

# **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESOURCE PACKET**



## **Office of the State Attorney Seventeenth Judicial Circuit**

**Assistant State Attorney:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** 954-831-7978

**Assigned Victim Advocate:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** (954) 765-4133

## **VICTIM RIGHTS AND COMMON CONCERNS**

Victims have the right to be informed, to be present, and to be heard when relevant, at all crucial stages of criminal proceedings, to the extent that these rights do not interfere with the constitutional rights of the accused. It is normal to have mixed feelings about the incident and the court process. Victims may be concerned that the incident and pending case will cause stress on relationships, problems for children, and financial hardship. A victim advocate at the State Attorney's Office is available to help you with questions and concerns regarding your rights, information about the case, and community resources to assist you.

To view the Victims' Rights Brochure containing Article I, Section 16 of the Florida Constitution, scan the QR Code below.

A written copy of the Victims' Rights Brochure is available upon request.



## INTRODUCTION

This packet is offered as a guide to assist you in understanding the dynamics of an abusive relationship and how domestic violence is addressed within the criminal justice process. It is common for victims of abuse to experience feelings of helplessness, fear, shame, embarrassment, anger and guilt. They may even blame themselves and/or feel responsible. These feelings often prevent victims from taking and/or following through with legal and personal actions. There are many obstacles, such as pressure from the abuser, family or friends. A victim may feel guilty that the abuser faces criminal charges. During this difficult time, abusers often apologize and make promises to change. Without outside help, the violence often happens again and it may be worse the next time.

## WHO DECIDES TO MAKE AN ARREST?

Calling the police **IS** the appropriate response for a violent or potentially violent situation. When an officer responds to a domestic violence incident and believes that a crime has been committed, the incident may result in an arrest. It is the responding officer's responsibility to decide whether or not an arrest is to be made. Victim input will be considered but the final decision is that of the officer.

## WHO DECIDES TO FILE CHARGES / CAN CHARGES BE DROPPED?

- The responding law enforcement agency will investigate the case and present the information to the State Attorney's Office. A Filing Assistant State Attorney / prosecutor will make the decision whether or not to file charges.
- If an arrest was not made, a victim of a misdemeanor domestic violence offense can go to the State Attorney's Office, Domestic Violence Unit at 540 S.E. 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> floor with a police report to complete required paperwork. A Filing Assistant State Attorney will review the information and make a filing decision.
- The victim has a right to voice their concerns to the prosecutor and/or the victim advocate assigned to the case (which will be taken into consideration in resolving the case) but ultimately the prosecutor makes decisions regarding prosecution of the case.

## VICTIM RIGHTS AND COMMON CONCERNS

- As a victim in a criminal case, you have the right to be present, informed and heard when it is relevant. It is normal to have mixed feelings about the incident and the court process. Victims may be concerned that the incident and pending case will cause stress on relationships, problems for children, and financial hardship.
- The Attorney General's Office has a fund available for victims of violent crime. You can apply for assistance regarding expenses such as medical bills, relocation, lost wages or other financial losses related to the crime (see safety plan for number). A victim advocate at the State Attorney's Office is available to help you with questions and concerns regarding your rights, information about the case, and community resources to assist you.
- You may receive a subpoena for deposition, trial, and/or other hearings throughout the legal process. A subpoena summons a person to appear at the time and date specified.
- The defendant's attorney can issue a subpoena for you to appear for a deposition. You have the right to request a victim advocate to attend the deposition with you.
- Many cases are settled through a plea negotiation. The State Attorney's Office must consult with the victim before finalizing a plea agreement with the defendant.
- If you become aware that the defendant has violated pretrial conditions, please notify the assigned prosecutor. You may also notify **Pretrial services** at **(954) 765-4251**.

**Hearing dates can be found at** <http://www.browardclerk.org>. Click on "Case Search." Type in the case number.

You may also register for text and email reminders about upcoming court events. This free public service may be accessed at <https://enotify.flcourts.org/User/Signup>

**You may track the custody status of a defendant housed in a Broward County facility by going to** <http://www.sheriff.org> or an "Arrest Search".

## What is Domestic Violence?

About **1 in 10 men** in the U.S. experience domestic violence, and **1,500** of them die each year. These numbers may be higher; domestic violence remains an underreported issue, and many victims do not seek help. Research shows that victims of domestic violence suffer negative physical and mental health consequences. [1]

- Domestic violence is **any action** done to harm, scare, or force an individual to do things they do not want to do.
- The abuser is often someone the victim intimately knows or lives with.
- Domestic violence does **NOT** have to be physical assault. It can include stalking, neglect, or emotional, psychological, economic, and sexual abuse.
- Children, family members, partners, and cohabitants can all be victims of domestic violence.
- Intimate partner violence, child abuse, and elder abuse are different types of domestic violence. [2]
- **Physical violence** is only **one form** of domestic violence. There are other less obvious forms of abuse, usually involving power and control, that occur simultaneously and exacerbate the situation.

The graphic below can help you to identify and understand 8 different tactics used to assert power and control. [3] Examples are included for each one. These tactics are worse when there is the threat or use of physical and sexual violence, the outer ring of the wheel.

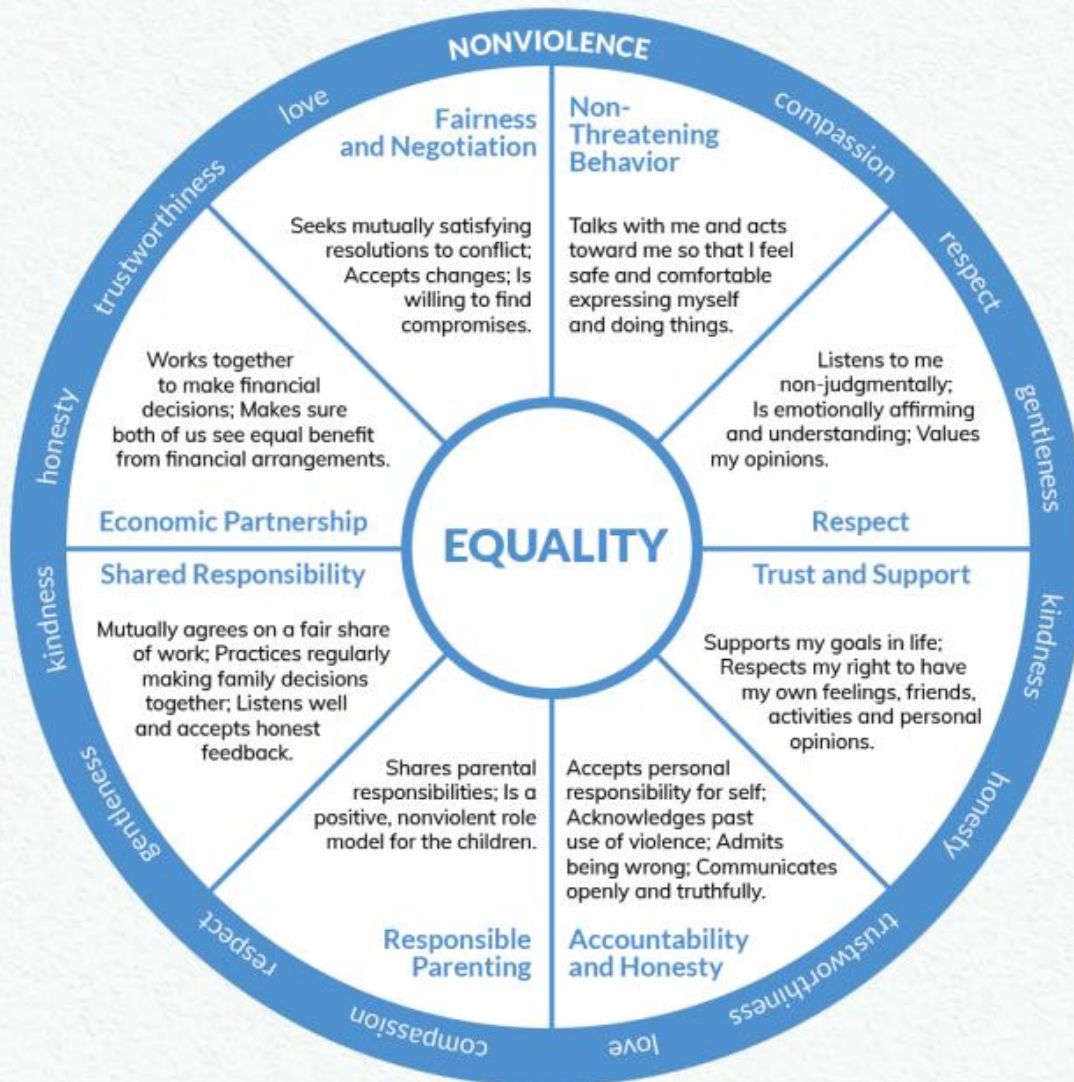




When most people think of equality they think of a 50/50 split, or everything being exactly the same for everyone. While equality can be defined in this manner, in a relationship it's often a little more complicated. Relationships ebb and flow as people's needs, interests and desires change over time – or even daily!

Equality can mean different things to different partners. What matters is how you and your partner define it for your relationship. It's important to communicate regularly about the balance in your relationship, especially if one of you is unhappy or uncomfortable.

Why does equality even matter, you might ask? Well, we know that in an abusive relationship, one partner does whatever he or she can do to maintain power and control over the other. This type of relationship is extremely unbalanced and unequal. By learning more about how to create equality in a relationship, we can end abuse and build healthier relationships.

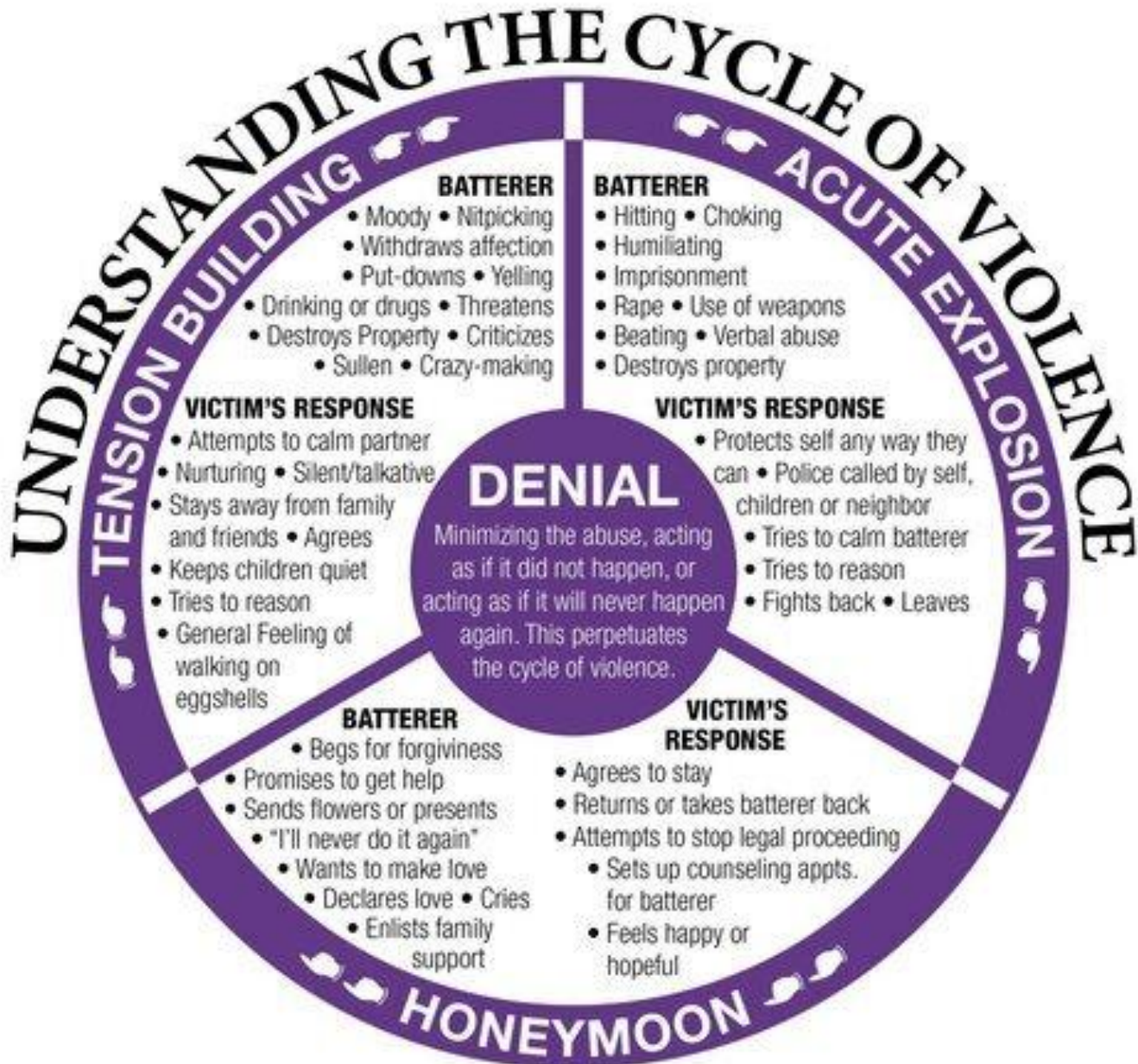


Developed by  
Domestic Abuse Intervention Project  
202 East Superior Street  
Duluth, MN 55802  
(218) 722-4134



**NATIONAL CENTER**  
on Domestic and Sexual Violence  
training • consulting • advocacy  
tel: 312.407.9020 • fax: 312.407.9020 • [www.ncdsv.org](http://www.ncdsv.org)

## Understanding the Cycle of Violence



It's important for you to be aware that any form of abuse will not go away on its own. That's why it's called a cycle.

- Seeking outside help and healing is the only way change will ever take place.

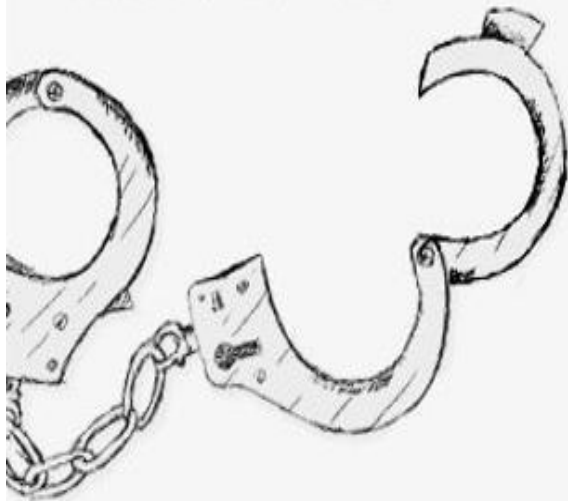


# INVISIBLE VICTIM

## How Domestic Violence Affects Men

### Identifying the male victim

Men suffer in silence for a number of reasons, making them less likely to report the abuse. Men may be **embarrassed** or think they can handle the abuse. Some male victims also **fear** they may be ridiculed for admitting their female partner has abused them. A man who calls the police to report domestic violence is three times more likely to be **arrested** than the woman.



830,000

men fall victim to domestic violence every year

every

37.8

seconds,  
somewhere in  
America a man  
is battered

### Is it a growing trend?

More men than women were victims of intimate partner physical violence in 2010. In the 2001 National Violence Against Women Survey, some 38% of the victims of intimate physical violence were men, but in the 2011 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey 53% were men.

## How often are men victims?



One in ten men in the United States have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by a partner and report that they have been affected by the incident.



Approximately one in four men in the United States has been slapped, pushed or shoved by an intimate partner in his lifetime.



Nearly one in seven men in the United States has experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner in his lifetime.



## Violence in relationships

70%

of women were  
the perpetrators

30%  
were  
male

In non-reciprocally violent relationships, women were the perpetrators in more than 70% of the cases, according to a study titled "Differences in Frequency of Violence and Reported Injury Between Relationships with Reciprocal and Nonreciprocal Intimate Partner Violence," Almost 24 percent of all relationships studied had some violence, and half of those were reciprocally violent.



## Warning Signs



## Long-lasting effect



frequent headaches



chronic pain



activity limitations



difficulty sleeping

Compared to men who have not been subjected to domestic abuse, male victims are at a greater risk for chronic pain, poor mental and physical health, limited physical capabilities, difficulty sleeping and frequent headaches later in life.

## Where to get help

**Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men and Women**

[www.dahmw.org](http://www.dahmw.org)

**State by state breakdown of help:**

[www.safe4all.org](http://www.safe4all.org)

**The National Domestic Violence Hotline**

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)



Source: [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com), [www.ncjrs.gov](http://www.ncjrs.gov), [www.dahmw.org](http://www.dahmw.org), [www.law.fsu.edu](http://www.law.fsu.edu), [www.batteredmen.com](http://www.batteredmen.com), [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov),  
[www.aichepublications.org](http://www.aichepublications.org), [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)

## Consequences of Domestic Violence

- Victims of domestic violence, whether male or female, suffer **short and long-term physical and mental health consequences**. Common physical health effects include broken bones, bruising, lacerations, and cardiovascular and gastrointestinal problems. [2,4]
- Domestic violence is one of the **most common** causes of injury among women [4]; less is known about the impact on male victims.
- Many domestic violence victims also experience mental health problems, such as **depression** and **post-traumatic stress disorder** (PTSD).
- Domestic violence has also been associated with suicidal behavior, sleep and eating disorders, **social dysfunction**, worsening of psychotic symptoms, and drug and alcohol abuse. [4]
- Children who have been around domestic violence feel **greater distress** and are more likely to have behavioral problems, abuse drugs and alcohol, and face depression and anxiety.
- Child abuse is also **common** in families experiencing intimate partner violence. In about 30-60% of families where intimate partner violence takes place, child abuse also takes place. [2]

## Why Do People Stay in Abusive Relationships?

There are **numerous** other reasons that may make it difficult for a victim to leave:

- **Fear** of how the abuser will react, fear of losing custody of children, fear of losing the acceptance of their family, and embarrassment and **shame** are some reasons victims stay in abusive relationships.
- Victims may also face cultural or religious **stigmas** or **financial** barriers.
- The victim may be financially **dependent** on the abuser and lack the financial security to leave.
- If a victim has a **disability**, they may be physically dependent on their abuser for support. For **LGBTQ+** couples, a victim who has not come out to everyone may fear of being outed.
- They may also be less likely to be **believed** or be less likely to believe they themselves are being abused due to the lack of education about the topic.
- If a victim is **undocumented**, they may be afraid of seeking help or fear their abuser will use their citizenship status against them.

## Strangulation

- **Strangulation investigations are Homicide Prevention.**
- Victims of non-fatal strangulation are:
  - **800%** more likely to become a homicide victim.
- Death can occur to the victim in as little as **10-15 seconds** of constant pressure.
- Autopsies of victims who have died by strangulation often **do not** reveal any external injuries. (Glass et al., 2008).

## Stalking

- When an abuser acts in such a way as to **intentionally** create a fear of harm or death for the victim, that is stalking.

If you are in an abusive relationship, you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at any time of day or night to speak to someone trained to help you. The Hotline operates **24 hours a day, seven days a week**. All calls are confidential and anonymous, and interpreter services are available for more than 170 languages. **National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)1-800-787-3224 TTY**

## Effects of Domestic Violence on Children

Short Term Consequences	Long Term Consequences
<b>PRENATAL:</b> higher incidence of miscarriages among battered mothers	<b>PRENATAL:</b> higher incidences of premature birth and low birth weight
<b>INFANTS:</b> crying and irritability; sleep disturbance; poor health;	<b>INFANTS:</b> delay in motor skill and problems with language development
<b>TODDLERS/PRESCHOOLERS:</b> more aggressive than other children or more withdrawn than other children; general fearfulness; anxiety; stomach aches; nightmares; lack of bowel and bladder control in children over 3 years of age; lack of confidence to begin new tasks; excessive fantasy in play	<b>TODDLERS/PRESCHOOLERS:</b> difficulty learning; delays in verbal development; poor motor skills
<b>SCHOOL AGE:</b> poor grades or in special classes (SLD, EH); general aggressiveness; violent outbursts of anger; bullying or withdrawn; dependent; bed wetting; nightmares; digestive problems; ulcers; headaches	<b>SCHOOL AGE:</b> failure of one or more grades levels; poor social skills; lower self-esteem; eating disorders
<b>TEENAGERS:</b> poor grades; refuses to bring friends home; stays away from home or feels responsible to take care of home and mother; runaway; violent outbursts of anger; destroying property; withdrawn; few friends; nightmares; ulcers; digestive problems; bedwetting; headaches; severe acne	<b>TEENAGERS:</b> failure in school; quits school; low self-esteem; joining in on physical abuse with parent; suicide; drug/alcohol abuse; unable to communicate feelings; immaturity; dating violence; poor judgment; irresponsible decision making;

One third of children who have experienced child neglect and abuse report have trauma symptoms such as; depression, anxiety, and emotion dysregulation. (Lünnemann MKM, 2019)





## COUNSELING PROVIDERS FOR CHILDREN

<p><b>Nova Southeastern University</b></p> <p><b>3301 College Ave. Davie, FL</b></p> <p><b>(954) 262-5730</b></p> <p><b>ENGLISH, SPANISH</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.nova.edu/healthcare/clinics-services/family-therapy.html">https://www.nova.edu/healthcare/clinics-services/family-therapy.html</a></p>	<p><b>Henderson Mental Health</b></p> <p><b>2900 West Prospect Road</b></p> <p><b>Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33309</b></p> <p><b>(954) 731-5100 ENGLISH, SPANISH</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.hendersonbh.org/">https://www.hendersonbh.org/</a></p>
<p><b>Kids In Distress</b></p> <p><b>819 NE 26<sup>th</sup> Street Wilton Manors, FL</b></p> <p><b>(954) 390-7600 ENGLISH, SPANISH</b></p> <p><a href="https://kidinc.org/">https://kidinc.org/</a></p>	<p><b>PACE Center for Girls Counseling Center</b></p> <p><b>2225 N Andrews Ave, Wilton Manors, FL 33311</b></p> <p><b>954-561-6939</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.pacecenter.org/">https://www.pacecenter.org/</a></p>
<p><b>Children's Home Society of Florida 3333 Forest Hill</b></p> <p><b>Boulevard West Palm Beach, FL 33406</b></p> <p><b>(561) 868-4300</b></p> <p><a href="https://chsfl.org/">https://chsfl.org/</a></p>	

## How to Obtain a Restraining Order

If you have been a victim of stalking and/or physical violence by a spouse, ex-spouse, relative, someone you live with or have a child with, you may be granted a temporary Restraining Order for protection (Injunction).

**Where to go:** Clerk of Courts Intake Unit – Phone Number: 954-831-5579

201 SE 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Rm. 02140

Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33301

Hours of Operation: 8:30 am - 5:00 pm

There is metered parking along 6<sup>th</sup> Street and there is attended courthouse parking around the courthouse. You may wish to either bring quarters for the metered parking or bills for the attended parking lots.

### West Regional Courthouse

100 N. Pine Island Road - Room 180

Plantation, FL 33324

Phone Number: 954-831-5612

Hours of Operation: 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (filings stop at 2:00 p.m.)

**All filings after 2:00 p.m. must be filed at the Broward County Central Courthouse located at 201 SE 6th Street, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 or through the eFiling Portal.**

**For emergencies after normal business hours, please contact Women in Distress 954-761-1133.**

**What to bring:** A picture I.D. of yourself

**An address where the Respondent** (the person from whom you are seeking protection) can be served.

There is no fee for a Domestic Violence Injunction.

Process takes about 3-5 hours.

You can fill out the documents online and hand in the packet in person for a quicker process time.

<https://www.browardclerk.org/Divisions/DomesticViolence#RestrainingOrdersAndInjunctions>

Child care is available for ages 0-13 in room **#02129**. You may fill out the information form in the Domestic Violence Office (across the hall).

Make sure to pack diapers, formula and snacks for children while in child care.

### **What will happen:**

You will fill out the paperwork with the guidance of the Clerk of Courts staff. You will be given instructions about filing the papers with the court.

A judge will review your request for a Restraining Order and decide while you are at the courthouse.

The Restraining Order becomes effective only after the Respondent is served with the paperwork by a Law Enforcement Officer.

Keep a copy of the Restraining Order with you at all times. Call the police **anytime** if the Respondent harasses you, comes to your home or place of work, or attempts to harm you. The Respondent may be arrested for violating the order. You may also go to Family Court Services to file paperwork indicating that the Respondent has violated the Restraining Order.

- Please contact your assigned prosecutor to alert them of a Restraining Order violation. At this point they can move to revoke Bond if case is pending.

**For further assistance, call the Clerk of Courts Intake Unit at (954) 831-5579.**

## Broward County Resource Providers

AGENCY	CONTACT	DETAILS
<b>2-1-1 Broward</b> Your First Call for Help	954-537-0211 <a href="http://211-broward.org">211-broward.org</a>	Crisis hotline; resource and referral source for anyone in Broward County LANGUAGES: Español, Kreyol, Français, others upon request
<b>Women in Distress</b> Mon-Thu 8:30AM-4:30PM Schedule an Appt 24 Hour Crisis Hotline LANGUAGES: English + Español	PO Box 50187 Lighthouse Point, FL 33074 Courthouse: 201 SE 6th St #5107 954-760-9800 954-761-1133 <a href="http://widbroward.org">widbroward.org</a>	Shelter and services for women, men, + children support groups, emergency shelter, legal assistance for restraining orders + dependency, child advocacy, childcare, counseling, pet shelter
<b>Henderson Behavioral Health</b> LANGUAGES: English + Español	954-463-0911 (Mobile Response Team) 954-606-0911 (Centralized Receiving center for 18 years +) <a href="http://hendersonbh.org">hendersonbh.org</a>	Psychiatric Evaluation, Medication Management, Therapy Counseling on Sliding Scale: Based on income, Accept Medicare + Insurance
<b>National Domestic Violence Hotline</b>	<b>800-799-7233</b> SMS Text: Text START to 88788	24/7/365 Confidential Support; Languages: English & Spanish 200+ through interpretation service
<b>Nova Southeastern University</b> Psychology Services Center, Maltz Building Family Violence Program Family Therapy LANGUAGES: depends on student rotation	5151 College Ave Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33314 954-262-5730 954-262-5850 954-262-3030 <a href="http://nsuhealth.nova.edu/services/family-therapy/index.html">nsuhealth.nova.edu/services/family-therapy/index.html</a>	Family Violence Program: individuals only, \$100 for 3 intro sessions, \$80 Individual sessions, sliding scale based on income  Family Therapy: \$25/session
<b>Banyan Health</b> Broward Miami After Hours	<a href="https://banyanhealth.org/service/mental-health/">https://banyanhealth.org/service/mental-health/</a> 954-327-4060 305-774-3300 305-774-3400	Mental Health, Primary Care (Miami only), Children Services, Substance Abuse, Psychiatry, Research/Evaluation
<b>Hispanic Unity</b> LANGUAGES: English + Español	5840 Johnson St, Hollywood, FL 33021 954-964-8884 <a href="http://hispanicunity.org">hispanicunity.org</a>	Free immigration assistance Thu 9AM-12PM Education: Pre-K-Highschool, English, Parenting Economic Dev: Tax Prep, Home Ownership, Entrepreneurship, Public Benefits, Employment Services
<b>SunServe</b> Youth & Senior Services	2312 Wilton Dr, Wilton Manors, FL 33305 1480 SW 9th Ave, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33315 954-764-5150 <a href="http://sunserve.org">sunserve.org</a>	LGBTQIA+ housing case management, mental health counseling, senior day center, substance use recovery, youth services, transgender services, women's health services, support groups
<b>Career Source</b> North Center (Coconut Creek) Central Center (Oakland Park) South Center (Hollywood)	<a href="https://careersourcebroward.com/">https://careersourcebroward.com/</a> 954-969-3541 954-677-5555 954-967-1010	Job assistance, employment referrals, professional workshops, training + education, internships, youth services
<b>Family Success Center</b> Coral Springs Pompano Beach Hollywood Fort Lauderdale	954-357-5000 954-357-5340 954-357-5650 954-357-5001	Case Management Services: emergency assistance, rent, mortgage, utilities information and referrals to local community partners <a href="http://broward.org/FamilySuccess/Pages/FamilySuccessCenters.aspx">broward.org/FamilySuccess/Pages/FamilySuccessCenters.aspx</a>
<b>Glass House</b> Court approved group structured psychoeducation format	3500 N State Road 7, Ste 310 Lauderdale Lakes, FL 33319 954-938-0055 <a href="http://theglasshouseonline.net">theglasshouseonline.net</a>	Anger Management, Juvenile AM, Betterers' Intervention, Addiction Program, Parenting Program \$50 intake fee (sliding scale) \$100 fee Psychosocial Evaluation
<b>Broward Public Schools</b> Homeless Education Assistance Resource Team (HEART) Mental Health Services Food + Nutrition Services	<a href="http://browardschools.com/heart">browardschools.com/heart</a> <a href="http://browardschools.com/mentalhealthservices">browardschools.com/mentalhealthservices</a> <a href="http://broward.k12.fl.us/foodservice">broward.k12.fl.us/foodservice</a>	Services available to children attending Broward County Public Schools include housing assistance, mental health services, food and nutrition services
<b>Catholic Legal Services</b> Broward / Miami	6565 Taft St, 4th Fl, Hollywood, FL 33024 954-306-9537 / 305-373-1073 <a href="http://cclsmiami.org">cclsmiami.org</a>	Immigration assistance in Broward and Miami-Dade
<b>Legal Aid</b>	491 N State Road 7 Plantation, FL 33137/ Main Courthouse 954-736-2400	Free legal assistance: crime victims, family law, elders, economic 954-736 2118 / <a href="http://browardlegalaid.org">browardlegalaid.org</a> Immigration: 954-951 5343



## State Attorney's Office - Victim Advocate Unit Safety Planning Guide

### IMPORTANT NUMBERS AND WEBSITES:

Emergency	911	
Women in Distress (Crisis Hotline)	(954) 761-1133	<a href="https://www.womenindistress.org/">https://www.womenindistress.org/</a>
First Call For Help (Crisis Hotline)	(954) 537-0211 or 211	<a href="http://211-broward.org/">http://211-broward.org/</a>
Police Department		
Victim Advocate (Police Department)		
State Attorney's Office (Domestic Violence Unit)	(954) 831-7978	<a href="https://browardsao.com/domestic-violence-unit/">https://browardsao.com/domestic-violence-unit/</a>
Victim Advocate (State Attorney Office)	(954) 765-4133	<a href="https://browardsao.com/victims-and-witnesses/">https://browardsao.com/victims-and-witnesses/</a>
Family		
Friends		
Work / Supervisor's number		
Children's School or Day Care		
Restraining Order / Clerk of Courts Intake Unit	(954) 831-5579	<a href="https://www.browardclerk.org/Divisions/DomesticViolence#GeneralInformation">https://www.browardclerk.org/Divisions/DomesticViolence#GeneralInformation</a>
Clerk's Office Restraining Order	(954) 831-5570	<a href="https://www.browardclerk.org/Divisions/DomesticViolence#RestrainingOrdersAndInjunctions">https://www.browardclerk.org/Divisions/DomesticViolence#RestrainingOrdersAndInjunctions</a>
Number to verify service of Restraining Order (BSO)	(954) 831-8787 Ext. 3	
Victim Notification // VINE	1(877) 846-3435	<a href="https://www.vinelink.com/">https://www.vinelink.com/</a>
Confinement Status	(954) 831-5900	
Office of the Attorney General (Crimes Compensation)	1(800) 226-6667	<a href="http://myfloridalegal.com/">http://myfloridalegal.com/</a>
Family Court Services (Child support)	954-831-7196	<a href="https://www.browardclerk.org/Divisions/Family#General">https://www.browardclerk.org/Divisions/Family#General</a>
Broward County Clerk of Court	954-831-6565	<a href="http://www.browardclerk.org">http://www.browardclerk.org</a>
E-Notify: Sign up to receive FREE notification via text and/or email for upcoming court dates		<a href="https://enotify.flcourts.org/User/Signup">https://enotify.flcourts.org/User/Signup</a>
Track custody status of defendant in Broward County		<a href="http://www.sheriff.org/">http://www.sheriff.org/</a>

## Things you should consider when developing your safety plan:

As the victim in an abusive relationship, you do not have the ability to control or change your partner's behavior. You do, however, have options that you can explore to help keep you and your family safe. Only you have the ability to determine with whom you may safely discuss your situation and possible options. It is a good idea to speak to people who may be able to help you before a crisis occurs so that you have a plan as well as an idea of resources that may be able to assist you.

- Have an **escape route**, identify which door, window, stairwell or elevator offers the quickest way out of the home. Know where you plan to go, how you will get there and practice if possible.
- Keep money, keys, important telephone numbers, clothing and any other necessary items in the same place in order to assist you in leaving quickly. (Consider leaving cash, duplicate keys to your car and home, a day's clothes and important items with someone you trust outside the home or at work, in case you have to leave without your belongings).
- Identify **safety areas** in the house where there are no weapons and where there are always ways to escape. If an argument seems unavoidable, move to a room or area with easy access to an exit to allow you to leave if necessary.
- If possible, have a phone **accessible** at all times and know the numbers to call for help.
- Discuss safety with your children. Identify a safe place for them and teach them to dial 911. Use a code word to teach them to call for help or leave the house.

### ***If the abuser does not reside with you:***

- If you have a restraining order, keep it with you at all times.
- Vary your routes to and from work. Do not walk to your car alone. Park in well-lit areas.
- Change your telephone number.
- Install new deadbolt locks on doors, secure all windows and glass doors.
- Trim all trees and shrubbery for an unobstructed view of the property surrounding the home.
- Make sure your children's school or daycare center knows who is authorized to pick up your children.
- Install smoke detectors and purchase a fire extinguisher.
- Alert your neighbors of your situation.
- If you have a security alarm system, change the code.
- Consider installing an alarm or security cameras.
- Limit your postings on social media – don't "update your status" or "check-in" at places, thereby disclosing your location.
- Change your passwords for bank accounts, electricity bill, cell phone bill, email account, social media, etc.

## ***Safety Planning Worksheet***

### ***Step 1: Prepare***

Collect evidence. If it is safe to do so, keeping a journal of abusive incidents (date, time, details), including threats, as well as copies of threatening or abusive emails, text messages, police reports, doctor or hospital records will be helpful if and when you file for an order of protection or press charges against an abuser. Keep this evidence outside of your home, like at a workplace, a friend's house or a safety deposit box. I can keep the evidence I've collected or will collect, which includes:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

at \_\_\_\_\_ (safe place the abuser won't find).

Stash a getaway bag. This bag, which you should, again, keep somewhere where the abuser can't find it, such as a friend's house, your workplace or a neighbor's house, will contain important documents such as: your driver's license, passport, birth certificate, social security cards, copies of financial records, your lease or deed, health insurance information, prescriptions, marriage license or divorce papers, and all similar paperwork for your children, if applicable. It should also include, if possible, some cash you are able to save in case the abuser cancels credits cards or blocks you from accessing bank accounts.

I will make sure to pack the following in my getaway bag:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

and will hide it at \_\_\_\_\_ (safe place the abuser won't find).



## Step 2: Plan

Decide where to go. When it's time to leave—it could be while the abuser is at work, the next time you feel in danger, exactly two weeks from now or whenever you deem the best time—you need to plan where to go. Consider an emergency shelter (which will need advance notice, so contact an advocate there), a friend or family member's house that the abuser doesn't know the location of or is far enough away that it will be difficult for the abuser to get to you, or, if affordable, a hotel or apartment that you pay for with cash so the abuser cannot track you there. Keep in mind that if you have a cell phone, the abuser may be able to trace your location, so consider getting a pay-as-you-go temporary phone and leaving your cell behind.

I will be leaving \_\_\_\_\_ (approximate date/time)

and going to \_\_\_\_\_.

I will only tell \_\_\_\_\_ (trusted friend/family member/advocate) of my whereabouts.

Plan for all possibilities. You know your partner best. You know what abusive tactics he or she is most likely to use. Make sure you think about that as you get ready to leave. The abuser may feel like something is different in your demeanor and may become more controlling. When an abuser feels like they are losing control, it is often the most dangerous time for a survivor. Prepare for this by thinking out different scenarios that could happen and what you will do. For example, if an abuser always shuts the bedroom door to close you in before he or she becomes violent, can you unlock a window ahead of time, given you're on the ground floor, and exit through it when this starts? If an abuser threatens to keep or harm your children or pets if you leave, can you make sure they're in a safe place before you leave, such as taking them to a trusted relative's house? Can you create a code word that, if you say it in front of your children, they'll know to run next door to the neighbor's house and call 911?

I know my partner is likely to use the following tactics to control me and keep me from leaving:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

To counteract these things, I will prepare by doing the following:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Step 3: After You Leave***

Stay vigilant. After you leave an abuser, or after an abuser is forced to leave your home, you'll want to take safety precautions to keep yourself and your family safe. This should include considering an order of protection, alerting your place of employment and your children's school what is going on and giving them a photo of the abuser so they can alert you if he or she comes around, using a different route to get to and from work or school, changing your schedule, taking a break from social media so the abuser is less likely to track or harass you, and changing your phone number and making it unlisted. After I leave, I will do the following actions to help keep myself safe:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

***To create a safety plan with a domestic violence or dating violence advocate, please call:***

#### **Florida Domestic Violence Hotline**

1-800-500-1119

TTY: 1-800-621-4202

#### **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

<https://www.thehotline.org/what-is-live-chat/>

1-800-799-7233

TTY: 1-800-787-3224

#### **References**

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