

Domestic Violence is a Crime

Domestic violence occurs within a family or an intimate relationship as a way for one person to control another. It includes physical abuse, not allowing someone to leave home or using objects like knives and guns to cause injury. It also includes harming someone emotionally by threats, name-calling and put-downs.

Domestic violence is a crime. Legal protections are available to you. You can file criminal charges against your abuser with local or state police and/or ask the court to issue a Protection from Abuse Order (PFA) to stop your abuser from hurting you or your children. You do not need a PFA to file criminal charges, and you do not need to file criminal charges to get a PFA.

When you go to court, a judge may grant a PFA to:

- Keep your abuser away from you and your family, your home and where you work
- Give you temporary custody of your children
- Make your abuser pay support
- Take away your abuser's weapons.

It is important to know that you do not need a lawyer to get a PFA in Pennsylvania. When you need help in filing criminal charges or applying for a PFA, your local domestic violence program can talk to you about your choices.

To find the local domestic violence program nearest to you, look in the phone book in the blue pages under abuse or assault. You can also ask your doctor or other health care professionals to help you find the help you need.

If something about your relationship scares you or you are worried about a friend and you need to talk, call us.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-7233 (SAFE)

1-800-787-3224 (TTY for the Deaf)

www.ndvh.org

Help is available in English and Spanish and many other languages.

All contact with the hotline is free and confidential.