



Think you may be experiencing domestic violence?

Ask yourself the following:

- 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, strangled, 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 experiencing 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 it safely.

To discuss your safety and/or to design a safety plan to meet your needs, please contact Women's Center & Shelter.



Bright Sky

Bright Sky is a safe, free, easy-to-use app and website that provides practical support and information on how to respond to domestic violence. It is for anyone experiencing domestic violence, or for those worried about someone else.

Learn more, or download the app, at
us.bright-sky.org



**Women's Center & Shelter
of Greater Pittsburgh**
Serving all survivors.

Call | Text | Chat

412-687-8005 | 412-744-8445 | WSCanHelp.org

Legal Advocacy

412-355-7400 ext.5

P.O. Box 9024 • Pittsburgh, PA 15224



Women's Center & Shelter of
Greater Pittsburgh



@wcs_pittsburgh

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Understanding Your Options



Domestic violence is a serious issue.

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 get started.



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Your Medical, Legal & 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 301, 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 you temporary custody of your minor children
- grant other helpful relief, including protection for pets

To obtain a PFA order, go to the Family Division between 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m., Mon. - Fri. It's 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 professionals 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. Petitioners seeking an Emergency PFA Order are encouraged to fill out their paperwork online first by using the QR code provided. You still must appear in person once paperwork has been submitted.

For more information, please call **412-350-3240**, and press the option for arraignment court.



Emergency PFA

For certain non-domestic violence abuse, Protection from Intimidation Orders and Sexual Violence Protection Orders are also available.

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 Magisterial District Court serving the address where the incident occurred. Call the District Court's office to find out the day and time the area prosecutor will be present. 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: <https://bit.ly/districtjudgepa>

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

<https://bit.ly/childsupportpa>

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 ext. 5) for referrals to local legal services and attorneys. Individuals without attorneys should visit this website for more information:

<https://bit.ly/attorneyinfopa>

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.

Our vision at Women's Center & Shelter is to end domestic violence and create safe spaces for help, healing, and hope.

WC&S Programs & Services

Hotline Services (24/7)	Medical Advocacy
Children's Advocacy Program	Children, Youth, & Families Program
Legal Advocacy Department & Civil Law Project	Refugee, Immigrant, & Limited-English Speaking Services
Emergency Shelter (including pet suite)	STANDING FIRM: The Business Case to End Partner Violence
Wellness Programs (support groups & individual therapy)	School and Community Education and Trainings
Outreach Groups in the community	MENS Battering Intervention Program
Immediate Needs Coordination Program	