



**PROTOCOL
ON MANAGING DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE CASES
AT LOCAL LEVEL
THROUGH
THE COORDINATED REFERRAL
MECHANISM (CRM)
DURING THE COVID-19 SITUATION**



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MUNICIPALITY OF _____

Approved by the Steering Committee
of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism

with Prot. No. _____ in the meeting held on _____



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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this protocol is to assist the responsible institutions at local level, members to the Coordinated Referral Mechanism (CRM) for domestic violence cases, and especially to assist the Multidisciplinary Technical Teams (MTT) members in managing domestic violence cases during the period of natural disaster due to the COVID-19 pandemics.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic on 11 March 2020, whereas on 24 March 2020 the Albanian Government declared the state of natural disaster by means of the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 243/2020 “On declaring the state of natural disaster”. This situation brought the need to adapt to a special protocol with simple and practical instructions for the CRM members, **to be taken into consideration and observed while managing domestic violence cases, throughout the COVID-19 pandemics period.**

Such protocol shall be implemented while taking into consideration the existing legislation, as well as all the DCMs, Normative Acts or Instructions and Orders issued by the Albanian Government for the purpose of handling the COVID-19 pandemics situation. Thus, these steps and instructions shall be valid and applicable only under the COVID-19 emergency situation and shall be implemented while taking into consideration the entire legislation on domestic violence and the Protocol on Domestic Violence Case Management at local level through the Coordinated Referral Mechanism (approved by the Steering Committee of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism within your municipality), whose implementation is a must under normal conditions.

The entire narrative of this protocol brings to the attention the fact that the authorities must meet the legal obligations in addressing domestic violence, with priority and dedication, even during the COVID-19 situation.

1. GENERAL RULES TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM THE RISK OF BEING INFECTED OR SPREADING COVID-19

Given the COVID-19 situation, the Albanian Government has undertaken a number of restrictive measures to prevent the massive spread of the virus within the community. Social distancing and isolation are a priority, but despite some restrictions in the working hours of municipal employees during the pandemics, supporting and managing domestic violence cases during the COVID-19 situation as well, which on the other hand might increase its incidence, is of relevance to still remain a priority. Such situation requires several measures to be taken and instructions to be followed in order to protect the health of domestic violence victims and/or children on one hand, as well as of the MTT members/specialists who manage the case on the other hand.

In this sense, during COVID-19, the members of CRMs and especially the members of MTTs shall keep in mind the following set of general rules:

- a. Regularly follow the notifications issued by the Public Health Institute on the spread of pandemics at local, national, regional and global level;
- b. Use masks, gloves, hygiene solutions, hand sanitizers and disinfectants required for the personal hygiene and workplace hygiene;
- c. Always be informed on the preventive measures to avoid spread or infection with COVID-19 and how to implement them in practice, as well as forward this information to the victims of domestic violence on regular basis, any time you get in touch with them;
- d. Display in your work premises the information on the rules to be followed during the emergency period due to the COVID-19 pandemics, especially where you carry out specific actions to manage a case of domestic violence;
- e. Constantly monitor and improve the everyday hygiene of your work premises or meeting places of the members for the purpose of managing urgent cases, in order to avoid the risk of potential spread of COVID-19;
- f. Take care to constantly clean and sterilize personal items in your office such as the telephone, computer, doors, desks, folder shelves, etc.;
- g. Make sure to always have a stock of protection means from infection (mask, gloves and hand sanitizers) in order to always be ready (thus, have spare means with you to be used by you, the victim and/or abuser, if required), upon engagement to address a domestic violence case.

- h. While managing domestic violence cases make sure to avoid as much as possible hand contact (or in case you need to take actions against the abuser, please keep gloves and then take measures to immediately wash and sanitize your hands), to keep the distance of at least 1 metre when filling in the respective documentation, or to keep at all means the mask, as well as to explain to the victim, beforehand and through every step, that these measures are necessary to protect her life and yours as well.
- i. If during the case management work you need to have documents signed by the parties as well and the conditions do not provide the possibility to wash hands with running water and soap, please keep with you alcohol-based hand sanitizer and ask the persons who will sign the documents to sanitize hands beforehand. Be careful to avoid at the maximum touching your face, mouth, nose, etc.
- j. Keep your windows open and ventilate as much as possible your workplace, especially the shelves used to keep documents frequently used and touched by several people. Make sure to wash your hands with running water and soap and to disinfect them immediately after finishing with handling the case documentation.
- k. The LCDV shall take measures to identify all the addresses and telephone number of service providers (psychological, legal, housing, etc.), by entering them in a list, in order to put them at the availability of police officers or other members of the MTT. Ideally, such list should be sent to all MTT members by e-mail for their consideration. The LCDV should always keep a copy of this list with him/her when contacting the victim in person (or keep it close if contacting the victim through the phone);
- l. If the LCDV has warning signs of a potential infection, he/she shall stay at home and in self isolation, receiving advice from the medical personnel as well as via the family doctor. If these signs turn into first symptoms, then immediately call the emergency number 127. If these signs disappear, i.e. the LCDV has had just a flu condition, it is advisable that he/she stays at home for at least 2-3 more days, upon recovering from the flu. The decision to go back to work is taken only with the approval of the family doctor. Meanwhile, since the very first day of staying at home, he/she shall inform the Head of Sector/Director of the Social Services Directorate in the Municipality, who shall take the immediate measures to assign a new municipal employee as the LCDV for the domestic violence cases management. The contacts of this person shall be made immediately available to the police and the LCDV himself/herself, who, in case of receiving a phone call to follow up a specific case from a MTT member, then he/she will know where to instantly refer the case within the municipality. Since the very first day of staying at home, the LCDV shall communicate by telephone with his/her colleague who is temporarily in charge to cover his/her tasks, if there is any case being followed

up and if there are any steps to be met in this direction, or to guide him/her to find the documentation required to be used should a concrete case be identified. The employee in charge of temporarily covering the LCDV tasks, shall be clearly informed since the beginning on the importance of the position and on the obligation to maintain confidentiality in case of assisting a domestic violence case management. Similarly, all the colleagues of the LCDV, contact persons while working with the latter, shall be informed to carefully monitor their health situation, without panicking. This is also valid for the Child Protection Employee, who plays an important role in managing the cases of children surviving violence, whether direct or witnessed.

2. MANAGEMENT OF AN EMERGENCY CASE

While managing an emergency case the following instructions shall be taken into consideration:

- If the police is the first contact point, despite if the notification/reporting on the domestic violence case has been taken via telephone, online communication means or with the victim going straight to the police premises, the police officer, LCDV and other MTT members, who will conduct the risk assessment and will provide for the urgent needs of the case, shall follow strict protocols to protect from COVID-19 infection and spread, such as social distancing, use of protective means and taking the hygienic-sanitary measures. If the victim has left her house and gone to the police premises without any approved permission or beyond the hours permitted for circulation, measures shall be taken to avoid her punishment given the situation that has made her infringe the rules set for observation during the COVID-19 pandemics emergency. The Mayors, in their quality of CRM chairperson, shall equip the LCDV and CPU/CPE with an authorization to move around for purposes of domestic violence case management during the COVID-19 pandemics. These authorizations to move around shall be constantly validated, depending on the changes to the instructions to move from the Government, and measures shall be taken to update them accordingly. The police shall facilitate the process of reporting domestic violence cases. The State Police officers shall take into consideration and address with priority every notification they receive, of any kind and from any person that reports on a situation of violence or potential situation of violence.
- The State Police officer in charge of conducting the risk assessment shall inform the LCDV near the respective local self-government unit, who can assist with the drafting of the risk assessment report related to the domestic violence case. If the LCDV fails to appear in person, he/she shall be immediately replaced with a social worker from the respective structure for social services in the local self-government units. Failure of the LCDV/social worker from the structure responsible for social services in the local self-government to appear on time, shall not constitute a reason to interrupt the risk assessment or to any delays in drafting the report from the police.
- When a risk assessment conducted by the police and/or assisted by the LCDV

demonstrates that the adult victim is at a “high” or “medium” risk for her/his life, immediate measures shall be taken for the safety of the victim(s) and separating the victim from the abuser, considering that the mandatory isolation at home during the COVID-19 is a factor which sustains the reiteration of violence, its escalation and incrementation of life-threatening risk. Removing the abuser from the home shall be a priority when the risk assessment shows that the life of the victim is at risk. The police shall include this measure in the IPO/PO and immediately act to remove the abuser from the dwelling place.

- When the police structures come to the crime scene and begin with the procedures to address the case of reported violence, apart from the Local Coordinator for Domestic Violence of the municipality in the jurisdiction where the incident has happened (pursuant to paragraph II.5 of the Joint Instruction of the Minister of Interior and Minister of Health and Social Protection, No. 866, dated 20/12/2018 “On the procedures and template for risk assessment in cases of domestic violence”), shall also inform the Child Protection Unit Employee (pursuant to paragraph II.6 of the same instruction) despite if violence against children has been reported or not. Even though the reporting might be for violence exercised against an adult, the possibility that children have witnessed such scenes of violence is high due to their home isolation during the COVID-19 pandemics. Whether a child has been directly subjected to violence or has witnessed scenes of violence, his/her need for safety is urgent. The decision of the order on the preliminary immediate protection measures, issued to the victims at high life-threatening risk, shall necessarily include their children as well, even though they have not been directly subjected to violence, but have just witnessed it. The needs of the children for psychological treatment in such cases shall be met by the MTT “core nucleus”. While addressing such cases, the CPE/CPU shall also communicate with the Regional State Social Service Directorate (which is a member to the CRM/MTT) for a more effective management of the minor victim case, by providing the services closer to the victim and in compliance with the urgent and long-term identified needs.
- If the place where the domestic violence case has been reported or identified differs from the place of residence of the victim or abuser, the police officer in charge to conduct the risk assessment may ask for information via telephone or online communication means from the responsible structure of State Police in their place of residence.
- When the police refers the case to the Child Protection Unit at the local self-government unit and to the Child Protection Employee at the administrative units of the municipality, it shall observe the rules provided for in the effective legislation on the child rights and protection and shall refer to the Instruction No. 253, dated 10/04/2020 of the Minister of Health and Social Protection “On managing the cases of children in need of protection during the natural disaster period due to the pandemics caused from COVID-19”. The responsible structure at the State Police shall draft the risk assessment report in the presence of the CPU representative at the municipality / Child Protection Employee (CPE) in the administrative units of the municipality while observing the social distancing and using protective means as well as the measures of hygiene.

- The Local Coordinator for Domestic Violence and, in case of children, the Child Protection Employee, as well as any member of the Multidisciplinary Technical Team, that will contact with the case at the police or dwelling place shall be immediately equipped with a circulation permit from the police to move at any hour and the necessary logistics shall be ensured to conduct the visit at home or at the police premises.

It is advisable that the information from the institutions, organizations or individuals that are aware of the case to be retrieved via telephone or other online communication means (e-mail, Skype, zoom, etc.) and not face to face.

- If called by the court in the IPO/PO evaluation process, the State Police representative and/or LCDV shall take the measures to use the protective means and keep distance when appearing at the court; the police officer that has conducted the risk assessment and prepared the IPO/PO folder, as well as the LCDV who has assisted, shall be available and ready to participate in the IPO/PO assessment trial process via (electronic) communication means as well as to provide explanations on the evidences submitted.
- If the police officer and/or LCDV accompany the victim of domestic violence to the hospital or a service provider they shall use protective means and keep physical distancing. During the risk assessment, the police officer and LCDV or even the CPE present in the process, shall demonstrate maximum care to identify the potential and most adequate services to meet the urgent needs of the case.
- If necessary due to the risk for the life of the victim, when the police officer suggests to the police structure putting the victim in a specialized residential centre, whether public or non-public (emergency or long-term), actions shall be taken while keeping in mind the clarifications presented below in the respective section of this protocol ("need for housing").
- If a lawyer is needed, the case shall be contacted from the lawyer contracted by the municipality (if the case) or shall be referred to the list of free legal aid providers via telephone or e-mail, or Facebook pages of free legal aid providers. For contacts please refer to Annex No. 4 of the "Protocol on Domestic Violence Case Management at local level through the CRM".
- A primary legal aid is provided online at juristionline.al
- Moreover, psychological services to the victim and/or children may be provided immediately over the phone by the psychologist of the municipality (if the case) or by connecting the case to the following services:
 - Counselling Line for Women and Girls at the national hotline 116-117;

- Platform of the Order of Psychologists, Online Albanian Psychologists, whose telephone numbers are published in the official website of the Order of Psychologist (<https://www.urdhriipsikologut.al/covid-19-psikologet-shqiptare-online/>);
 - School, municipal or NGOs psychologists over the phone;
- The victim shall be informed in a clear and understandable language regarding the adaptation of the support and additional measures taken to prevent the risk of infection and spread of COVID-19 and the fact that the life of the victim and/or her children, as well as the life of the CRM/MTT members managing the case, remains a priority;
 - If the alternative to be followed appears to be that of housing the victim at her family members or relatives, then measures shall be taken to follow the following steps:
 - The family members/relatives shall be contacted in the presence of the victim and confirmation shall be taken that they agree with housing the victim (and her children) in their home till the risk from the COVID-19 pandemics has ended.
 - The victim (and her children), as well as family members/relatives, shall be informed beforehand that both the victim and children shall stay in self-isolation in a room for 14 days, in order to avoid the risk of a potential infection (ideally, details on self-isolation shall be given to the victim in writing - according to the templates that the health centre has or can develop).
 - If both parties accept these conditions, it is worth mentioning also that other services such as psychological, legal, etc., shall be provided over the phone and, if needed, the victim shall be contacted by MTT members in the premises currently being housed.
 - If the house where the victim will be staying during this period is in a different city, all measures shall be taken beforehand to confirm the availability of the MTT in that city/municipality to provide the required services to the victim (and her children) in case of need. MTT members of the place where the case has happened, as well as the assisting organizations or professionals, can continue to provide services over the phone, as mentioned further hereto.
 - Before the victim is supported with housing in a different dwelling (i.e. to be transported, accompanied there), it is important to remind receiving information if any of the relatives has had fever or cough in the last two days and the same is valid for the victim and her children as well. If none of these signs is present, then the victim must be accompanied at the relatives' house. If any of the parties has signs, the decision shall be taken only upon consulting with the medical service that is also a member to the MTT/SC of the respective CRM.
 - When the victim is housed at her relatives or family members, the case shall be constantly monitored over the phone and, if possible, at the dwelling place, by the police and LCDV, given that the conflict may be shifted or escalated by risking the safety of the victim or her family members and relatives.
 - **ATTENTION!** The implementation of the above-mentioned measures and of all the other preventive and protective measures to avoid the risk from infection with COVID-19 mentioned in all the decisions or other legal acts issued by the Albanian

Government, shall in no case constitute a cause for failure to deliver services, or for discrimination due to the health situation, and shall be applied in such a manner as to avoid bullying or negligence, whether with the parties in a case being managed or among colleagues.

- The police shares information that the police officers are ready to respond within the minute and to follow up cases of domestic violence via all the social communication means that the police has (including Facebook, Virtual Police, etc.).
- CRM shares information on the availability of all institutions, members to the CRM, to address cases of domestic violence, via the social media of the relevant municipality and informative materials published online by the LCDV, which include contact numbers and the response of CRM during COVID-19.

When implementing the protection orders:

- A copy of the order on the preliminary immediate protection measures shall be instantly notified to the LCDV using the online communication means such as the e-mail.
- The abuser, against whom the order has been issued, shall be informed by the police regarding the measures provided for in the IPO/PO and his obligation to implement them on voluntary basis. The police shall be obliged to inform the victim of domestic violence regarding the measures provided for in the IPO/PO. To inform the latter, telephone communication or other online communication means can be used.
- The police shall facilitate the work of the social services offices in the local self-government units, regarding the monitoring of the observation of protection orders from the parties. The community policing specialists shall support the LCDV to conduct a regular monitoring of the PO observation from the parties, including accompanying them when paying visits in the dwelling places to conduct such assessment. To this end, the municipality shall submit at the respective police station a written request providing the data of the persons who will conduct the monitoring as well as a list of the families where the monitoring will be done (thus, the list of the victims with PO) and relevant addresses. The community policing specialists may coordinate with the Local Coordinators on the days and hours of movements to conduct the relevant monitoring.
- The LCDV and the office of social services within the municipality, which monitors the observation of the protection order from the parties, shall keep social distancing and use the protective means and hygiene measures (described hereto, but also in all other documents published for this purpose from the PHI, MHSP and WHO) while conducting the monitoring process and home visits in the municipalities/administrative units that have no indication for persons infected with COVID-19.

- When there are data on the presence of COVID-19 virus, the case monitoring shall be first conducted over the phone to make sure that the victim and/or her children are in good health. If contact over the phone is impossible to be reached, or if the communication shows signs of reluctance to speak out, which might warn for a situation where the victim might be under pressure, then measures shall be taken in coordination with the police, to immediately go to the dwelling place and conduct the monitoring there.
- When the monitoring identifies violations of IPO/PO, reported from the victim, Local Coordinator for Domestic Violence or identified from the community policing specialists themselves, the case shall be instantly followed in line with the legal provisions, with maximum priority and responsibility, engaging other CRM members as well, such as the prosecution office, the court, etc. The rules described above in this protocol, shall be borne in mind and applied rigorously throughout all the steps taken in order to protect from COVID-19 infection.

When the case needs to be provided with the housing service in one of the existing public or non-public centres:

- The IPO/PO may put the victim in a residential or emergency centre for the victims of domestic violence only in case of life-threatening risk, taking into consideration her will, the best interest of the child, as well as pursuant to the effective legislation on the standards of these centres.
- The police officer and LCDV shall take the necessary measures to refer the case to a public or non-public centre that provides emergency or long-term housing service, bearing in mind the fact that under emergency conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemics, these centres operate with limited capacities and strict rules of accepting new cases. Therefore, it is recommended that the LCDV gets very much familiar with the content of the “Protocol on the functioning of the public and non-public residential centres that provide housing service (shelters) for the victims of domestic violence and trafficking under the COVID-19 pandemics situation”, approved by Order of the Minister of Health and Social Protection No. 254, dated 10/04/2020, in order to be aware on what explanations to provide to the victim and/or children before putting them in a centre (see especially chapter 3 of the just mentioned protocol).
- If in the LGU where the case occurs or in the near LGU there is an emergency shelter (public or non-public), then in its decision the MTT shall consider the possibility for the victim and/or children to be sheltered in this centre, taking into consideration the observation of the minimum standards for the provision of services in these shelters, based in the Instruction of the Minister of Health and Social Protection No. 744, dated 15/11/2019 “On approving the minimum standards of social care services for the victims/survivors of gender-based violence and domestic violence in the emergency residential centres (short-term), public and non-public (emergency shelters)”. This also means that the institution that manages the emergency housing service at local level (thus, the municipality or a specialized NGO), shall take into consideration the provision of this

service by complying with the core needs of the case (food, clothing, hygienic-sanitary means), as well as ensure, in cooperation with MTT, Order of Psychologist or specialized NGOs, the provision of psychological counselling over the phone (especially when the shelter is managed by the municipality and the responsible staff might lack the adequate qualification in this sense), legal counselling, emotional support for the victim and children, etc.

- If we talk about housing only violated children (i.e. not accompanied by their parents), then the procedures shall be in line with the steps specified in the Instruction No. 253, dated 10/04/2020 “On managing the cases of children in need of protection during the natural disaster period due to the epidemics caused from COVID-19”.
- If the above steps are complied with and the decision is taken for the victim (and her children) to be housed in the emergency shelter, then the institution managing such service shall take the following measures:
 - The emergency shelter premises shall be equipped with the due quantity of soap, detergents and disinfectants necessary to be used during the entire permanence of the victim (and her children) there.
 - The rules related to the operation of the centre during the COVID-19 emergency situation, as well as the specific rules on hand washing and keeping personal hygiene and environmental hygiene in the shelter shall be displayed in visible places.
 - In order to provide the possibility for time to go by as calmly and actively as possible, the shelter shall be equipped with toys for children, as well as with books for children and adults.
 - In case of need for food or other items supplies from the outside, measures shall be taken for the latter to be left at the room/shelter door, well packed, as well as to immediately unpack them, throw the plastic bags in the rubbish bin and wash hands immediately (for more details in this case, please also refer to the “Protocol on the functioning of the public and non-public residential centres that provide housing service (shelters) for the victims of domestic violence and trafficking under the COVID-19 pandemics situation”, approved by Order No. 254/2020 of the Minister of Health and Social Protection, especially chapter 3 thereto).
 - Meet the needs of the victim for psychological services and legal counselling (over the phone or online) and, when necessarily required face to face, to provide them by strictly observing the rules on avoiding the risk from COVID-19 infection.
 - The services shall be provided in line with the minimum standards on the operation of emergency shelters, as provided for in the Instruction No. 744, dated 15/11/2019 “On approving the minimum standards of social care services for the victims/survivors of gender-based violence and domestic violence in the emergency residential centres (short-term), public and non-public (emergency shelters)”
- Prior to putting the victim and/or her children in the shelter, a detailed information shall be taken from the victim and her family members regarding the possibility that she and/or

her children might be infected with COVID-19; While the victim and/or her children are staying in the emergency shelter, their body temperature shall be regularly monitored (measured at least twice a day, not with an oral thermometer) and contacts shall be kept with the family doctor regarding any need or consultation on health status.

- Following these instructions mentioned hereto, please also refer to the protocol “On the public and non-public residential centres that provide housing service (shelters) for the victims of domestic violence under the COVID-19 pandemics situation” regarding any details on the manner of functioning of an emergency shelter during this emergency situation due to COVID-19.

If the victims of domestic violence appear to have been infected with COVID-19, measures shall be taken upon agreement and cooperation with PHI, SSS and MHSP to provide the necessary psychological and/or legal support under hospitalization conditions, for as long as they are in stable health conditions (not in intensive care unit or intubated).

ATTENTION! In managing an emergency case during the COVID-19 pandemics situation, it might be necessary to include a certain number of MTT members, whether those defined to be engaged as the “core nucleus” as well as others, depending from the identified needs. Therefore, while treating an emergency case during the COVID-19 pandemics as well, all actions that might be undertaken from the MTT members shall be taken into consideration, as described in section 4.3.1 of the “Protocol on Domestic Violence Case Management through the Coordinated Referral Mechanism”, implementing them by accurately following up and applying the general rules described in section 1 of this protocol. The case management steps are still required to be followed with accuracy and also use all the templates presented in the relevant annexes to the case management protocol in non-emergent situations, depending on the characteristics and needs of the case for emergent treatment, BUT always paying maximum attention to the implementation of the general rules against the COVID-19 pandemics.

3. MANAGEMENT OF A NON-EMERGENCY CASE

- Given that face to face meetings of the MTT are forbidden based on the COVID-19 situation decisions, it is advisable for the MTT meetings to be held online, as the case needs may indicate, using the most practical platforms to all the members (Skype, Zoom, Google Meet, Messenger, etc.). The LCDV shall coordinate the development of such meetings. A regular monthly communication with the MTT members is suggested despite zero cases for management during a month or if cases have been managed with just two or three MTT members. In this sense the LCDV shall prepare and circulate by e-mail a monthly information to all the members, the same as he/she shall do with the circulation of the monthly meetings minutes, even when they are held online.
- During the online meetings of MTT, the court representative shall share information with the members on the modus operandi of the court during the COVID-19 and what

will happen with the court cases of the domestic violence victims, as well as appeal deadlines during the epidemics period caused by the spread of COVID-19.

- The representative of the Bailiffs Office shall share information on the normative acts related to the activity of the judicial bailiff service during the epidemics situation period caused by COVID-19.
- The LCDV shall assist the victims using a material prepared and printed with information on their rights and how to follow up the necessary procedures to obtain a protection order, as well as the steps to be taken in case this order is violated, for cases when trial sessions are not suspended, like in the case of immediate protection orders and protection orders hearings, as well as claims related to family issues of urgent character, claims having as a subject to trial the care, obligations and observation of child rights, custody and adoption, protective measures against domestic violence, parental responsibility, care and alimony, suspension of appeal deadlines and lawsuits, avoiding gatherings in the court, using protective means in the court, execution of judicial verdicts, etc. Such information may be shared with the domestic violence victim over the phone as well.
- In any case of domestic violence under observation, the LCDV shall forward the information to the Directorate of Finance within the Municipality in order to include this case in the list of persons that need economic support, which is send to the Prefecture Office to be submitted to the Central Commission on Assistance Provision and to the General Directorate of Civil Registry, in line with the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 236, dated 19/03/2020 “On taking measures to deliver the economic assistance in the dwelling place for the vulnerable groups, under the conditions of COVID-19 epidemics”.
- All MTT members shall attend the online meetings of the MTT and shall be committed to meet the case needs.
- The Employment Office shall prepare information in plain language regarding the procedures, documentation and amount of financial assistance for the current employees and employees dismissed due to COVID-19 and shall share it in the MTT meeting. For those cases addressed in the online meeting of MTT, the participants shall also discuss on a post COVID-19 plan to support the cases with vocational training courses or employment opportunities. The LCDV shall inform the Employment Office on regular basis on the cases of domestic violence, in order to include them in the lists for vocational training and employment, when possible.
- The Probation Service shall comply with the legal obligations and follow up the implementation of court verdicts. The case prosecutor shall be immediately informed in case of violation of the verdict provisions.
- The RED/EO shall play an active role by providing the violated children with the service of psychologists at schools. This service shall be provided to children over the

phone or via other online communication means by the school psychologists. The LCDV shall share ongoing information with RED/EO regarding the cases of identified children facing with direct or witnessed domestic violence.

- The forensic doctor shall conduct an expertise of the damages during the COVID-19 situation as well, while also observing the obligations imposed by the law, as well as implementing a strict protocol on protection from the risk of infection or spread of COVID -19. When the latter observes that the victim needs specific psychological support or other supports, he/she shall immediately communicate with the LCDV in order to refer the case to the relevant specialists.
- The Prosecution Office shall share information that protection orders do not impede criminal proceeding of domestic violence cases and shall inform on the criminal proceeding of domestic violence cases regarding concrete cases handled or being handled by the MTT, as well as the trends during COVID-19. Moreover, it is important to guide the victims and explain to them the roles of the victims' coordinator in the Prosecution Office and the adaptation of this role via online communication means during the COVID-19.
- All institutions that must be aware of the case shall maintain confidentiality of data, when there are suspicions or it appears that the domestic violence case has been infected with COVID-19; The information shall be disclosed only when it is necessary to safeguard the health of the victim and of the CRM/MTT members, who have been in direct face to face contact with the victim.
- When documents need to be shared for the purpose of managing the case, they shall be shared via e-mail in order to avoid physical contact among institutions.
- The employees in charge to ensure the safety of the victim at court shall rigorously implement the protective measures.
- When the case is being criminally prosecuted, the victims' coordinator at the Prosecution Office that informs the victim shall observe the protective measures and/or adapt the manner of information. The coordinator is suggested to assist the victims using a prepared and printed informative material on their rights and follow up of criminal proceedings.
- Also, all the other stakeholders in the CRM (forensic doctor, bailiffs office, educational directorate, local educational directorate, local employment directorate, etc.) shall take measures to provide the required support to the case while observing the protective measures and/or tailoring the manner of information (telephone, online, etc.).

Important to be borne in mind during the COVID-19 pandemics situation:

- The LCDV in cooperation with the MTT members shall take measures to make available to the public/citizens all the information on how to report domestic violence, which highlights the operation of the structures responsible for domestic violence cases management under COVID-19 situation as well.
- The LCDV and MTT members shall take measures to publish the available numbers to report violence on the websites of the Municipality, Health Institutions, Police, etc., such as the number of Albanian State Police - 129, the numbers of the national hotline - 116-117, the numbers of ER/green numbers made available by the Municipality under this situation, or even the number of the LCDV, when possible.

ATTENTION! While managing a non-emergency case during the COVID-19 pandemics as well, it might be necessary to include a certain number of MTT members, as described in section 4.4.1 of the “Protocol on Domestic Violence Case Management through the Coordinated Referral Mechanism”, implementing them by accurately following up and applying the general rules described in section 1 of this protocol. Therefore references to the relevant sections and annexes to the case management protocol in non-emergent situations, depending on the characteristics and needs of the case for non-emergent treatment remains a necessity, BUT always paying maximum attention to the implementation of the general rules against the COVID-19 pandemics.

4. OTHER INFORMATIVE MATERIALS

- Order of the Minister of Health and Social Protection, dated 24 January 2020 “On strengthening the preparedness to protect from the penetration of the novel coronavirus and preventing its spread in Albania” (<https://shendetesia.gov.al/masat-e-marra-per-parandalimin-e-koronavirusit-te-ri-ne-shqiperi/>)
- The National Action Plan: “Prevention, preparedness and response against COVID-19”, developed by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, as well as the Public Health Institute (https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Covid_AL-spreads.pdf)
- Decision dated 08/03/2020 of the Interim Committee on the infection spread by the novel coronavirus (<https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Urdher-53-Ngritje-Komiteti-.Koronavirus-2.pdf>)
- Order of the Minister of Health and Social Protection No. 157, dated 10/03/2020 “On taking measures to prevent infection from COVID-19 of the social care services beneficiaries”.
- Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 243, dated 24/03/2020 “On declaring the state of natural disaster” (<https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/VKM-nr.-243-date-24.3.2020.docx..pdf>)
- Normative Act of the Council of Ministers No.8, dated 24/03/2020 “On some addenda and amendments to the Normative Act No. 3, dated 15/03/2020 of the Council of Ministers “On taking special administrative measures during the duration of the infection period caused by COVID-19”, as amended; <https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/akt-normativ-2020-03-24-8.pdf>
- Instruction No.253, dated 10/04/2020 “On managing the cases of children in need of protection during the natural disaster period due to the epidemics caused from COVID-19” of the Minister, Ministry of Health and Social Protection; <https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/2761/file/Udhezim%20nr%20253.pdf>
- Normative Act No. 9, dated 25/03/2020 “On taking special measures in the area of judicial practice during the duration of the epidemics caused from COVID-19”. <https://qbz.gov.al/.../50/e3fcdb87-677d-4df7-98d8-875bccc757b2>
- Order of the Minister of Health and Social Protection No. 254, dated 10/04/2020 “Protocol on the functioning of the public and non-public residential centres that provide housing service (shelters) for the victims of domestic violence and trafficking under the COVID-19 pandemics situation”
- Instruction No. 744, dated 15/11/2019 “On approving the minimum standards of social care services for the victims/survivors of gender-based violence and domestic violence in the emergency residential centres (short-term), public and non-public (emergency shelters)”
- Normative Act No. 13, dated 02/04/2020 “On taking special measures in the area of judicial bailiffs service, mediation service and bankruptcy procedures administration practice during the duration of the epidemics caused from COVID-19”. <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2020/57/76b7f625-3fb2-4e59-a736-2405096d10e2?fbclid=IwAR2IpDgLwOMdd4nneiDt8VfHgVuT-xkQ1g9a67RcckboPwBTmOgWKXLd-wM>

- Decision No. 305, dated 16/04/2020 of the Council of Ministers “On defining the procedures, documentation and amount of financial assistance for the current employees and employees dismissed due to COVID-19”.
- <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/vendim/2020/04/16/305/19776fdf-bc9c-4d68-9332-d1ba38f5c463>