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When 'stay at home' orders put children, women in easy reach of their abuser



Enid Draluck (<https://saportareport.com/author/current-guest/>) • June 28, 2020 3:09 pm



(<https://s3.amazonaws.com/saportainsta/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Enid-Draluck-homepage-e1593365954121.jpg>)

By Guest Columnist **ENID DRALUCK**, *community volunteer, advocate, philanthropist*

Having a safe community is a basic want for any of us, regardless of where we live, the color of our skin, what we do for a living, how we worship or who we love. Having a safe community during the time of the Corona Virus, added a layer. (<https://saportareport.com/>) Having a safe community for all, when Black men and women are being killed by the very people who are there to protect and serve, added another layer.



Enid Draluck

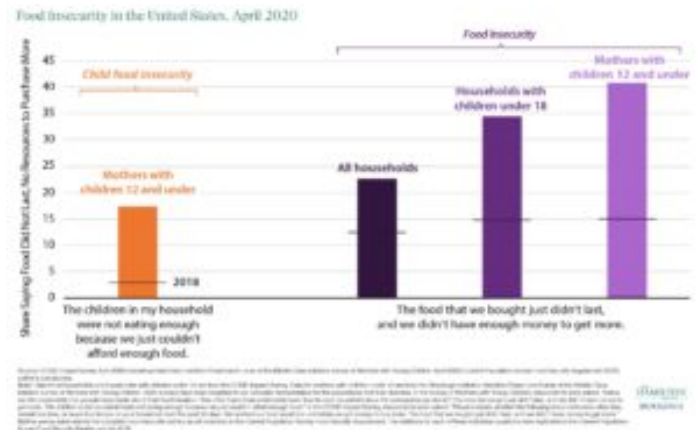
Life before these additional layers was hard enough. Now the compounded effects of all of this are pushing people and the non-profits working to address these issues to limits like we have never experienced. Organizations' missions have been stretched to provide basic needs, which in turn puts a tremendous strain on their personnel and their budgets: No end is in sight.

Most of us take for granted that when we walk into our homes, it is a safe and loving environment with people who care about us and will protect us, while that is a luxury for others. We can log on to the Internet from one of our personal electronic devices to work, study or to be entertained, not so for others. The lack of Internet access and equipment produced another layer for some sheltering at home, and created additional obstacles for non-profits to find the resources to secure both Internet service and the devices, switch to provide the services these communities needed to a virtual delivery, again, adding strain to already stretched budgets.

Sheltering at home should provide comfort for people, but for our most vulnerable children it becomes a potential danger zone, and it disproportionately effects our children of color. For children who have been abused or trafficked, sheltering in place could be putting them back in the environments that caused them harm and trauma – back with their abusers or traffickers. [\(https://saportareport.com/\)](https://saportareport.com/)

The added stress to the adults during this time when people are told to stay at home, while losing their jobs and having limited opportunities, have no safety net to take care of expenses, don't know where the next paycheck is coming from, and the frustrations of what is happening in our streets, exacerbates the feelings of anger and hopelessness, and there, right in front of them, is a convenient target.

Jennifer Swain, executive director of youthSpark (<https://youth-spark.org>), an organization described as, “an innovator in transforming the lives of youth vulnerable to abuse and exploitation,” has had to quickly change the way the agency provide services to their youth. This has included



Food insecurity can be one reason individuals and their children stay in abusive situations, even if current provisions are in scant supply. ‘We didn’t have enough money to get more,’ is one reason children go without food in almost one in five households observed in two nationwide surveys conducted in April. Credit: brookings.edu

confronting obstacles including internet access, devices to log on for school and support groups, food and shelter, all of which have associated costs that are not allotted for in the current budget. Swain observed:
(<https://supportareport.com/>)

- “We pride ourselves on our ability to create unique solutions with our kids and the reality is, right now, they’re navigating already existing abuse and other traumas in the middle of a global crisis. It is necessary that we not only acknowledge where we are as a hurting community, but add even more layers to our response, ensuring our kids feel valued, supported, and have their own voices amplified. We will continue to stand in the gap for them, walking beside them, but also to do the hard work to be the change we wish to see.”

The press is reporting that the number of domestic violence cases and child abuse cases are down: DO NOT

(<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/making-sense-chaos/202005/why-the-increase-in-domestic-violence-during-covid-19>)
get excited. Children have not been not in school; teachers and administrators are not there to notice a change in behavior or see the bruises to be able to report the abuse. Pediatricians were not seeing patients unless it is an emergency, and young children are not aware of the resources and help available to them. It is not their job to protect themselves.

“When children are no longer visible to the vast majority of people who are trained and required to report, and then you see this kind of decline, we get super concerned,” said Melissa Jonson-Reid, a professor of social work research at Washington University in St. Louis.

How COVID-19 can exacerbate risks of violence for women

- Stress, the disruption of social and protective networks, and decreased access to support services all can exacerbate the risk of violence for women.
- As distancing measures are put in place and people are encouraged to stay at home, the risk of intimate partner violence is likely to increase. For example:
 - The likelihood that women in an abusive relationship and their children will be exposed to violence is dramatically increased, as family members spend more time in close contact and families cope with additional stress and potential economic or job losses.
 - Women may have less contact with family and friends who may provide support and help to escape from violence.
 - Women bear the brunt of increased care work during this pandemic. School closures further exacerbate this burden and place more stress on them.
 - The disruption of livelihoods and ability to earn a living, including for women (many of whom are informal wage workers), will decrease access to basic needs and services, increasing stress on families, with the potential to exacerbate conflicts and violence. As resources become more scarce, women may be at greater risk for experiencing economic abuse.⁹

The stay-at-home orders issued during the COVID-19 pandemic have increased the exposure to potential violence of women who are in an abusive relationship, and their children, according to a report by the World Health Organization. Credit: WHO

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children received 2 million reports of online child exploitation, up from 983,000 a year earlier. In April, NCMEC received 4.1 million reports of child online exploitation, up from around 1 million in April 2019.

More than ever, non-profits serving those who have been trafficked or abused needed to change the way they deliver services.

“It is the poverty, trauma, basic healthcare and other inadequate services for our children and families that must be at the center. The pandemic’s societal pause forced us to use the tools of technology available to us and to think outside the box”, according to Judge Juliette Scales, presiding judge of the Fulton County Juvenile Court.

Quickly changing to online services, training, support groups and counseling is the new normal and looks like it will continue to be. This shift takes creativity, especially to secure equipment, Internet service – and how all that gets paid for from a limited budget. Once that is in place, permission to participate, a safe place within the home to listen, talk and

Children are spending more time on virtual platforms, which makes them vulnerable to online sexual exploitation, predators, and online grooming for traffickers. The safety nets that have been put in place to notice, protect, and report abuse, are not active during a pandemic. In March, the

(<https://supportreport.com/>)

engage, particularly if the home environment is deteriorating or dangerous patterns are presenting themselves again, another layer.



Atlanta is making progress in addressing the antecedents of human trafficking, specifically the last two years through the Metro Atlanta Task Force to End Human Trafficking that includes

representation from all sectors: For profit, not for profit and faith based, under the direction of the International Human Trafficking Institute at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights. IHTI built the coalition to disrupt the business model of human trafficking by addressing the systemic issues of vulnerable children and predators who drive market demand. The pandemic forced the educational component and training of IHTI to shift to more online training, making it available for all of us to learn the signs of trafficking, to know how to react and act, it is more relevant than ever.

Vulnerable children and their families are able to receive help from youthSpark, a local nonprofit established in 2000 by Fulton County Juvenile Court judges, elected officials and other supporters. Credit: youth-spark.org

“The number of reports of children being approached by predators online for both labor and sexual exploitation, is increasing exponentially,” states Deborah Richardson, executive director of IHTI. “In order to prevent it, parents and care takers must know what it looks like, and how it is occurring. Our free online training has never been more urgent. As more

people learn something, see something, and do something to end human trafficking, together, we will create communities where every child is protected and nurtured.” (https://saportareport.com/)



Emotional/verbal abuse is the leading complaint reported by those who call the National Domestic Violence Hotline, and the number of contacts has increased during the pandemic. The two next-highest issues are physical abuse, and economic/financial abuse. Credit: thehotline.org

Polaris' National Human Trafficking Hotline has reported a 40 percent increase in calls in April. The majority of these calls were for people looking for shelter.

“I believe a connecting link to this increase is young people who had to abruptly leave their schools and campuses, without a home or safe place to go back to,” Richardson said.

For women who have been abused in their homes by a partner or spouse, they are sheltering in place in danger. It is a difficult decision for a woman to flee their abuser at any given time, the added layer of a pandemic makes it that much harder. Shelters and safe houses are at capacity, women are not moving out during this pandemic, and if space is available, non-profits need to provide an alternative location for women and their children to be quarantined for 14 days to protect everyone prior to moving in. Layers, more and more layers to safety, and funding that is not in the organizations' budget.

Judge Juliette Scales, presiding judge of the Fulton County Juvenile Court, said, “Great challenges bring greater opportunities to create better solutions. This pandemic reemphasized the truth that we all know – we are inextricably linked together, and each link is interdependent on the efforts made for one another. We, as members of our society, are called upon to provide cover for each other.”
(<https://saportareport.com/>)

If you are looking for a way to make a difference, there is no time like the present. If you thought about financially supporting a non-profit involved with these issues, there is no time like the present. Now, more than ever, is the time for funders to stay committed, and to rely on and listen to the people who are leading the charge to protect our most vulnerable citizens in new, creative, and innovative ways. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “listen” as: ***to pay attention to sound; to hear something with thoughtful attention; give consideration; to be alert to catch an expected sound.***

As a volunteer and donor to non-profits in metro Atlanta, my personal ideas of how to direct my donor dollars are clearer than ever – LISTEN to the experts. When possible, I will focus funding to general operating expenses or un-restrict the dollars moving forward so that the professionals on the ground, serving their clients in this ever-changing landscape, will be able



to adjust and change and
continue to take care of OUR
community, creating a safe haven
for ALL of our families.

Efforts to halt sex trafficking in metro Atlanta have
included a campaign of graphic messages installed on
billboards along busy highways by the International
Human Trafficking Institute. Credit: IHTI

(<https://saportareport.com/>)

Our purpose in this life is to help others, and if you can't help them, at least don't hurt them. – Dalai Lama.

Note to readers: The author observes – “If you did not have the time to take the free training before, there is no time like the present.” Please click here
(<https://www.ihtinstitute.org>).

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