



UDRUŽENJE ROMKINJA "OSVIT"
SOS telefon na romskom I srpskom jeziku
0800/100909



ODBOR ZA LJUDSKA PRAVA VRANJE
SOS telefon za žene sa iskustvom nasilja
0800/001017

GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

24.04.2020.

Human Rights Committee – Vranje and Association Of Roma Women OSVIT – Nis are the only licensed SOS providers 24 hours 7 days a week for women with experience of violence from the civil sector, in the conditions of the COVID-19 virus pandemic and state of emergency. In order to ensure a greater degree of prevention of domestic and partner violence against women, girls, children and femicide, as well as the protection of women in cases of domestic violence in the period of emergency and pandemic COVID - 19, in communication with the beneficiaries of SOS service for women and competent institutions, we have confirmed the problem that without a COVID 19 test result, women seeking protection from violence cannot be placed in Safe Houses.

In support of the efforts of the Government of Serbia and civilian women's organizations to adopt effective measures to prevent and combat gender-based domestic-partner violence, especially in the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is very significant that Serbia endorsed the recently adopted Declaration of the Istanbul Convention Committee on the implementation of the Convention during the pandemic COVID -19, explicitly stating that States qualify as "necessary" and / or guarantee the continuity of general and specialized support services for victims of all forms of violence governed by this Convention. This may require additional measures to be taken to accommodate the capacity of existing support structures, including safe houses and in this context:

We are submitting to the Government of the Republic of Serbia

PROPOSAL: Amendment to the Decree on Organizing the Work of Social Welfare Institutions, Social Welfare Organizations for Provision of Housing Services for Victims/survivors of Domestic Violence during the Emergency (Official Gazette RS, No.54 / 2020)

- 1. The admission of women with experience of domestic violence to Safe Houses during the COVID-19 pandemic is approved.** A woman with experience of domestic violence must be tested for the virus as part of the implementation of health measures to prevent the spread of the virus corona. While waiting for the test results, the woman must be housed in separate departments formed in Safe Houses.
- 2. The Safe Houses are obliged to provide separate reception rooms to serve the accommodation of women who have experienced violence, in the period while waiting for test results on Covid-19.**
- 3. We propose that the Government of the Republic of Serbia implement this preventive interim measure of protection against domestic violence continuously until the end of the state of emergency and in following period of pandemic COVID-19.**

So far, the work of the SOS Hotline of the Association of Roma Women Osvit and SOS Hotline Vranje, which continuously provide the service 24/7, shows that since March 15, 2020 and the introduction of the state of emergency in Serbia, women with experience of violence have been increasingly exposed to violence. In the case of reporting domestic violence, after 10 pm, during the curfew, the police and the Centers for Social Work do not have a clear instruction on where to place the woman, because no health care institution or crisis staff does COVID-19 testing after 10pm. Experience shows that admission to Safe Houses is only possible after a negative test on COVID-19. It takes a couple of days to test for COVID-19, while test results arrive after 1-2 days. The question is **WHERE WILL THE WOMAN WHO NEED TO BE RELOCATE FROM THE HOUSE IN THE CASE OF VIOLENCE IS GOING TO BE SAFELY PLACED UNTIL SHE IS LOCATED TO A SAFE HOUSE?**

Decree on Organizing the Work of Social Welfare Institutions, Social Welfare Organizations for Provision of Housing Services for Victims/survivors of Domestic Violence during the Emergency (Official Gazette RS, No.54 / 2020) does not foresee the manner in which new beneficiaries will be admitted during a pandemic,



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from the period of reporting the violence to the accommodation period. It is understood that the safety of women in Safe Houses is mandatory and that COVID-19 testing of new beneficiaries is required. But it is also necessary to provide accommodation for the woman from the moment of reporting the violence to the time of testing on COVID-19. It is the duty of all institutions that implement measures to combat domestic violence to ensure the safety and security of women in the case of domestic violence. Unless we provide shelter to a woman in the case of reporting violence and keep her away from the abuser, the goal of all institutions working to prevent violence has not been achieved. It is necessary to introduce emergency measures in accordance with the state of emergency, but to make the safety and security of women a priority for us all.

It is necessary that the relevant institutions make a clear statement of response in case of accommodation of women who have experienced violence in the Safe House for the period of COVID-19 pandemic. It must be submitted in writing to the institutions - Safe Houses, Centers for Social Work and the police, where and how to provide housing for women until they have been tested for COVID-19. The safest accommodation for women is in Safe Houses, and for these reasons, it is necessary to provide special rooms within their institutions where women will be housed while awaiting testing and test results.

It is also necessary to send a clear message to women that they are not alone in the pandemic period, which the SOS Phone Osvit and SOS Phone Vranje are doing through their Facebook page as well as on the website.

Licensed SOS Telephone Vranje 0800 001 017 for providing free service to women with experience of violence (24 hours 7 days a week) in March 2020 recorded a 25% increase in calls from women compared to February 2020. Licensed SOS Telephone in Romani and Serbian languages - Osvit, Niš 0800 100 909 for providing free service to women with experience of violence (24 hours 7 days a week) in March 2020 recorded a 50% increase in calls from women. At the same time there are reports that show multiple increases in domestic-partner violence against women, girls, children, from all countries of the world, where the Corona virus pandemic has been present for a long period.

It should be mentioned that the implementation of effective measures to protect, prevent and support women, girls exposed and survivors of gender-based violence is an obligation of Serbia as a signatory to the Istanbul Convention and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and above all, it is the obligation of our state in emergencies such as the COVID-19 virus pandemic.

We would like to inform you that we have submitted the same Proposal to:

- Government of the Republic of Serbia - Prime Minister Ana Brnabic
- Deputy Prime Minister's Office - Deputy Prime Minister Prof. Dr Zorana Z. Mihajlović
- Coordination Body for Gender Equality
- Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs
- Commissioner for the Protection of Equality
- Protector of citizens
- Office for Human and Minority Rights
- Office for Cooperation with Civil Society

APPLICANTS

Human Rights Committee – Vranje
Suzana A.Ristić, President

In Vranje and Nis
04/24/2020

Association Of Roma Women OSVIT Nis
Ana Saćipović, President

The document is valid without signature and stamp