

# Yonkers Free Press

MONDAY MARCH 23, 2020 - BRIAN HARROD PUBLISHER



This could get ugly. Yonkers mental health providers say family violence may spike amid outbreak

## Domestic Violence Shelters Are Reaching Capacity

By BRIAN HARROD

A combination of reduced services, and people isolated at home amid the coronavirus outbreak has already made for a dangerous situation in Yonkers with family shootings, and stabbing and violence from domestic partners.

Abusers seek to isolate their partners from other people and the situation with coronavirus enhances their ability to do that.”

Making the situation even more difficult is the outbreak has changed how many Yonkers mental health providers are operating.

Pretty much all preventive face-to-face assessments have been temporarily suspended, and all anger management training sessions scheduled through the month of April have been postponed.

All domestic violence shelters for

Women and children in Westchester County are well over capacity.

The decreased capacity and the potential for increased need is rapidly causing a dangerous situation in the city of hills, as Governor Andrew Cuomo has put the city on "pause'.

Yonkers mental health groups have temporarily suspended all support groups and “programs that serve those not in immediate crisis, with staff working remotely.

Other agencies are also ending or limiting in-person services as the Yonkers Police Department and medical providers must work in a city where programs that provide domestic violence services have closed their offices.

Some Yonkers not for profit staff members say their offices are closed but will continue to offer 247 hotline services, crisis intervention, remote counseling emergency shelter referrals and children's services.

New York's statewide sexual assault crisis hotlines remain intact.

This is brand new for Yonkers social service workers.

They have never experienced something like this.

It's not like we really have anything to compare it to or see what has worked best in the past.

Family violence victims and survivors can contact an advocate through the United Way's 211 referral line.

But it is unclear if domestic violence victims who need to leave a desperate situation, even though shelters are at capacity, will get the help they need remotely from mental health providers working from their kitchen tables.

Soon Yonkers Police Offers will start hearing, "Oh no, I can't leave, I have no place to go' .

But it's still unknown what impact the crisis will have on requests for mental health services from family violence victims who are housebound due to COVID-19 and facing challenges.

Anytime there's widespread fear, anxiety or economic strain, domestic violence advocates prepare for increased calls.

If you are in immediate danger call the Yonkers Police Department at 911 and if you need other services call the United Way's referral line at 211.