

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: WHAT IMMIGRANTS NEED TO KNOW

What is Domestic Violence?

It is when your partner or spouse uses his or her actions to control you.

Some examples might include:

- your partner or spouse pushing or shoving you
- your partner or spouse punching or kicking you
- being forced to have sex with your partner or spouse when you don't want to
- your partner or spouse threatening to hurt you
- your partner or spouse saying that the children will be hurt if you do not do as he or she wants

What are problems that only affect immigrants?

It is abuse if your partner or spouse threatens to call Immigration and Customs Enforcement on you or lies about whether you are in the U.S. legally.

It is abuse if your partner or spouse refuses to file papers that could keep you in the U.S. legally.

It is abuse if your partner or spouse tries to keep you from learning English or does other things that would keep you from talking to others to learn your rights, get an education, or get a job.

What is sexual abuse?

Your partner or spouse forcing you to have sex when you don't want to is an example of sexual abuse. Also, you cannot be forced to have sex with anyone else by your spouse or partner. These acts are illegal.

What is emotional abuse?

Your partner or spouse calling you racist names, trying to embarrass you in front of friends or family, or saying he or she will hurt you or your children are all emotional abuse. If this happens often, you should seek help. These acts are illegal.

If I am being abused, what can I do?

There are several things you could do, depending on the situation. You could leave, call the police, or call a domestic violence hot line or shelter.

When should I leave the abuser?

If you are afraid you or your children are going to be attacked, you should take the children and get to a shelter. There is a list of resources on the back of this brochure that can help you find a shelter.

I can't leave now, but I am afraid something is going to happen. What should I do?

Be ready to leave quickly if you need to. Pack a bag for yourself and your children with your important papers, medicines, money, a mobile phone and other valuables. Have the phone numbers of friends and shelters handy. Do things to keep yourself safe at home, such as removing weapons or things that could be used as weapons from the home.

Can I call the police if I am not in the United States legally?

Yes. Always call the police if you or your child is being hurt. There are laws in the U.S. that say you and your children will not be sent out of the country just for trying to get help when you have been hurt. There are special visas for domestic violence victims.

What else can I do if I do not want to go to a shelter or do not need to call the police?

Tell someone that you are being abused. It is not your fault, and your friends and neighbors can do many things to help. For example, if you are afraid there is about to be violence in your home, you could ask your neighbor if you could come over until things get better.

If I call the police, go to a shelter, or seek other help, will my partner or spouse go to jail?

It depends. Abusing another person is against the law, and the courts can do many different things to help, not just sending the abuser to jail. The abuser may be told to stay away from you or be put out of the home, made to help you with money, or pay a fine, as well as many other things.

RESOURCES FOR HELP

National Domestic Violence Hotline

- 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- 1-800-787-3224 Police
- 911

Any local domestic violence shelter. A list of shelters can be found in our [Immigrant Resource Guide](#).

This is not all the information you need to know if you or someone in your family is dealing with domestic violence. You may want to talk to a lawyer about your situation.

If you do not have a lawyer, the South Carolina Bar Lawyer Referral Service can give you the name of a lawyer who is willing to meet with you and advise you at a lower rate. For the name of a lawyer in your area, call the Lawyer Referral Service at (800) 868- 2284 statewide or (803) 799-7100 in Columbia.

If you have a very low income, your local legal services office may be able to help you. To get in touch with them, call the Legal Assistance Telephone Intake Service for a referral (888) 346-5592 statewide or (803) 744-9430 in Columbia.

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