am not on campus?

Yes - interim measures are still available, can be accessed, and are active. Student Intervention Services (SIS) coordinates the University's response to reports of interpersonal violence against students. SIS provides support to student victims/survivors; coordinates with schools, housing administrators, and other relevant offices at students' request; and connects students to appropriate support services. SIS respects the sensitivity of violence cases and can discreetly advocate for students with schools and other offices in the University. Visit SIS website directly to coordinate and find interim measures available to you.
How do I care for my mental health during COVID-19?

The outbreak of COVID-19 can be incredibly stressful and you may be overwhelmed with many different emotions. We want to acknowledge that everyone reacts differently to stressful situations - there is no "typical" response during this time and any emotions you may be feeling are valid. CAPS (Counseling & Psychological Services) has created resources that highlights various coping techniques and has an on-call clinician available 24/7.

- Call 215-898-7021 and press 2 to speak to the front desk or press 1 to talk to a clinician 24/7.
What is digital abuse and what resources are available to me?

Digital abuse, or the use of technology to harass or intimidate someone, can take many forms. It can occur at any stage of a relationship and to people of all ages. It can also occur outside of intimate partner relationships, such as experiencing harassment from someone on a dating website. Like other types of abuse, digital abuse is about control. Signs of digital abuse may include:

- Bullying and harassment: Sending insulting or threatening texts or social media messages; putting you down in social media posts;
- Monitoring and stalking: Stealing or demanding to know your passwords; looking through your phone or computer without permission; using location tagging or spyware to monitor and track you;
- Sexual coercion: Demanding you take or send explicit photos or videos you aren’t comfortable with; sending you explicit photos or videos without your consent; sharing your photos or videos with others;
- Possessiveness and control: Deciding who you can follow or be friends with online; controlling who you can text or message;

If you are facing digital abuse, know that it is not your fault. You have the right to privacy online and offline and the right to feel safe and respected. University of Pennsylvania Staff are available at Special Services, Penn Women’s Center, Penn Violence Prevention and other confidential support offices. For national support on domestic violence issues, including digital abuse, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.
What if I do not feel safe at home and what is a safety plan?

- Social distancing can help protect you from COVID-19, but for some, isolation may increase experiencing homophobia, transphobia, sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, and/or family violence. Any form of relationship or sexual violence is not OK, and you don’t deserve to be treated that way. You deserve respect and support.

- If you or someone you know is in an abusive relationship or experiencing violence at home help is available. University of Pennsylvania Staff are available at Special Services, Penn Women's Center, Penn Violence Prevention, Penn LGBT Center, and other confidential support offices. For national support on domestic violence contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or via their live online chat. The Trevor Project is available for LGBT students at 866-488-7386 or via their live online chat or text.

- A safety plan is a set of steps you can take to reduce the risk of harm in unsafe situations with an abuser or family member. You can find resources and tools for safety planning via our master resource list. It is important to remember that you know your situation better than anyone, so please individualize your safety plan to what feels safest for you. If something does not feel safe, trust your instincts. For example, it may not be safe to complete a safety plan in writing, but you can still review one in your head and memorize it as best you can. It can also be helpful to go over your safety plan with a trusted friend or relative.
How can I stay connected to my partner(s) while social distancing?

Social distancing — which means staying at home as much as possible, and staying at least 6 feet away from other people when you do leave the house — is needed during this pandemic. Keeping yourself and your community healthy may mean making some changes to sex and relationships at this time, and that can be frustrating or lonely. But it doesn’t mean you can’t connect with partners in other ways. There are still things you can do to be intimate and stay safe, alone or with a partner:

- Masturbation is the safest kind of sex there is — there’s no risk of unintended pregnancy or STDs, and no risk of spreading COVID-19. Masturbation can also help you relax if you’re feeling anxious or stressed out. Just make sure you wash your hands and sex toys with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after.
- If you and your partner are consenting adults who agree to respect each other’s boundaries and privacy, you can be sexually active with each other virtually through text, calls, photos, or video.
- If you’re dating, you can go on a virtual date — watch a movie together over video, play a video game or virtual board game, video chat over coffee or a meal, or listen to an album or playlist together.
How can I safely have sex during COVID-19?

- The best way to prevent COVID-19 is to try to avoid close, physical contact — including sex — with anyone who doesn’t live with you. The safest person to have sex with is yourself: masturbation doesn’t spread COVID-19, or any other infections. Just make sure to wash your hands and sex toys with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after.

- The safest sexual partners are people who already live with you. Right now, it’s best to try not to have close contact with anybody outside your home if you can. Staying away from as many people as possible will help protect you and others from COVID-19.

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, you still need to ask for consent every time you want to have any kind of sex, even if you’ve had sex before or if you’re in a relationship, live together, or are married. If your partner doesn’t want to have sex for any reason — including being worried about COVID-19 — it’s important to respect that. Further, it is recommended that you use barriers — like condoms and dental dams — during oral and anal sex to help prevent contact with spit and fecal matter that can carry COVID-19.

- It is also important to recognize that you may be wanting to have more or less sex than before the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. Stress can impact all parts of your body, including your desire to have sex which is always changing.

- We encourage you to visit Student Health Services website to learn more about sexual health.
Can I still get birth control during COVID-19?

- Right now, the options available to you may vary depending on whether health care providers in your area are open. For example, you might not be able to get an IUD or implant if the health center is closed for in-person visits, but you may be able to get a prescription for the birth control pill, patch, or ring online or over the phone. Call your doctor or nurse for more information.

- There are still ways to prevent pregnancy if you can’t get your prescription birth control method during the COVID-19 pandemic. You can use a method that you buy over-the-counter, like condoms. (Bonus: condoms will help protect you and your partners from STDs, too.) You can get condoms at most drugstores, pharmacies, grocery stores, convenience stores, gas stations, superstores, and online. If you use condoms along with another birth control method — like spermicide or withdrawal (aka pulling out) — you’ll get extra protection from pregnancy.

- We encourage you to visit Student Health Services website to learn more about sexual health.