



## ARE YOU A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Ask yourself,

- am I physically, sexually or emotionally abused and controlled by a person with whom I currently have, or formerly had, an intimate relationship?
- is my partner very jealous, possessive, critical, controlling of my behavior and choice of friends?
- am I verbally abused, harassed, or physically harmed (slapped, kicked, shoved, punched, choked, shaken, burned, stabbed)?
- has my partner ever threatened to kill me or to kill himself/herself?

If you answered YES to ANY of these questions you may be a victim of domestic violence. Safety planning can save your life. If you feel you are in danger and decide to leave your home, it is critical that you have a plan to do that safely.

**To discuss your safety and/or to design a safety plan to meet your needs, please call Women's Center & Shelter's 24-Hour Hotline (412) 687-8005.**



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Connecting to a domestic violence program is the single greatest factor in reducing domestic violence injury, re-assault and homicide. WC&S developed the RUSafe App to help users identify if they are in a potentially dangerous relationship and connect them to a domestic violence hotline in their area.

Learn more at [www.rusafe.net](http://www.rusafe.net)



**Women's Center  
& Shelter**  
of Greater Pittsburgh

P.O. Box 9024  
Pittsburgh, PA 15224

24-Hour Hotline: 412.687.8005  
Administration: 412.687.8017  
[info@wcspittsburgh.org](mailto:info@wcspittsburgh.org)  
[www.WCSCanHelp.org](http://www.WCSCanHelp.org)

Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization – donations to which are tax deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law. The official registration and financial information of the Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR OPTIONS

Domestic violence is a crime. And a victim of abuse has the right to call the police for help, seek assistance from the courts, and obtain information on where to find safe shelter and services.

**Here's how to start.**



**Women's Center & Shelter**  
of Greater Pittsburgh



### Medical Attention

If you need medical attention, call your local paramedic service or police, or go to the nearest hospital Emergency Room. It is important to tell medical personnel about your abuse so that it becomes part of your medical history. This information can be used later for any legal action you may choose to take.

### Protection From Abuse Order

Whether or not the police bring criminal charges against the abuser, you may be able to obtain immediate court-mandated protection through a civil Protection From Abuse (PFA) Order.

The order is issued by Family Division, Court of Common Pleas, and it can:

- order the abuser to stop the violent behavior and refrain from harassing, contacting, or stalking you;
- remove weapons from your abuser;
- exclude the abuser from your residence;
- grant temporary custody of your minor children to you;
- order payment of temporary support to you;
- grant other helpful relief.

To obtain a PFA order, go to the Allegheny County Family and Juvenile Court facility, 440 Ross Street, Room 3030, between 8:30 - 11:00 a.m. or 1:00 - 3:00 p.m., Mon. - Fri. (Best to go in the morning.) You will see the judge that day to request the order. The court's PFA Unit and domestic violence advocates will be available to assist you there. Neighborhood Legal Services Association (NLSA), which provides free legal services, may be able to

provide an attorney to represent you at the final PFA hearing approximately one week later, but you must stay after your temporary hearing to apply for this free service.

When Family Division is not available on weekday afternoons/nights or weekends, an Emergency PFA is available through Allegheny County's Arraignment Court at Pittsburgh Municipal Court, 660 First Avenue, downtown Pittsburgh (next to the Allegheny County Jail). You can also get one from your local Magisterial District Judge on weekday afternoons. For more information, please call 412-350-3240.

### Arrest

If you have been physically abused or threatened, the police may be able to arrest and charge your abuser. They can do so without waiting to obtain a warrant if you or another witness give information about the incident and if the officer observes recent physical injury to you or other supportive evidence.

### Private Criminal Complaint

If the police do not arrest your abuser, you can file a private criminal complaint with the area prosecutor at the court of the Magisterial District Judge serving the address where the incident occurred. Call the District Judge's office to find out the day and time the area prosecutor will be present in the court.

### Custody Order

Without a custody order, both parents generally have equal rights of their child(ren). A custody order establishes the rights and responsibilities of each parent and determines with whom the child(ren) will live. Custody rights are separate and distinct issues from support obligations. Custody relief can be obtained at Family Division.

### Divorce

If you no longer wish to remain in a marriage, you can seek a divorce. It is helpful to use an attorney to obtain a divorce. Programs exist which give legal referrals and assistance to low-income individuals.

### Child Support

You may be entitled to Court-Ordered child support when your children live with you and the other parent

is no longer in the home. You may also be eligible for spousal support if you cannot independently support yourself. You may apply for support on your own at the Family Division. For information on how to apply for support, call 412-350-5600 or visit [www.humanservices.state.pa.us/csww/](http://www.humanservices.state.pa.us/csww/)

If you are trying to get help at Family Division, it would be best to have an attorney to represent you. Contact a Women's Center & Shelter Legal Advocate (412-355-7400) for referrals to local legal services and attorneys. Also, Family Division has a Self-Help Center for those without attorneys (daily 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. at first floor Family Division.)

### Public Assistance

If you have no means of financial support, you may be eligible for aid from the Pennsylvania Public Assistance Program, which can provide a cash grant, medical assistance and food stamps. Call 412-565-2146 for application information.

The mission of Women's Center & Shelter is to advance the safety and wellbeing of victims of intimate partner violence and prevent and respond to intimate partner violence through social change.

### WC&S Primary Service Area

The City of Pittsburgh & Allegheny County  
24-Hour Hotline (412) 687-8005  
Legal Advocacy (412) 355-7400  
[www.wcspittsburgh.org](http://www.wcspittsburgh.org)

### WC&S Services

24-Hour Hotline  
Legal Advocacy Civil Law Project  
Emergency Shelter  
Children's Program  
Medical Advocacy  
Empowerment Center  
Education  
Men's Group



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