

THE DENVER CENTER FOR CRIME VICTIMS
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SAFETY TIPS

Domestic violence is physical or emotional mistreatment of you by your companion. It can involve physical contact: slapping, hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, any action intended to injure you. It can involve the use of a weapon: stick, knife, gun, any heavy object. Emotional abuse can involve threats to harm you, family members, friends, pets or possessions; deprivation of money, sleep or affection; harassment at work or home; any behavior that causes you, the victim, emotional pain. Physical and emotional abuse is done to punish, dominate or control the victim. You have the right to be treated with respect and have safe relationships with people who value you!

Does your spouse or companion...

- “Track” all of your time—want to know where you go and with whom?
- Constantly accuse you of being unfaithful?
- Discourage your relationships with family and friends?
- Criticize you for little things?
- Check your email and monitor your other computer and phone communications?
- Anger easily when drinking or using drugs?
- Control all finances and force you to account in detail for what you spend?
- Humiliate you in front of others?
- Destroy personal property or sentimental items?
- Hit, punch, slap, kick, or bite you or the children?
- Use or threaten to use a weapon against you?
- Threaten to hurt you or the children?
- Force you to have sex against your will?

If you find yourself saying yes to any of these, it’s time to get help to prevent further abuse.

Things you can do:

- **Talk to someone.** Part of the abuser's power comes from secrecy. Victims are often ashamed to let anyone know about intimate family problems. Go to someone you trust—a friend, family member or neighbor—or call a domestic violence hotline to talk to a counselor. Seek help through counseling or a support group. 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.
- **Plan ahead and know what you will do if you if you decide to leave your home.** Have phone numbers for shelters easily accessible. Let trusted neighbors, family and friends know of your situation and safety plan. Put aside clothing, extra keys, money, choose a place to go, decide how you will get there, and put important papers together in a place where you can get them quickly:
 1. Driver's license, birth certificates, social security cards, passport, citizenship documents
 2. Your children's birth certificates, social security cards, health and school records
 3. Photos, sentimental items
 4. Money, checkbook, bank books, credit cards
 5. Medications and prescriptions
 6. Car registration, insurance cards
 7. Divorce papers, protection orders, and other important legal papers

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SAFETY TIPS (cont.)

- Identify your partner's use and level of force so 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, your arms around either side of your head, fingers entwined.
- Let trusted friends and neighbors know of a visual signal for when you need help.
- Teach your children how to get help. Instruct them not to get involved in violence between you and your partner. Plan a code word to signal 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 neither you nor they are at fault or cause the violence; 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.
- Keep weapons locked up and as inaccessible as possible. Remove if can.
- Make a habit of backing the car into the driveway and keeping it fueled. Keep the driver's door unlocked and 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 day or night.
- Call a domestic violence hotline periodically to assess your options and get a supportive, understanding ear.

If you are presently being abused:

- **Do not hesitate to call the police at 911.** Domestic violence is a CRIME!
- **Leave your living situation or have someone come and stay with you.** Call a crisis hotline and go to a battered women's shelter. If you believe you and your children are in danger—leave immediately. Make sure friends and relatives, including children, know not to tell your abuser your address or phone number. Check with the telephone company or cell phone provider to learn options to keep you safe.
- **If you have physical injuries, get medical attention from doctor or hospital emergency room.** Have staff photograph your injuries; keep detailed records for legal action.
- **Contact a lawyer or Project Safeguard at (303) 863-7416 to obtain a protection order.**

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have safe relationships with people who value you!**

SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE

Numbers to call for assistance:

Denver Police Department Emergency: 911 and Nonemergency: (720) 913-2000
Denver Shelters: SafeHouse 24-hour crisis line(303) 318-9989
Brandon Center(303) 620-9190

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