



Resources for Safety and Support When Facing Domestic Violence

Everyone is entitled to a relationship that is healthy and safe.

Sometimes relationships between current or former partners or family members become unsafe. This can happen to anyone regardless of who they are, how they identify, where they are from, or what they do. Individuals in unhealthy relationships may feel confused, angry, afraid and may even blame themselves. These are normal responses. It is important for you to know that it is not your fault and you are not to blame for your partner's behavior. Abusing someone is a choice that is never acceptable.

In Massachusetts, what is abuse under the law?

Abuse is defined as "the occurrence of one or more of the following acts between family or household members: (a) attempting to cause or causing physical harm; (b) placing another in fear of imminent serious physical harm; (c) causing another to engage involuntarily in sexual relations by force, threat, or duress." Family or household members are persons who are or were: married, living together, related by blood or marriage; or, in a substantive dating or engagement relationship; or, persons who have a child in common. *M.G.L. c. 209A*.

Other indicators that a relationship might be unsafe or unhealthy may include:

- Name calling, insults, or put downs;
- Threats of violence to commit harm to oneself, a partner, children, or family pets;
- Limiting access to money, preventing a partner from getting or keeping a job, ruining a partner's credit;
- Tracking a partner's activities directly or through the use of technology like social networks, email, or phones;
- Threatening a partner with deportation or withholding legal status documents;
- Threatening to out a partner's sexual orientation to family or friends.

What is a safety plan and why is it important?

A safety plan is a personalized plan that can help you react and make decisions when you are in danger. A safety plan may include ideas for how to increase your safety if you are in an abusive relationship, if you are planning to leave an abusive relationship, or if you have left an abusive relationship. Safety planning may include things such as:

- Memorizing or making a list of emergency numbers for local law enforcement agencies or crisis hotlines;
- Identifying escape routes and places to go if you need to flee from an unsafe situation quickly;
- Talking to your child(ren) about what they should do if a violent incident occurs and they are afraid;
- Putting together an emergency bag that includes money, medicine, extra car keys, and important documents such as birth certificates, social security cards, immigration documents, or health insurance cards.

What resources are available?

It is important to know that you are not alone and that there are various agencies that can provide support. **Community based advocacy or crisis agencies** can connect you with advocates who offer free and confidential services. **SAFEPLAN Advocates** are court-based and can assist with restraining order applications. **Victim Witness Advocates** work for the local District Attorney's Office and can answer questions about any pending criminal matters involving violence against you. **Child Witness to Violence programs** can help if you are concerned about your child(ren)'s behavior at related to the impact of violence or stress in the home. Contact information can be found on the back of this flyer.

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Resources for Safety and Support When Facing Domestic Violence:

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The programs and resources listed below can offer information, help, and support for you or someone you know who is experiencing or has experienced domestic violence.

24/7 Helplines (Statewide/National)	
SafeLink Helpline (Statewide)	877-785-2020
National Domestic Violence Hotline	800-799-7233
Child at Risk Hotline (Statewide)	800-792-5200

State Agencies	
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 844-878-6682 	
Attorney General's Office, Victim Compensation and Assistance Division	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 617-727-2200 x 2160 	
Department of Public Health, Domestic Violence Programs	

Statewide Culturally Specific Domestic Violence Resources	
Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence (ATASK)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24/7 Multilingual Hotline: 617-338-2355 	
Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers (MAPS)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 617-864-7600 	
The Network/La Red	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24/7 Hotline: 800-832-1901 	
Our Deaf Survivors Center, Inc.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24/7 National Deaf Hotline: 855-812-1001 https://www.odscunity.org/ 	
SAHELI: Friendship for South Asian Women	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bilingual Helpline: 866-472-4354 	

Victim Witness Advocates					
Berkshire DA's Office	413-443-5951	Pittsfield	Northwestern DA's Office	413-774-3186	Greenfield
Bristol DA's Office	508-997-0711	New Bedford		978-544-7376	Orange
Cape & Islands DA's Office	508-362-8103	Barnstable		413-323-5275	Belchertown
Essex DA's Office	978-745-6610	Salem		413-586-5780	Northampton
Hampden DA's Office	413-747-1000	Springfield	Plymouth DA's Office	508-584-8120	Brockton
Middlesex DA's Office	781-897-8300	Woburn	Suffolk DA's Office	617-619-4000	Boston
Norfolk DA's Office	781-830-4800	Canton	Worcester DA's Office	508-755-8601	Worcester

Legal Assistance	Child Support Assistance	Domestic Violence & Pets
If you need help with a legal problem, MassLegalServices , MassLegalHelp , and MassCLAVC can provide contact information for legal aid programs, government agencies, and court-based programs. Each program will determine if they can assist you.	If you need assistance getting, enforcing, or changing a child support order, contact the Child Support Enforcement Division at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 800-332-2733 	RedRover provides information about pet-friendly domestic violence shelters, organizations that might be able to assist when pets cannot stay with you at a shelter, and financial assistance for victims of domestic violence and their pets.

Supporting Someone Facing Domestic Violence

There is no timetable when it comes to recovering from domestic violence. As individuals, even if we have the same experience, we all heal differently. Often, the first reaction an individual receives from the first people they talk to influences their decision to move forward and get help. You can have a profound impact just by the language you use.

Using phrases such as "I'm sorry this happened" and "it's not your fault" acknowledges the experience and the impact it has had on a victim's life while also reminding them that no one deserves to be subjected to abuse. Reassuring individuals who have experienced domestic violence that they are not alone and that there are various agencies that are available to provide support and answer questions may also be helpful.

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