

Whether or not you feel able to leave an abuser, there are things you can do to make yourself and your family safer.

IN AN EMERGENCY

If you are at home & you are being threatened or attacked:

- **Stay away from the kitchen** (the abuser can find weapons, like knives, there)
- **Stay away from the bathrooms, closets or small spaces** where the abuser can trap you
- **Get to a room with a door or window to escape**
- **Get to a room with a phone** to call for help; lock the abuser outside if you can
- **Call 911** (or your local emergency number) **right away for help**; get the dispatcher's name
- Think about a neighbor or friend you can run to for help
- If a police officer comes, tell him/her what happened; **get his/her name & badge number**
- **Get medical help** if you are hurt
- **Take pictures** of bruises or injuries
- ☐ **Call a domestic violence program or shelter** (some are listed here); ask them to help you make a safety plan

To find out where to get help in your area,
CALL the

Virginia Family Violence and Sexual Assault
Hotline
1-800-838-8238 (V/TTY)

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AT HOME

- Learn where to get help; **memorize emergency phone numbers**
- **Keep a phone** in a room you can lock from the inside; if you can, get a cellular phone that you keep with you at all times
- If the abuser has moved out, **change the locks on your door**; get locks on the windows
- **Plan an escape route** out of your home; teach it to your children
- Think about where you would go if you need to escape
- **Ask your neighbors** to call the police if they see the abuser at your house; make a signal for them to call the police, for example, if the phone rings twice, a shade is pulled down or a light is on
- **Pack a bag** with important things you'd need if you had to leave quickly; put it in a safe place, or give it to a friend or relative you trust
- Include **cash, car keys & important information** such as: court papers, passport or birth certificates, medical records & medicines, immigration papers
- **Get an unlisted phone number**
- **Block caller ID**
- **Use an answering machine**; screen the calls
- **Take a good self-defense course**

HOW TO MAKE YOUR CHILDREN SAFER

- **Teach them not to get in the middle of a fight**, even if they want to help
- **Teach them how to get to safety**, to call 911, to give your address & phone number to the police
- **Teach them who to call for help**
- **Tell them to stay out of the kitchen**

- **Give the principal at school or the daycare center a copy of your court order**; tell them not to release your children to anyone without talking to you first; use a password so they can be sure it is you on the phone; give them a photo of the abuser
- **Make sure the children know who to tell at school if they see the abuser**
- **Make sure that the school knows not to give your address or phone number to ANYONE**

HOW TO MAKE YOURSELF SAFER AT WORK

- Keep a copy of your court order at work
- **Give a picture of the abuser to security and friends at work**
- **Tell your supervisors** - see if they can make it harder for the abuser to find you
- Don't go to lunch alone
- **Ask a security guard** to walk you to your car or to the bus
- If the abuser calls you at work, **save voice mail and save e-mail**
- Your employer may be able to help you find community resources or may have an employee assistance plan available

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF OUTSIDE THE HOME

- **Change your regular travel habits**
- Try to get rides with different people
- **Shop and bank in a different place**
- **Cancel any bank accounts or credit cards you shared**; open new accounts at a different bank
- **Keep your court order and emergency numbers with you at all times**
- **Keep a cell phone & program it to 911** (or other emergency number)

USING THE LAW TO HELP YOU

Protection or Protective Orders

- Ask your local domestic violence program who can help you get a civil protective order and who can help you with criminal prosecution
- Ask for help in finding a lawyer

In Virginia, the judge can:

- Order the abuser to stay away from you or your children
- Order the abuser to leave your home
- Give you temporary custody of your children and, in conjunction with a support petition, order the abuser to pay you temporary child support
- Order the abuser to cooperate in allowing the police to escort you to your home to pick up your personal belongings
- Give you possession of a jointly-owned car
- Order the abuser to go to a batterers intervention program
- Order the abuser not to call you at work
- Limit the abuser's access to weapons

When in court, as applicable :

- Show the judge any pictures of your injuries
- Tell the judge that you do not feel safe if the abuser comes to your home to pick up the children to visit with them
- Ask the judge to order the abuser to pick up and return the children at the police station or some other safe place
- Ask that any visits the abuser is permitted are at very specific times so the police will know by reading the court order if the abuser is there at the wrong time
- Tell the judge if the abuser has harmed or threatened the children; ask that visits be supervised; think about who could do that for you

CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS

- Show the Commonwealth's attorney your court orders
- Show the Commonwealth's attorney medical records about your injuries or pictures if you have them
- Tell the Commonwealth's attorney the name of anyone who is helping you (a victim advocate or a lawyer)
- Tell the Commonwealth's attorney about any witnesses to injuries or abuse
- Most Virginia counties have victim-witness assistants who can help you
- Ask the Commonwealth's attorney to notify you ahead of time if the abuser is getting out of jail

BE SAFE AT THE COURTHOUSE

- Sit as far away from the abuser as you can; you don't have to look at or talk to the abuser; you don't have to talk to the abuser's family or friends if they are there
- Bring a friend or relative with you to wait until your case is heard
- Tell a bailiff or sheriff that you are afraid of the abuser and ask him/her to look out for you
- Make sure you have your court order before you leave
- Ask the judge or the sheriff to keep the abuser there for a while when court is over; leave quickly
- If you think the abuser is following you when you leave, call the police immediately
- If you have to travel to another State, take your protective order with you because it is valid everywhere and every State has domestic violence programs
- Get a copy of the court order
- Keep the court order with you at all times

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

SAFETY TIPS FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

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IF YOU ARE IN DANGER,
call 911

or your local police emergency number

To find out about help in your area, call:

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The Virginia State Bar
Young Lawyers Conference