



**CANADIAN CENTRE
FOR WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT**

**CENTRE CANADIEN
POUR L'AUTONOMISATION
DES FEMMES**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment holding weekly Virtual Support Groups to help Domestic Violence Survivors during COVID-19

OTTAWA, ON (June 18, 2020) –Research shows domestic violence increases during periods of social crisis, so The Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE), a registered non-profit dedicated to empowering domestic violence survivors through advocacy, mentorship, and economic empowerment, has been providing weekly virtual support groups during the COVID-19 pandemic to women who have experienced – or are currently experiencing – domestic violence.

In addition to increased rates of domestic violence, the pandemic may exacerbate the existing financial, mental and physical stresses Domestic Violence Survivors were already experiencing. CCFWE recognizes it is critical to continue to support victims and survivors even when in-person services are no longer possible.

To date dozens of women have attended the weekly virtual support groups, which are led by professional facilitators. Each session focuses on a different topic relevant to survivors, such as safety planning, self-care, trauma recovery, or parenting during COVID-19.

“Its time to commit to continue to helping survivors in this unprecedented time of COVID-19 and we are keeping up with a shift to virtual practices,” says CCFWE Executive Director Meseret Haileyesus. “Survivors are already dealing with a lot of symptoms of PTSD, loneliness and isolation, which are then made worse by the pandemic. Our advocates are still here to support them,”

There are two separate support groups: one specifically designed to address the needs of African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) Women, and one for all Canadian women. Each session lasts approximately one hour. For information on upcoming sessions, visit CCFWE's Facebook page under the events section: <https://www.facebook.com/ccfwe/>. To register for a session, email info@ccfwe.org.

All sessions are free and entirely confidential.

Who We Are

CCFWE works with Domestic Violence Survivors to strengthen financial security, enhance their physical and mental wellbeing, and create education and awareness about the impact of economic abuse. 95% of domestic abuses cases involve financial abuse, yet there is no national recognition of this term. We advocate for and support the development of new approaches to and policies surrounding economic abuse in Canada.



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Executive Director Meseret Haileyesus was motivated to start CCFWE when she saw how little economic abuse was understood in the community. “I have seen that domestic violence victims and survivors struggle with financial abuse, even after separation.” she said. “Their partners regularly take their money, paycheques, social assistance payments, and tax refund checks, leaving them with very little or no money. Sadly, most survivors also have debt accumulated in their names because their partners used their credit cards, took loans out, or put bills in their names, and then did not pay them. It has a direct impact on a woman’s future, including housing mental health as well as her ability to rebuild economic security and emotional wellbeing. We hear it consistently from survivors themselves: they couldn't find easy resources and tools to address these problems.”

Executive Director Meseret Haileyesus is available for interviews about the virtual support groups being held during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the impact of economic abuse.

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