



Are you  
a survivor  
of domestic  
violence?

## Ask yourself...

*Am I physically, sexually, financially, or emotionally abused and controlled by a person with whom I currently have, or formerly had, an intimate or dating 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 our children, 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.

## RU Safe

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

**24-Hour Hotline**  
412-687-8005

**Administration**  
412-687-8017

**Legal Advocacy**  
412-355-7400 x5

[info@wcpittsburgh.org](mailto:info@wcpittsburgh.org)  
[WCSCanHelp.org](http://WCSCanHelp.org)

P.O. Box 9024 • Pittsburgh, PA 15224



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# 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



## Understanding your legal, medical, and financial options

### Medical Attention

If you need medical attention, call 911 or 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 the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas, Family Division, 440 Ross Street, Room 3030, Pittsburgh, PA 15219. A PFA can:

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

**To obtain a PFA order**, go to the Family Division between 8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m., Mon. - Fri. (Best to go as early as possible.) 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. Upon obtaining a Temporary PFA Order, you can briefly stay at the Family Division and apply for free legal representation from programs such as Neighborhood Legal Services Association (NLSA), who may be able to provide an attorney to represent you at the Final PFA hearing. The Final PFA Hearing will be scheduled within ten business days of the Temporary PFA Hearing.

When Family Division is not available on weekday afternoons/nights, weekends, or Court holidays, 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**, and press the option for arraignment court.

### 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. If you live in the City of Pittsburgh, you can go to Pittsburgh Municipal Court on Fridays between 8:30 am and 11:00 am, or 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm. You can also find your local Magisterial District Judge's contact information here: [alleghenycourts.us/district\\_judges/offices.aspx](http://alleghenycourts.us/district_judges/offices.aspx)

### 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. It is always best if you speak with an attorney about your custody rights. 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 through the Family Division. For information on how to apply for support and what to bring with you, call **412-350-5600** or visit [humanservices.state.pa.us/cswws](http://humanservices.state.pa.us/cswws).

If you are trying to get help at the 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, the Family Division has a Self-Help Center for those individuals without attorneys (open weekdays 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. on the first floor of the 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.

#### WC&S Primary Service Area

- The City of Pittsburgh & Allegheny County 24-Hour Hotline **412-687-8005**
- Legal Advocacy **412-355-7400 x5**
- [WCSCanHelp.org](http://WCSCanHelp.org)

#### WC&S Core Programs & Services

- 24-Hour Hotline
- Emergency Shelter (including Pet Suite)
- Legal Advocacy
- Empowerment Center (on-site & off-site individual and group support)
- Children's Program
- Children/Youth Counseling
- Medical Advocacy

#### Specialty Services

- Refugees, Immigrants, & Limited-English speakers (RIL)
- Immediate Needs Coordination (INC)
- Victims Compensation
- Families involved with Children, Youth, & Families (CYF)
- LGBTQ Advocacy
- Civil Legal Representation
- MENS Battering Intervention Program

#### Prevention

- Education in schools & the community
- **STANDING FIRM: The Business Case to End Partner Violence**

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.

