

Protective Orders and Legal Resources



For some survivors, the criminal legal system may offer options for protection from abusive partners. The Hotline doesn't give legal advice—nor are we legal advocates—but there may be legal resources available to you in your community that we can help you identify. Call us at **800.799.SAFE (7233)** or chat to speak to an advocate about resources near you.

Protective Orders and Restraining Orders

- A protective order is a legal document intended to prohibit your partner from physically coming near you or harming or harassing you, your children, or other loved ones.
- You can apply for a protective order at courthouses.
- Protective orders may be able to put a stop to physical abuse but they depend on your partner's adherence to the law and law enforcement's willingness to enforce the protective order. Psychological abuse is still possible, and **a protective order should never replace a safety plan.**

Other Legal Resources

- [WomensLaw.org](https://www.womenslaw.org) has state-by-state information about laws including protective and restraining orders and child custody laws
- [Legal Services Corporation](https://www.legal-services-corporation.org) is an independent nonprofit established by Congress in 1974 to provide financial support for civil legal aid to low-income Americans. The Corporation currently provides funding to 134 independent nonprofit legal aid organizations in every state, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Territories.
- [VINE](https://www.vine.vawnet.org) allows crime victims to obtain timely and reliable information about criminal cases and the custody status of offenders 24 hours a day. Victims and other

concerned citizens can also register to be notified by phone, email or TTY device.

- **National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women** assists battered women charged with crimes and members of their defense teams such as defense attorneys, advocates, expert witnesses.
- Ask a volunteer legal services provider (attorneys who offer free legal services to low-income individuals) or a local advocacy group about actions against your partner for behaviors like criminal assault, aggravated assault, harassment, stalking, or interfering with child custody.

Protections for non-U.S. citizens

- **The Immigrant Legal Resource Center** and **WomensLaw.org** offer information about your rights as an immigrant. Further information about **resources available to non-U.S. citizens** can be found here.
- The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) states that people without citizenship status who are experiencing domestic violence and are married to abusers who are U.S. citizens or Legal Permanent Residents may qualify to self-petition for legal status. **Learn more about USCIS guidelines concerning VAWA.**

- Victims of certain crimes including domestic abuse and trafficking may be eligible for specific visas based on **certain eligibility requirements**.
- Legal actions to escape abuse can come with their own risks of immigration consequences depending on the findings of the judge who presides over your petition. A **specialized immigration attorney** should always be your first point of contact for immigration questions and concerns.

Answers shouldn't be hard to find.



We're here to help!

Building Your Case: How to Document Abuse



Safety Planning with Children



Contact

National Domestic Violence Hotline
PO Box 90249
Austin, Texas 78709
Administrative Line: 737-225-3150

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National Domestic Violence Hotline

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(7233)**



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