

For more information, contact:

Illinois Coalition Against  
Domestic Violence: (217) 789-2830

National Domestic Violence Coalition  
hotline: (800) 799-SAFE

For copies of other victim information  
brochures, contact:



ILLINOIS  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
INFORMATION AUTHORITY

120 South Riverside Plaza  
Suite 1016  
Chicago, Illinois 60606  
Phone: 312-793-8550  
TDD: 312-793-4170  
[www.icjia.state.il.us](http://www.icjia.state.il.us)

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Some information in this brochure was taken from *Handbook for Domestic Violence Victims*, Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence; *Domestic Violence Safety Plan*, Cook County State's Attorney's Office; Domestic violence palm card, Office of the Attorney General, California Department of Justice; and *Domestic Violence: The Hidden Crime*, National Crime Prevention Council.

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Are you being abused  
by someone you love?

It's time to get help.

## Safety Plan for Domestic Violence Victims

### Are you abused?

Does the person you love...

- Destroy your personal property or sentimental items?
- Make you or your children feel afraid?
- Threaten to hurt you or the children?
- Throw things at you or the children?
- Hit, slap, punch, kick, or bite you or the children?
- Force you to have sex against your will?

If you answered "yes" to any of these, you are a victim of domestic abuse. It's time to get help.

### Remember:

- You are not alone. One-fourth of all relationships include violence, which almost always involves the man beating the woman.
- You are not the cause of someone else's violent behavior.
- You do not deserve to be abused.
- You have the right to expect help and respect.
- You have the right to make your own choices, including the decision to leave the abusive situation.

*You don't have to live with the abuse. Take control of your life.*

While you may not have control over another person's violent behavior, you do have choices about how you respond.

Always remember, it is against the law for your partner or ex-partner to hurt you. Domestic violence is not a "family matter" — it is a serious crime. You have the right and the power to break free from the violence. You can have the better, safer life you and your children deserve.

This brochure should be used as a planning tool. It will help you think about what you need to do if or when you leave the abusive situation. It is not easy to do, but you can do it — one step at a time.

Even if you think you won't leave, take the time now to read this brochure and develop your own personal safety plan — do it for yourself, and do it for your children.

*Only YOU can decide the way it will be; what kind of life - the quality. A new life awaits - seek strength from within. A new life awaits - let the healing begin.*

—Linda, survivor of domestic violence



## 1 Before an attack

- **Contact a domestic violence agency.** Call the National Domestic Violence Coalition hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). The Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) number is 1-800-787-3224. The hotline operates 24 hours a day in English and Spanish; translators for other languages can be found in minutes. The hotline can help you find shelter and other services in your area. You will need to know what to do the next time your partner becomes violent.
- **Decide where you will go if you leave home,** even if you do not think it will come to that. Will it be a shelter, a relative's house, or a friend's place?
- **Find neighbors you can tell about the violence.** Ask them to call the police if they see or hear a disturbance.

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*Even though you may be afraid, take action NOW. Your safety and the safety of your children may depend on your willingness to act. It is more dangerous to do nothing than to take some action.*

- **Pack a bag and have it ready to go in case you leave home.** Keep the bag in a private but accessible place where you can retrieve it quickly. If you plan to take the children, have a bag packed for them, too. You will need the following:

- Money, your checkbook, credit cards, ATM cards
- Identification — driver's license, Social Security card, passport, green card, public assistance ID, work permit, etc.
- Important papers such as your order of protection; divorce papers; school records; lease, rental agreement, or house deed; and insurance papers (If you have an order of protection, keep it with you at all times.)
- Birth certificates — yours and your children's
- Clothing
- House, car, and work keys
- Medications
- Jewelry/saleable objects
- Address book
- Toys

- Identify which door, window, stairwell or elevator offers the quickest way out of the home, and practice your route.

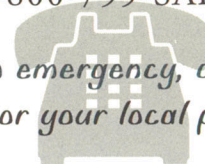
## 2 During an attack

- If an argument is unavoidable, move to a room or area with easy access to an exit. Stay away from the bathroom, kitchen, or anywhere near weapons.
- Defend and protect yourself. Call for help. Scream loudly and continuously.
- Get away. Try to get your packed bag on the way out, but if it is too dangerous, just leave. Go to a relative's or friend's house or a shelter.
- Call 911 or the police. The police must try to protect you from future abuse. They are required to provide or arrange transportation to a hospital or other safe place for you. The police should also arrest your abuser if they have enough evidence of a crime. They must give you a paper explaining your rights and telling you of a social service agency that can help.

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*Domestic violence hotline  
(24 hours a day):  
1-800-799-SAFE*

*During an emergency, always call  
911 or your local police.*



## 3 After an attack

- Get medical attention immediately. Tell the doctor or nurse what happened, and ask them to take pictures of your injuries.
- Make a police report, even if you don't want your abuser arrested. The report will become evidence of past abuse which might prove helpful in the future. The abuser will **not** be notified that you made the report. If possible, the report should be done within 24 hours of the abuse.
- Save evidence. The police should tell you how to preserve evidence in case you want to take legal action, either now or later. Evidence includes medical records and police reports, dated photographs of your injuries or the house in disarray, torn clothing, any weapons used, and statements from anyone who heard or saw the attack.
- Talk to someone about your options. Call the toll-free domestic violence hotline, or look in the telephone yellow pages under "Women's Services," "Shelters," "Social Service Organizations," or "Crisis Intervention." You may want to talk to a counselor or other professional. Many agencies provide services at reduced or no cost.