

What to know now that you have a Protection from Abuse Order

The Petition for Protection from Abuse will be filed in for a Judge to review. The Judge will do one of three things:

1. Grant the Protection from Abuse Order (PFA)-this protects solely you. Once the Defendant is served with his/her copy of the Protection Order, he/she will not be allowed any direct or indirect contact with you to include: telephoning, texting, social media contact, threatening, stalking, annoying or engaging in any contact that would make you fear for your safety. The Defendant will be restrained from coming to your residence and place of employment. If the Defendant continues to do any of the above-mentioned items, contact the police department and file for a Violation of Protection from Abuse incident report and ask what your warrant options are. Violation of Protection from Abuse Orders is a misdemeanor charge. **You will be given a court date in which you must attend. Failure to attend said court date can result in the dismissal of your PFA.**

2. Grant a Mutual Restraining Order- this protects both parties. This prevents both parties from have contact by telephone, texting, social media as well as threatening, stalking, annoying or engaging in any contact that would make the other party fear for their safety. This also includes both parties' place of residence and/or place of employment.

3. Deny the Petition for Protection from Abuse- the Judge has the full discretion to approve or deny any Petition for Protection from Abuse, should he/she feels that the Petition does not rise to the level of abuse that the PFA is there to address, or the events of abuse do not fall into the time frames that allow a PFA to be granted.

You will receive a copy of the Judge's decision in the mail at the address you have provided within a few days. Please feel free to contact the Victim Service Officer at the number listed below if you need to know prior to the Order arriving in the mail.

Should you have any questions regarding the Protection from Abuse Order, please contact the Victim Service Officers at the District Attorney's Office, Amanda Tidwell at (256) 231-1774 and Amber Sanders Wilson at (256) 231-4527.

If you need to find out if the Protection from Abuse Order was served on the Defendant, please contact the Calhoun County Sheriff's Department at (256) 236-6600 and/or the police jurisdiction in which the Defendant lives.

SHOULD YOU FEEL IN FEAR OF YOUR LIFE OR IMMEDIATE SAFETY, PLEASE CALL 911!

What should I do when I leave the courthouse?

Once you leave the courthouse, here is a list of things you might want to do:

- Make several copies of the protection from abuse order as soon as possible.
- Keep a copy of the order with you at all times.
- Leave copies of the order at your work place, at your home, at the children's school or daycare, in your car, with a sympathetic neighbor, and so on.
- Give a copy to the security guard or person at the front desk where you live and/or work along with a photo of the abuser.
- Give a copy of the order to anyone who is named in and protected by the order.
- One week after court, call your local law enforcement office to make sure they have received a copy of the order. If the court has not given you an extra copy for your local law enforcement agency, take one of your extra copies and deliver it to them.
- Take steps to make a safety plan, which could include changing your locks and your phone number.

How can a PFA order help me?

In an **emergency (ex parte) protection from abuse order**, a judge can:

- Order the abuser to:
 - Stop committing (or threatening to commit) acts of abuse against you, your children and anyone else included in the order;
 - Stop harassing, annoying, and stalking you and your children;
 - Stop calling or contacting you and your children directly or indirectly (through a third party, for example);
 - Stop any conduct (or threatening any conduct) that puts you or your children in reasonably fear or physical injury;
 - Not have physical or violent contact with you or your property and stay at least 300 feet away from your home (even if you share the home with the abuser), from your work, from your children's school and any other specific place that you go to often (assuming the defendant has no good reason to be there);
 - Be removed from your home, regardless of who owns the home;

- Not interfere with the custody of your children and not remove the children from the state; and
- Not destroy, sell, or conceal joint property;*

What can I do if the abuser violates the order?

You can call the police immediately, even if you think it is a minor violation. It can be a class A misdemeanor crime* and civil "contempt of court" if the abuser violates the order in any way. The PFA order can be violated if the abuser does not follow every provision in the order. It is a good idea to write down the name of the responding officer(s) and their badge number(s) in case you want to follow up on your case.

What happens if I move?

Your Alabama PFA order is automatically good throughout Alabama and in all US states. The federal law provides what is called "full faith and credit," which means that once you have a qualifying criminal or civil protection order, it follows you wherever you go, including US Territories and tribal lands. Different states have different rules for enforcing out-of-state protection orders - in some states, you need to register the order. You can find out about your state's policies by contacting a domestic violence program, the clerk of courts, or the prosecutor in your area.

If you are involved with an abuser, you should know you are never safe. You need to think about ways to take care of yourself and make a plan for your safety. Every situation is different, but safety planning is a crucial step towards protecting yourself and your children.

You know your situation better than anyone else. The following are suggestions you may wish to consider in planning for your safety.

Immediate Safety:

Now

- Practice getting out of the house quickly.
- Tell neighbors to call police if they hear strange noises. (Tip: Make a code to signal for them to call.)
- Teach your children how to dial 911 and find safety.
- Decide where you will go.
- Call the Alabama Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-650-6522 to locate the nearest shelter.

During an Attack

- Scream for help (and do not stop).
- Do NOT run into a room that contains potential weapons such as the kitchen.
- Do NOT run into a room with no exit such as the bathroom or a closet.
- Call the police.
- Try to get to a safe place such as a neighbor's house or public place.

After a Violent Encounter

- Get out of the house.
- Get medical help. Your records could be evidence that can help you.
- Tell someone you trust what happened (a doctor, counselor, relative, neighbor).
- Call the Alabama Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-650-6522 for immediate help.
- Consider leaving and finding a shelter, even if just for the night.

Longterm Safety:

If You Leave

- Store money, clothes and keys with a friend or in a safety deposit box.
- Collect important, sentimental and valuable personal belongings i.e. medication, pictures, jewelry, etc.
- Open a separate savings account.
- Keep copies of important documents and personal identification cards on hand.
- Download and complete a Protection From Abuse order.

If He Leaves

- Change the locks on your doors and windows.
- Install an alarm system, window bars, smoke detectors, and a fire extinguisher.
- Put up outside lights.

In the Workplace

- Ask co-workers not to tell where you are if your batterer comes to the workplace or calls.
- Keep your office door locked if you can.
- Plan an escape route if your partner comes to work.
- Work when other people are there, never alone.
- Vary your route and the times you go to work.

In the Community

- Vary routines your partner may be familiar with i.e. change groceries, banks, or day care.
- Go out during the busiest times and/or take someone with you.
- Have people you trust walk you to and from your car.
- Carry a whistle.
- Take a self-defense class.

It is important to develop an age-appropriate and realistic safety plan for your children. The ACADV has provided some topics to consider and discuss with your kids to be proactive.

Kids in Preschool and Elementary School:

- What is something I can think about when I get scared?
- Who can I go to when I get scared?
- Who can I talk to when I am feeling down or afraid?
- Where are the safest exits in the house?
- Who can I contact in an emergency? (Make sure your child knows his/her phone number as well how to contact the police or a neighbor, friend and/or relative in the case of an emergency.)

Teenagers:

- Who should I tell about the violence and abuse (friends, teachers, security, etc.) in order to be safe?
- If stranded, who should I call for a ride home?
- Where could I go to quickly to get away from an abusive person?

- Keep a journal describing the abuse.
- Keep spare change, calling cards, number of the local shelter, number of someone who could help you and restraining orders with you at all times.
- What other things can I do?

How to Work with Children:

When first working with a child, it is helpful to ask what makes her/him feel comfortable and uncomfortable with adults. Parents and other adults working with children will need to build trust to yield nurturing and healing.

These key factors will help ...

- **Show respect.** Promote independence, allow for privacy and respect the child's feelings for the other parent. Believe in them and show interest in their opinions, thoughts and ideas.
- **Provide security.** Talk and act so that the child feels safe and comfortable expressing themselves. Be gentle, dependable and attentive.
- **Give discipline.** Use discipline to give instruction, not to punish. Be clear and consistent about limits and expectations.
- **Express affection.** Participate in their lives and include them in yours. Let the child know you care by being affectionate, especially at times when he or she is upset.
- **Offer support.** Encourage the child to follow their interests. Let them make mistakes. Listen to them, give them space and recognize their achievements.

Dating violence can happen to anyone. Everyone deserves to be respected in their dating relationships. Whether you are casually seeing someone or in a serious relationship, knowing these Safety Tips and the Dating Bill of Rights will help ensure that you make smart decisions.

Safety Tips:

- Consider double dating the first few times you go out with a new person.
- Before leaving on a date, know the exact plans for the evening and make sure a friend or family member knows what time you expect your date to end. Let your date know that you plan to check in with this person when you arrive home.
- Be aware of your decreased ability to react under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- If you leave a party with someone you do not know well, make sure you tell another person you are leaving and with whom. Ask a friend to call and make sure you arrived home safely.
- Assert yourself when necessary. Be firm and straightforward in your relationships.
- Trust your instincts. If a situation makes you uncomfortable, try to be calm and think of a way to remove yourself from the situation.

Dating Bill of Rights:

I have the right to

- Ask for a date.
- Refuse a date.
- Suggest activities.
- Refuse any activities, even if my date is excited about them.
- Have my own feelings and be able to express them.
- Say, "I think my friend is wrong and his actions are inappropriate".
- Tell someone not to interrupt me.
- Have my limits and values respected.
- Tell my partner when I need affection.
- Refuse affection.
- Be heard.
- Refuse to lend money.
- Refuse sex any time, for any reason.
- Have friends and space aside from my partner.

I have the responsibility to

- Determine my limits and values.
- Respect the limits of others.
- Communicate clearly and honestly.
- Not violate the limits of others.
- Ask for help when I need it.
- Be considerate.
- Check my actions and decisions to determine if they are good or bad for me.
- Set high goals for myself.
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Concerned that you may be in an abusive relationship? Remember you are not alone. Nearly 20 percent of dating couples report some type of violence in their relationship. Please talk to a trusted adult or contact ACADV for help.

The most common question asked about domestic violence victims is — "Why does she stay?"

This question puts the responsibility back on the victim and shows a misunderstanding of the dynamics of domestic violence. No one deserves to be abused or threaten. She is a victim and is not to blame. A more appropriate question would be: "Why does he abuse her?" or "Why can't he be stopped from hurting his family?"

Women stay in abusive relationships for many reasons. Guilt and fear are major factors. She may convince herself that it is ok because he has a hard life, that he needs her or that it is her fault. She may fear harm to her reputation, the safety of her children, retaliation, more severe abuse or that he will take her life.

If you know someone who is being abused, let her speak confidentially about her situation. You may be the only person with whom she feels comfortable.

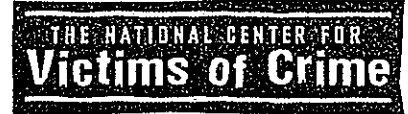
Address the Following:

- Show her you care and extend emotional support.
- Listen to her, believe her and do not blame her for the abuse.
- Advise her not to deny or minimize the seriousness of the abuse.
- Suggest she call the Alabama Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-650-6522 for help.
- Inform her about resources in her community for victims of domestic violence.
- Let her keep important papers and extra clothes at your house.
- Assure your friend that the violence in her home concerns you. Let her know you are afraid for her safety/life.
- Learn about domestic violence and help your friend understand she is not alone.
- Encourage her to develop a safety plan and think of ways to escape quickly.
- Focus on her strengths and remind her she deserves better.

Look for These Signs:

- Have you noticed evidence of injuries and improbable explanations?
- Have you noticed her missing work frequently?
- Have you noticed changes in her or her children's behavior?
- Does her partner show an unusual amount of control over her life?
- Does her partner embarrass or ridicule her in public?
- Does her partner blame her for the way he acts or the things he says?

get help



Domestic Violence: Safety Plan Guidelines

One of the most important things you can do when developing your safety plan is to talk to a victim advocate who can help you fully consider safety issues, understand your legal rights, and identify community resources (e.g., shelters, sources of financial assistance, or food banks). You can locate a victim advocate through a local domestic violence agency, which provides services at no-charge to victims. The National Crime Victim Helpline (1-800-FYI-CALL) can also help you prepare a safety plan and find victim assistance within your own community.

The following safety suggestions have been compiled from safety plans distributed by state domestic violence coalitions from around the country. Following these suggestions is **not a guarantee of safety**, but could help improve your safety situation.

Personal Safety with an Abuser

- Identify your partner's use and level of force so that you can assess danger to you and your children before it occurs.
- Try to avoid an abusive situation by leaving.
- Identify safe areas of the house where there are no weapons and where there are always ways to escape. If arguments occur, try to move to those areas.
- Don't run to where the children are as your partner may hurt them as well.
- If violence is unavoidable, make yourself a small target: dive into a corner and curl up into a ball with your face protected and your arms around either side of your head, fingers entwined.
- If possible, have a phone accessible at all times and know the numbers to call for help. Know where the nearest pay phone is located. Know your local battered women's shelter phone number. Don't be afraid to call the police.
- Let trusted friends and neighbors know of your situation and develop a plan and visual signal for when you need help.
- Teach your children how to get help. Instruct them not to get involved in the violence between you and your partner. Plan a code word to signal that they should get help or leave the house.
- Tell your children that violence is never right, even when someone they love is being violent. Tell them that neither you nor they are at fault or cause the violence, and that when anyone is being violent, it is important to keep safe.
- Practice how to get out safely. Practice with your children.
- Plan for what you will do if your children tell your partner of your plan or if your partner otherwise finds out about your plan.
- Keep weapons like guns and knives locked up and as inaccessible as possible.
- Make a habit of backing the car into the driveway and keeping it fueled. Keep the driver's door unlocked and the other doors locked for a quick escape.
- Try not to wear scarves or long jewelry that could be used to strangle you.
- Create several plausible reasons for leaving the house at different times of the day or night.
- Call a domestic violence hotline periodically to assess your options and get a supportive, understanding ear.

Getting Ready to Leave

- Keep any evidence of physical abuse, such as photographs of bruises and torn clothing.
- Know where you can go to get help; tell someone what is happening to you.
- If you are injured, go to a doctor or an emergency room and report what happened to you. Ask that they document your injuries.
- Plan with your children and identify a safe place for them (for example, a room with a lock or a friend's house where they can go for help). Reassure them that their job is to stay safe, not to protect you.
- Contact your local battered women's shelter and find out about laws and other resources available to you before you have to use them during a crisis.
- Keep a journal of all violent incidents, noting dates, events, and threats made.
- Acquire job skills as you can, such as learning to type or taking courses at a community college.
- Try to set money aside or ask friends or relatives to hold money for you.
- Store some belongings with a friend or relative. Leave clothing, medications, your Social Security card, a credit card (if possible), citizenship documents, children's school/medical records, children's toys, insurance information, copies of birth certificates, money, and other valued personal possessions with them.

The Day You Leave

- Leave when it is least expected, for example, during times of agreement and calm.
- Create a false trail. Call motels, real estate agencies, schools in a town at least six hours away from where you plan to relocate. Ask questions that require a call back to your house in order to leave those phone numbers on record.

General Guidelines for Leaving an Abusive Relationship

- Make a plan for how you will escape and where you will go.
- Plan for a quick escape.
- Put aside emergency cash as you can.
- Hide an extra set of car keys.
- Pack an extra set of clothes for yourself and your children and store them at a trusted friend or neighbor's house. Try to avoid using next-door neighbors, close family members, or mutual friends.
- Take with you important phone numbers (of friends, relatives, doctors, schools, etc.) as well as other important items, including:
 - ✓ Driver's license
 - ✓ Regularly needed medication
 - ✓ List of credit cards (account number and date of expiration) held by self or jointly, or the credit cards themselves if you have access to them
 - ✓ Pay stubs
 - ✓ Checkbooks and information about bank accounts and other assets.

If time is available, also take:

- ✓ Citizenship documents (such as your passport, greencard, etc.)
- ✓ Titles, deeds, other property information, and tax returns
- ✓ Medical records
- ✓ Children's school records and immunization records
- ✓ Insurance information
- ✓ Copy of marriage license, birth certificates, will, and other legal documents
- ✓ Verification of Social Security numbers
- ✓ Welfare identification
- ✓ Valued pictures, jewelry, or personal possessions.

After Leaving the Abusive Relationship

If you are getting a restraining order and the offender is leaving:

- Change your locks and phone number.
- Change your work hours and route taken to work.
- Change the route you take to transport children to school.
- Keep a certified copy of your restraining order with you at all times.
- Inform friends, neighbors, and employers that you have a restraining order in effect.
- Give copies of the restraining order to employers, neighbors, and schools along with a picture of the offender.
- If available in your community, register with **VINE Protective Order™** to be notified immediately when the order is served, when hearings will be held, and when any amendments to the order are filed. Ask your victim advocate or sheriff's office about this service.
- Call law enforcement to enforce the order.
- Carry a charged cell phone preprogrammed to 911.

If you leave:

- Consider renting a post office box for your mail.
- Be aware that addresses are listed on restraining orders and police reports.
- Be careful to whom you give your new address and phone number.
- Change your work hours if possible.
- Alert school authorities about the situation.
- Consider changing your children's schools.
- Reschedule any appointments that the offender is aware of when you leave.
- Use different stores and frequent different social spots.
- Alert neighbors and request that they call the police if they feel you may be in danger.
- Talk to trusted people about the violence.
- Replace wooden doors with steel or metal doors.
- Install security systems if possible.
- Install a lighting system that turns on when a person is coming close to the house (motion sensitive lights).
- Tell people you work with about the situation and have your calls screened by one receptionist if possible.
- Tell people who take care of your children which individuals are allowed to pick up your children. Explain the situation to them and provide them with a copy of the restraining order.
- Call the telephone company to request caller ID. Ask that your phone be blocked so that if you call, neither your partner nor anyone else will be able to get your new, unlisted phone number.
- Receive ongoing support from domestic violence and mental health service providers.

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Emergency Situations

All battering is dangerous; one push or shove can quickly escalate to a life-threatening situation. Battering increases in frequency and severity over time. Certain behaviors, actions and words by an abuser, however, indicate particular danger for you. The ACADV wants to help you identify if you are in a risky situation.

Look for These Signs:

Threatens suicide or homicide. If he says he will kill himself, understand that this likely means he will kill you as well.

Fantasizes about homicide or suicide. If he sees this as a "solution" to his problems, he may attempt it. Beware of your abuser threatening to kill himself. Usually, it means he plans to kill you first.

Possesses weapons. If your abuser owns weapons and has used them or threatened to use them in the past, he has a potential for lethal assault. The use of guns is a strong predictor of homicide.

Ownership issues. If your abuser believes you "belong" to him, or "death before divorce," his behavior is more likely to become lethal.

Idolizes you. If your abuser idolizes you, or depends heavily on you to sustain him, and has isolated himself from others, it is likely he will retaliate against you if you decide to end the relationship.

Separation violence. If your abuser believes you will leave him, and he can't imagine life without you, he may try to kill you. Many homicides occur when a woman is leaving her abusive partner.

Escalating danger. When your batterer begins to act more and more as if he has no regard for the consequences of his actions – legal or otherwise – you are at an extremely increased risk of danger.

If you see any of these in your abuser, you should know that your relationship could become deadly. Please take caution and call the Alabama Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-650-6522** for immediate help.

Crisis Hotline

1-800-650-6522.

Help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you are a victim, you can get help. We care. We will listen.

The ACADV is dedicated to serving you. If you have concerns about your safety, please call the Alabama Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-650-6522.**

Legal Services

These offices offer free legal assistance to people in civil cases (including cases involving domestic violence) who cannot afford to pay a lawyer. Call the Legal Services Alabama (LSA) Statewide Intake Hotline at (866) 456-4995 or the most convenient LSA office below to ask for further help.

Montgomery

2567 Fairlane Drive, Suite 200, Montgomery, AL 36116 (334) 832-4570

Birmingham

1820 Seventh Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203 (205) 328-3540

Mobile

104 St. Francis Street, Suite 700, Mobile, AL 36602 (251) 433-6560

Anniston

1047 Hamric Drive East, Oxford, AL 36203 (800) 884-0595

Selma

801 Alabama Avenue, Suite 250, Selma, AL 36701 (800) 644-6028

Huntsville

1115 Church Street NW, Suite F, Huntsville, AL 35801 (256) 536-9645

Tuscaloosa

2315 9th Street, Suite 3A, Tuscaloosa, AL 35401 (888) 440-3256

Dothan

224 West Main Street, Dothan, AL 36301 (334) 793-7932

Shelters

Our safe shelters will open their doors for you and your children. The ACADV's shelter programs offer temporary emergency shelter and transitional housing, individual counseling and peer support groups and connections to community and legal resources.

Find a Domestic Violence Shelter Program in Your Area:

2nd Chance

Counties Served: Etowah, Cleburne, Calhoun, Talladega
(256) 236-7233 Crisis Line / (256) 236-7381 Office

Asha Kiran*

Counties Served: Madison
(256) 509-1882 Crisis Line / (256) 698-4446 Office

Crisis Center of Russell County

Counties Served: Russell
(334) 297-4401 Crisis Line / (334) 297-4435 Office

Crisis Services of North Alabama

Counties Served: Limestone, Madison, Jackson, Morgan
(256) 716-1000 Crisis Line / (256) 716-4052 Office

Daybreak

Counties Served: Walker
(205) 387-1157 Crisis Line/Office

Domestic Violence Intervention Center

Counties Served: Randolph, Tallapoosa, Chambers, Lee, Macon
(334) 749-1515 Crisis Line/Office

Family Sunshine Center

Counties Served: Chilton, Autauga, Elmore, Montgomery, Lowndes, Butler, Crenshaw
(334) 263-0218 Crisis Line / (334) 206-2100 Office

Harbor Haus/Victim Services of Cullman

Counties Served: Cullman
(256) 734-6100 Crisis Line / (256) 775-2600 Office

House of Ruth

Counties Served: Bullock, Barbour, Pike, Coffee, Dale, Henry, Houston, Geneva, Covington
(334) 793-2232 Crisis Line / (334) 793-5214 Office

Kelley's Rainbow

Counties Served: Marshall, DeKalb, Cherokee
(256) 891-0019 Crisis Line / (256) 891-9864 Office

Penelope House

Counties Served: Washington, Mobile, Clarke, Choctaw
(251) 342-8994 Crisis Line / (251) 342-2809 Office

SABRA Sanctuary

Counties Served: Perry, Dallas, Wilcox, Sumter, Marengo, Greene
(334) 874-8711 Crisis Line / (334) 877-4645 Office

SafeHouse of Shelby County

Counties Served: Shelby, Clay, Coosa
(205) 669-7233 Crisis Line / (205) 669-1877 Office

Safeplace

Counties Served: Lauderdale, Colbert, Lawrence, Winston, Marion, Franklin
(256) 767-6210 Crisis Line / (256) 767-3076 Office

The Lighthouse of Baldwin County

Counties Served: Escambia, Baldwin, Conecuh, Monroe
(251) 947-6008 Crisis Line / (251) 947-6197 Office

Turning Point

Counties Served: Lamar, Fayette, Pickens, Tuscaloosa, Bibb, Hale
(205) 758-0808 Crisis Line/Office

YWCA Domestic Violence Services

Counties Served: Blount, St. Clair, Jefferson
(205) 322-4878 Crisis Line / (205) 322-9922 Office

***culturally specific service for foreign born survivors**