

Domestic Violence

Survivor's Handbook



LACASA

Our Mission

LACASA Center protects, supports, empowers and advocates for survivors of child abuse, domestic violence, and sexual violence; and promotes interpersonal safety through education, awareness, and prevention programs

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The LACASA Domestic Violence Survivor's Handbook was
written, edited and compiled by LACASA staff and volunteers.

Statement of Purpose

This handbook is intended for use by survivors of domestic violence and their families. Its purpose is to provide critical information on domestic violence and explore options. It is not intended to dispense legal advice.

Acknowledgements

LACASA would like to thank staff, survivors, and the community for their contributions to the accuracy of the information in this handbook.

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Our Mission

LACASA Center protects, supports, empowers, and advocates for survivors of child abuse, domestic violence, and sexual violence; and promotes interpersonal safety through education, awareness, and prevention programs.

Our Values and Beliefs

Safety and Security

We provide and encourage a safe environment to minimize the occurrence or risk of injury, danger, or loss.

Excellence and Quality

We strive to exceed expectations, raise our standards, and challenge ourselves. We utilize evidence-based models of service delivery. We introduce innovative and progressive ideas, techniques, and methods in our work to meet the needs of survivors, families and the community.

Integrity

We conduct business ethically and with a commitment to moral principles.

Diversity

We are committed to fostering an inclusive culture.

Empowerment

We are dedicated to the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.

Social Justice

We honor the concepts of human rights and equality.

Collaboration

We value working with our collaborative partners to achieve systems change and a safer society

Note on Language & Terminology

LACASA Center acknowledges that some of the terms used in this handbook are different from those a survivor may use.

This handbook primarily uses the word partner when describing an individual using abusive or controlling behaviors. We acknowledge that violence may also be occurring between family members. The information in this book can be applied to any interpersonal violence.

The terms that we do not use (i.e. batterer, victim, etc.) in this handbook may still be seen when discussing legal matters or looking at legal documents, in the media, or throughout other documents from other agencies.

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Chapter 1

What is Domestic Violence?

- Almost one in two women and more than two in five men reported experiencing contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking victimization by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime.¹

- Over 61 million women and 53 million men have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner in their lifetime.¹

¹ Leemis R.W., Friar N., Khatiwada S., Chen M.S., Kresnow M., Smith S.G., Caslin, S., & Basile, K.C. (2022). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 Report on Intimate Partner Violence. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is an established pattern in which an individual uses tactics to control the behavior and maintain power over another person. These tactics can include, but are not limited to:

- Physical abuse
- Verbal abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Economic abuse
- Threats
- Isolation
- Intimidation

Families impacted by domestic violence include individuals from all occupations, genders, income levels, races, sexual orientations, ethnicities, ages, abilities, and religious groups. Abusive partner relationships can include individuals who may or may not be married, same-sex relationships, dating, living together, or separated. Domestic violence is not exclusive to partners, and can occur within the family between siblings, children, parents, as well as other relatives.

Am I in an Abusive Relationship?

Domestic violence occurs in many families. It may be happening to you. It may be hard to accept the fact that a person you love would hurt you. You may think you are to blame or you caused the abuse. But that is not true. Your partner chooses the behavior and is aware of what is happening. It is not your fault, it is about the choices that they are making.

Think about the questions on the following page. If you answer “yes” to any of them, you may be experiencing domestic violence.

Remember...You Are Not Alone.

You may not know what you want to do or where to turn. You may be afraid to take any action that might make your partner angrier. If you have children, you may be worried about them. You may be concerned about your financial situation. These are all valid concerns.

Many survivors report that abuse in a relationship often escalates, becoming more frequent and dangerous. It may be helpful for you to talk about the physical and emotional toll abuse can have on you. LACASA is here to support you and help explore options.

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- Does your partner degrade you and call you names?
- Have you ever been slapped, hit, strangled, pushed, bitten, or burned?
- Has your partner used a weapon against you?
- Has your partner ever made you do something humiliating or degrading?
- Does your partner embarrass you in front of others?
- Has your partner forced or coerced you into having sex when you did not want to?
- Have you had bruises from being squeezed, pinched, or held?
- Has your partner ever threatened you, your children, or other family members?
- Do you feel like you are walking on eggshells to avoid upsetting your partner?
- Has your partner used an object to hurt you?
- Has your partner intentionally destroyed your personal property?
- Has your partner ever threatened to kill you?
- Has your partner stopped you from getting a job, or threatened you at work?
- Does your partner control where you go and who you see?
- Does your partner think your family and friends are all on your side and come between you and your partner?
- Does your partner control all of the household money and/or make you ask for an allowance?
- Does your partner monitor you all the time by tracking you, checking your phone and social media, or following you?
- Have you ever seen a doctor for an injury inflicted by your partner?
- Does your partner apologize for their behavior after an abusive incident? Promise it will never happen again? Deny the abuse took place or that it was not as bad as you claim?
- Has your partner threatened, hurt, or abused your household pet?

Individuals Who Use Abusive Behavior

There is a common misconception that a partner using abusive behavior is easy to recognize, but that is not always the case. These individuals come from all occupations, genders, income levels, races, sexual orientations, ethnicities, ages, abilities, and religious groups. Many individuals can be very charming and pleasant. They may be outgoing and have a wonderful “public” personality, while in private they may use controlling, abusive, and cruel behavior. Although everyone is different, the following characteristics are common among those who choose to use this behavior:

- Extreme jealousy
- Quick emotional involvement/attachment
- Controls where you go, who you see and what you do
- Blames others for problems
- Uses force during sex
- Verbally abusive
- Isolates you from family and friends
- Uses force and/or threats during arguments
- History of abuse in previous relationship
- Extreme mood swings
- Believes that you belong to them
- Has witnessed or been a survivor of family violence in childhood

Individuals using abusive behavior establish a pattern of fear and control in their relationships. They use different tactics to gain and maintain that control. These beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes are hard to change. Some individuals may never take responsibility for their behavior. They might see no reason to change and do not feel their behavior is problematic.

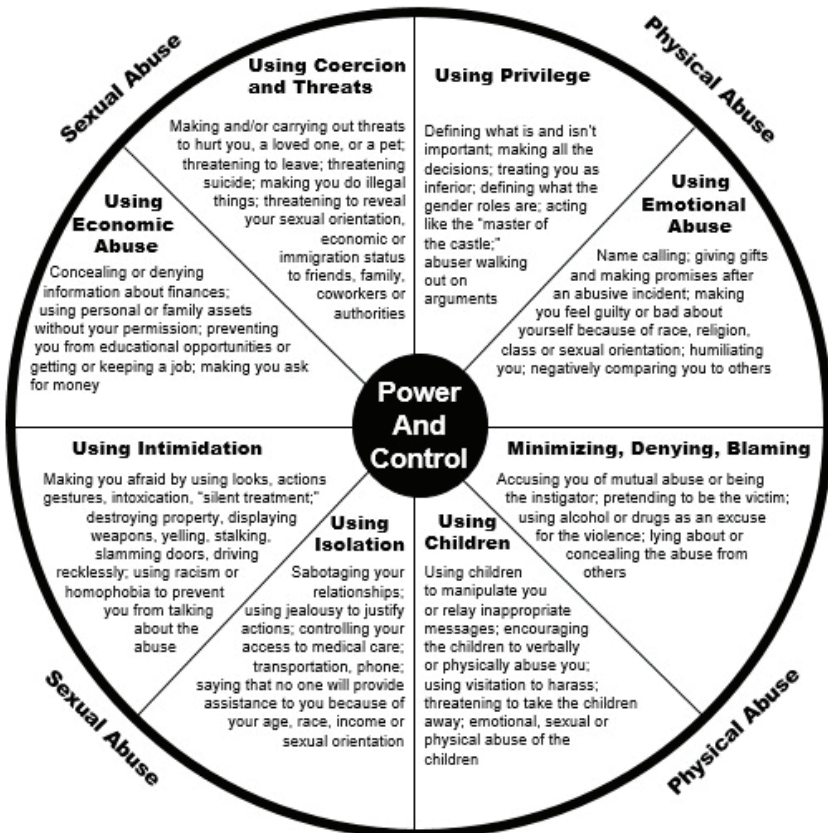
Abuse is a choice and the individual using the abusive behavior must make the decision to change. Abuse intervention services can provide them support in taking responsibility for their actions and learn new, healthy ways of interacting in their relationships.

For information on abuse intervention services, see the resource section of this handbook or contact LACASA.

Power and Control Wheel

This diagram illustrates the different tactics used to gain control over partners. You do not need to be physically abused to be in an abusive relationship. Abuse takes all forms. The abusive tactics used by partners are intentional, planned, and deliberate.

Physical and sexual abuse remain outside of the wheel below because they make all the other tactics of abuse more severe. The amount of physical/sexual violence varies greatly in each relationship.



Adapted by LACASA from The Duluth Model, Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs 202 East Superior Street, Duluth, MN 55802218-722-2781

Physical Abuse in Relationships

Physical abuse is any unwanted contact including, but not limited to, hitting, kicking, punching, slapping, and strangulation. Physical abuse may or may not result in a physical injury. Additionally, there are many different words that are used to describe strangulation such as choking and/or suffocation. Strangulation is defined as external pressure applied to the neck that disrupts the blood flow. Often, strangulation does not result in external injuries, but there may be internal injuries that occur.

Rape and Sexual Violence in Relationships

Sexual violence is often difficult to recognize or talk about, but it can be a common aspect of violent relationships. Partners may use various tactics to sexually abuse. Some examples of sexual violence in a relationship are:

- You are forced to perform sexual acts against your will or acts that make you uncomfortable.
- You feel coerced and/or manipulated into sexual activity.
- You are afraid to say “no” to sex.
- You are forced to have unprotected sex.
- You are hurt physically during sex.
- You are treated like an object or called sexually degrading names.
- Your partner forces you to view or make pornography.

Forced sex is against the law. Whether you are married or not, you have the right to say “no.” For more information on medical and sexual assault services, visit the medical resource at the end of this handbook.

Substance Abuse

Domestic violence and substance abuse may co-occur, but they are separate problems. Individuals may blame the abusive behavior on alcohol and drugs, but abusive behavior is a choice. Even if a partner recovers from substances, the violence can continue.

Some self-help groups may claim you are “codependent” with your partner and are responsible for their behavior. Not all substance abuse specialists understand the dynamics of domestic violence and that your partner’s choices are not your fault. Some individuals have reported using substances to cope with the abuse they have experienced.

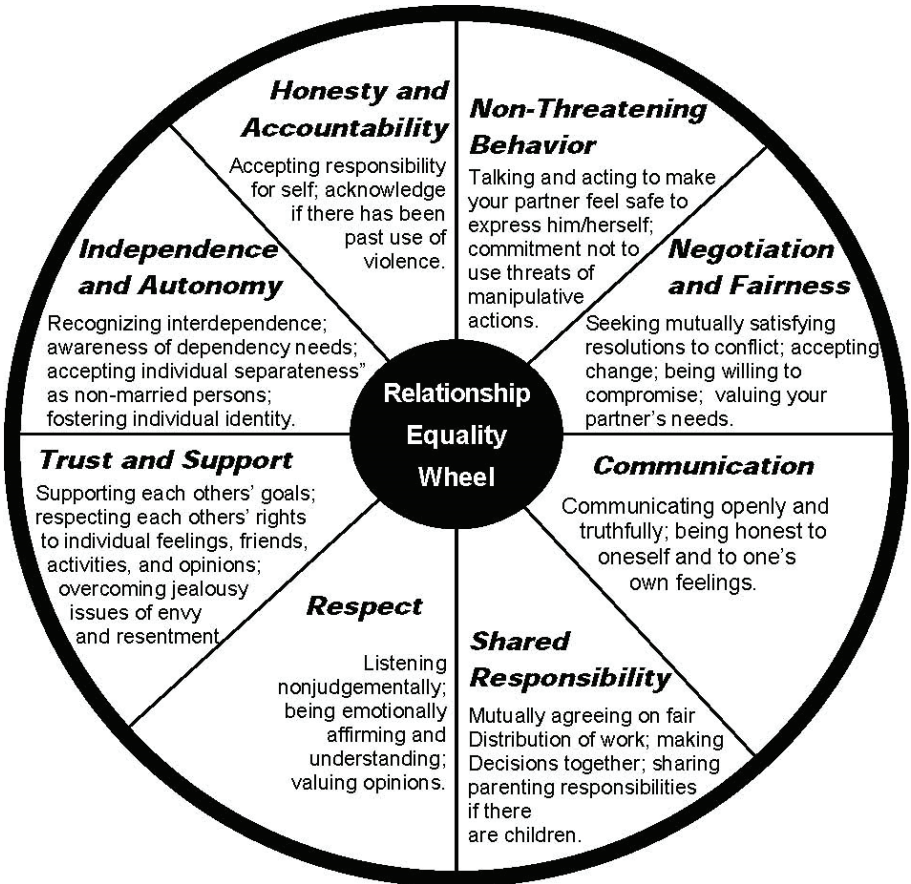
Resources and help are available.

What About Couples Counseling?

Although couples counseling can be a good option for individuals where there is no domestic violence, many survivors do not find it to be helpful or safe to discuss the abuse they have experienced. Many individuals report that couples counseling may escalate the abuse, making the relationship more dangerous. Couples counseling has not been proven to be an effective method for reducing or stopping abusive behavior. Individuals who use abusive behavior need to choose to change their behavior on their own.

Equality Wheel

This diagram illustrates aspects of a healthy relationship including mutual respect, trust, and equality. Everyone deserves to have these aspects in their relationships.



Adapted by LACASA from The Duluth Model, Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs
202 East Superior Street, Duluth, MN 55802218-722-2781

Chapter 2

Who Experiences Domestic Violence?

- Abuse crosses all lines, including race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age and income.
- An estimated 51.3% of black adult female homicides are related to intimate partner violence. ¹
- Women with disabilities experience intimate partner violence at twice the rate of other populations. ²
- Within the LGBTQ+ community, intimate partner violence occurs at a rate equal to or even higher than that of the heterosexual community. ³
- Abuse does not discriminate and impacts all communities. Remember that you are not to blame. LACASA provides support for all individuals who have experienced domestic violence.

¹National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2020). Domestic violence and the Black community. Retrieved from https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2497/dv_in_the_black_community.pdf

² National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. (2022). People with disabilities and domestic violence

³ National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. (2018). Domestic violence and the LGBTQ+ community.

Who Experiences Domestic Violence?

LACASA services are available to all survivors of domestic violence. Additional written resources can be found at the end of this book for specialized populations.

If You Are a Person of Color or Ethnic Minority

Your partner may use issues of race or ethnicity to keep you from seeking outside help. They may claim that you will be treated unfairly or be placed in physical danger if you report the abuse, due to current and historic racism that exists in our community. By disclosing the abuse, you may feel that you are being disloyal to your community. You may fear that sharing this information supports the myth that people of color are more abusive than white men. Domestic violence can happen regardless of your race or ethnicity.

If You Are a Man

Due to the myth that men are not abused by their partners, you may feel that no one will believe you if you ask for help. You may feel embarrassed or ashamed, because society has defined that men should be assertive and powerful, not victims and survivors. Your partner may use myths and stereotypes to maintain control over the relationship. Domestic violence can happen regardless of your gender.

If You Are LGBTQ+

Domestic violence occurs at the same rate or even higher and with the same characteristics in same-sex relationships as it does in opposite-sex relationships. However, LGBTQ+ survivors may experience unique challenges.

You may have chosen not to tell people in your life about being LGBTQ+. As a tactic of abuse, your partner may threaten to reveal your identity to a family member, friend, or a co-worker. Your partner may tell you that if you talk about your experience in the relationship, you are making the LGBTQ+ community look bad; that you are not loyal; that no one will believe you or provide assistance.

You may feel severely isolated. You may fear that it is not safe to seek help from the police, courts, shelters, your family, etc. You may not feel comfortable seeking help from within the LGBTQ+ community because of potential retaliation from your partner, or you may have a lack of family and community support. Domestic violence can happen regardless of your orientation or identity.

If You Have a Disability

Your partner or caregiver may use your disability to control and manipulate you. They may use tactics to take away your autonomy and rights, and make you dependent on them. They may try to isolate you by removing, tampering, and/or limiting needed resources. This is a method used to gain power and control over you. If you are dependent on the individual using the abusive behavior, this may result in you feeling powerless. Domestic violence can happen regardless of your abilities.

If You Are an Older Adult

Some older adults depend on their partner or caregiver who may use abusive behavior. You may be afraid of your partner or caregiver. They may threaten you, deprive you of your basic needs, or take your money. You may heavily rely on your caregiver and be fearful of what will happen to you if you do not have their help.

You have a right to be safe and not live in fear. Help is available through LACASA, your doctor, physician, a nurse, or a social worker. If you have a physical or mental disability, the Adult Protective Services Unit of the Department of Health & Human Services may provide additional assistance. Domestic violence can happen regardless of your age.

If You Are a Teen in a Dating Relationship

Violence may occur in dating relationships. There are many signs that your partner is abusive and many of these behaviors mirror domestic violence (see Chapter One). Sometimes it may seem that these behaviors are expressions of love, but they are not—they are ways of gaining power and control over you. Try to identify a safe person in your life that you can talk to, such as a relative, parent, school counselor, etc. Remember that you are not alone. Domestic violence can happen regardless of your age.

If You Are a Child, Sibling, or Parent

Violence does not occur only between partners. Family violence may include abuse and assault between siblings, children, and parents. If your child has assaulted you, you may feel embarrassed to ask for help. You may feel protective of your child and the abuse. If your brother or sister is abusing you, there is help available. Domestic violence can happen in many different relationships. Violence is not acceptable in any relationship.

If You Practice Religion or Spirituality

Domestic violence can affect people of any religion or spiritual practice. These practices can be a resource or a barrier for survivors. As a resource, faith can be a source of comfort, support, and connection to a larger community. However, religion and spirituality can make seeking support difficult if community members justify abusive actions based on their interpretation of religious beliefs, or partners build strong relationships with others in the religious or spiritual community. Domestic violence can happen regardless of your religion or spirituality.

Various Income Levels

Domestic violence impacts individuals of all incomes and economic classes, from the most vulnerable to those with access to many resources. Abusive tactics can differ depending on economic level, but they are largely similar. This can include one person controlling the finances by not allowing access to income and/or educational opportunities. Even if your income is considered a “high level”, you may not have access to finances or may be experiencing other dynamics of abuse which can create barriers on your choices. Domestic violence can happen regardless of income level.

LACASA provides support for all individuals who have experienced domestic violence. If you are particularly concerned about confidentiality and receiving help in your community, LACASA can provide a referral to another service that will meet your needs.

Chapter 3

What About the Children?

- Approximately one in five children witnesses intimate partner violence in their lifetimes.¹
- Children who witness incidents of domestic violence (a form of childhood trauma) are at greater risk of serious adult health problems including obesity, cancer, heart disease, depression, substance abuse, tobacco use, and unintended pregnancies than peers who did not witness domestic violence.¹
- 20% of intimate partner homicide victims are someone other than the intimate partner; 88.8% of them are children.¹

Children are resilient when given the tools they need to move forward. LACASA provides support for children impacted by domestic violence.

¹National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. (2023). Domestic violence and children. https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2497/children_and_dv.pdf

Can Living in a Home with Domestic Violence Affect My Children?

Whether or not your children are harmed directly, your children may be negatively impacted by living in an environment where there is abuse. Although you may try not to fight in front of your children, almost all children living in a violent home report that they see or hear the fighting. Even if your children do not directly witness domestic violence, they develop an understanding of the abuse by feeling the tension, hearing the fighting, or seeing the aftermath such as injuries and broken objects.

How Does Domestic Violence Affect My Children?

Your children will react to domestic violence in their own way based on their personality and their circumstances. Other factors may include: your child's age, gender, relationship with you and the individual using the abusive behavior, and the severity and frequency of abuse.

The following is a list of possible feelings that your children may experience as result of exposure to domestic violence:

- Confusion
- Anger
- Sadness or depression
- Withdrawal
- Embarrassment
- Anxiety or nervousness
- Guilt and responsibility
- Loss of control
- Powerlessness
- Low self-esteem
- Fear
- Hopelessness
- Distrust
- Hypersensitivity
- Loneliness
- Conflicted feelings

Your children may express their feelings and reactions to abusive situations through their behavior. Your children may mirror some of the characteristics of you or the individual using the abusive tactics, because children learn from what they see and hear. They may also learn that violence is an acceptable way to deal with problems.

Your children may exhibit some of the following behaviors.

- Aggression
- Passivity
- Overachievement
- Perfectionism
- Alcohol and/or drug abuse
- History of running away
- Sexual promiscuity
- Delinquency
- Separation anxiety
- Academic problems
- Suicide attempts
- Assuming care giver role
- Misunderstanding social situations or feelings for others
- Abusiveness toward you, others, or animals around them

Your children may develop physical symptoms due to their feelings.

This is common in children who experience or witness abuse.

These may include:

- Sleeping difficulties/nightmares
- Stomach aches
- Asthma
- Headaches
- Learning difficulties
- Speech problems
- Loss of energy
- Eating disorders
- Allergies
- Developmental delays/regression

A child's reaction may become worse or seem exaggerated when they are in a safe place and feel okay to display big feelings, emotions, and behaviors. This is common for children who have witnessed or experienced violence. Regardless of how your children respond, they need your support.

What Can I Do If My Children Are Being Harmed?

In many domestic violence situations, the abuse does not stop with the adult survivor. Your children may be injured on purpose or by accident. For example, your children may be hit by a thrown object during an argument, or injured in an attempt to protect you.

Children may directly receive physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. This may be happening to your children with or without your knowledge. If children tell you that they have been abused, the best thing you can do is believe and protect them. It is important to teach your children ways to keep themselves safe and provide them with a supportive environment.

There are also many services available to assist you and your children. If you know or suspect a child is being abused you can make a report to Child Protective Services (CPS), a division of the Department of Health and Human Services. As a social service agency, LACASA is mandated to file a report with CPS if child abuse is suspected.

If CPS contacts your family, remember their goal is to help keep your children safe. If you think that you may be hurting or neglecting your children because of stress or to appease your partner, assistance is available to you. The Parent Helpline is a resource which provides 24 hour confidential crisis counseling regarding parenting concerns and issues. See the resource section of this handbook for phone numbers.

What Can I Do To Help My Children?

- Educate your children at an age-appropriate level about the dynamics of domestic violence, and be honest about what is or has been happening. Most importantly, remind your children that the violence is not their fault.
- Educate your children about different feelings they may be experiencing, and that all feelings are OK. You can directly identify feelings when you see them in your children.
- Teach and model appropriate ways to express feelings.
- Disapprove and discourage violence by teaching and modeling appropriate problem-solving skills.
- Teach your children ways to keep themselves safe.

- Help your children identify signs of violence, safe places they can go if violence occurs, appropriate use of 911, and their rights as a person.
- Help your children identify individuals they can talk with about feelings or worries.
- Provide yourself and your children with a supportive environment that includes family and friends.
- Establish fair, consistent rules and limits. Knowing what is expected gives your children a sense of control and order in their lives.
- Praise your children when you see behavior that is positive.
- Emphasize and appreciate your children's value, personal worth, and importance each day.

Children are impacted by domestic violence in many different ways. They need support from you, other family members and friends, and from other resources in the community. Most of all, children need your patience and understanding.

LACASA can help. Counselors are available to talk to children who have witnessed or experienced domestic violence.

"What helps the most is feeling safe."

- Child shelter resident

Chapter 4

How Do I Protect Myself and My Family?

Develop a safety plan that addresses:

- 65% of all murder-suicides involve an intimate partner; 96% of the victims of these crimes are female.¹
- On average, 100% of the individuals who utilize LACASA services report developing a safety plan that is helpful for them.

Your safety is vital. LACASA is a safe place!

¹National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2020). Domestic violence in Michigan. Retrieved from www.ncadv.org/files/Michigan.pdf.

Safety Plan

Everyone has the right to be safe! Having a safety plan in place is essential. Being prepared before a violent incident occurs may reduce your risk of injury. LACASA can assist you in making a plan for you and your family.

What is a Safety plan?

- Possible safety options available to you and your family during a violent incident.
- Things you can do to be prepared if you need to leave the situation/relationship
- Decision on who to inform about your situation.

How Do I Protect Myself and My Family?

All threats against your life should be taken seriously. The following questions can help you determine the level of danger in your relationship:

- Has your partner ever threatened to kill you? Your children?
Other family members?
- Does your partner have access to any guns or other weapons?
- Has your partner ever threatened you with a weapon?
- Has your partner ever taken you hostage? Your children?
- Is there sexual violence in your relationship?
- Has the abuse become worse or more frequent?
- Has your partner threatened or attempted suicide?
- Have you filed divorce papers?
- Is your divorce final?
- Have you been stalked?

Although the questions above could indicate potential violence, there are no concrete predictors of violent behavior. It is important to think about your safety and the safety of your loved ones during a violent incident.

A violent incident can happen anywhere...

In your home

Plan ways to get out of your house safely and practice how to escape. When an argument begins, move to a room with an easy exit and where there are no weapons. Know who you can stay with if you need to leave. You may want to tell a neighbor or friend about the violence and devise a signal for them to call 911 if you need help.

Outside of your home

Be aware of your surroundings and how you can safely move away from the abusive environment. Keeping a cell phone with you at all times could assist in calling 911.

Sometimes you may not be able to escape the abusive situation. Remember that it is not your fault.

Safety Plan for Children

Safety plans can be set up for children as well. It is important that children know how to dial 911 and when it is appropriate to do so. Children can be taught safe places to go to protect themselves when there is a fight or argument. A safe neighbor or a safe place in the house are both possibilities. LACASA can help you develop a safety plan that is best for your family.

When Preparing to Leave

You may recognize warning signs of an incident of violence. Plan a safe place to go when tension escalates in your home. Abuse is usually not a one-time occurrence. Statistics show that if violence occurred one time, it will likely happen again. Try to plan ahead and revise your plan as often as needed. If you are preparing to leave the home, be especially careful.

Violence often escalates or gets worse when a survivor shows signs of independence. Your partner may become desperate and more violent when they feel a loss of power and control in the relationship.

In order to establish or increase independence, you may want to examine financial options or savings. Plan on where you will go and who you will stay with. Trusted family and friends can be an option. LACASA can provide a confidential, temporary safe place to stay. Try to have a packed bag ready and in a place that is safe and easy to access. You may want to leave some extra money, keys, clothes, and copies of important documents with someone you can trust. Be sure your support network will not let your partner know your plans or where and when you are going.

If you have children, take them with you when you leave. If you do not have the children with you, you may not be able to obtain temporary custody. The parent with physical possession of the children is usually granted temporary custody.

If you have time, the following things should be taken with you when you leave:

- Driver's license
- Identification
- Birth certificates for you and your children
- Social Security cards
- Money
- Divorce papers
- School records
- Medical records for entire family
- Medications
- Car registration
- Insurance papers
- House and car keys
- Pictures
- Address book
- Protection orders
- Items of sentimental value
- Children's small toys, blankets, etc.
- Lease, house deed, rental agreement
- Passport(s), work permit(s), green card(s)
- Partner's Social Security number and driver's license number
- Credit cards
- Bank statements
- Paycheck stubs
- Tax returns
- Safe deposit box key

Family pets can also be impacted by violence. If you are preparing to leave your home, plan for your pet to stay with a friend or relative. If you become a client at LACASA's shelter, you may be able to bring your household pet to our on-site Safe Pet Place, or even have your pet in your room with you. If possible, the following pet items should be taken with you when you leave:

- Updated pet vaccination/medical records
- Pet medications
- Name and phone number of current veterinarian
- Collar, leash, and sturdy pet carrier
- Current animal license

After You Leave

Even if you end the relationship and you or your partner moves, caution is needed in your home. Consider changing the locks on your doors and installing additional safety devices. Tell your neighbors and friends that your partner is no longer living with you and if they see them near your house, to call the police. Think about obtaining a personal protection order (PPO). For more information on how to obtain a PPO, see Chapter Six.

If you have children, inform their school and childcare providers about who has permission to pick up your children. If you have a PPO, or a custody order, consider providing the school with a copy of the order and a picture of your partner. Continue to have a safety plan for you and your children and update as needed.

A safety plan at your job and in public may also be necessary. You may want to inform someone at work about your situation and provide a picture of your partner to your employer. Consider having someone screen your phone calls and escort you to your car. Try to rearrange your habits, such as grocery shopping, or think about taking different routes home. If you suspect someone is following you, go to a public place, preferably the police station. If you must communicate with your partner, think about the safest way to do that.

Explore ways to take care of yourself. Read books and articles that empower you. Build a network of friends and family who will give you support. LACASA has a number of services to assist you.

*"After 20 years in an abusive relationship, I had my doubts if I had the strength to break free. Thanks to everyone's support and the use of the shelter for protection, I now feel much stronger."
- Anonymous*

Chapter 5

The Criminal Justice System, What Can I Expect?

- In 2019, 57,018 incidents of domestic violence were reported to Michigan police. Many others went unreported.¹
- In 2018, domestic violence accounted for 20% of all violent crime.¹

LACASA has advocates to assist you through the criminal justice process.

¹National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2020). Domestic violence in Michigan. Retrieved from www.ncadv.org/files/Michigan.pdf.

The Criminal Justice System, What Can I Expect?

If you are involved in the legal system because your partner has been arrested or is being charged with domestic violence, it is important to remember it is not your fault. Some survivors are relieved when their partner is arrested, while some may feel angry at the system or guilty because of the arrest. All feelings are normal. Your partner may become more abusive after being arrested and blame you. Always remember that you are in no way responsible for the arrest, violence is a choice that your partner made.

Michigan law is written to hold your partner accountable for the violence. The Livingston County Prosecutor's Office, not you, will make the decision to issue charges against them. The following section will go through the criminal process from the arrest to the sentencing of your partner. Individuals who use abusive behavior may lie to their partners about court proceedings or court dates, so if you have more questions, contact a LACASA Legal Advocate or contact the office of the prosecuting attorney.

Your Rights as a Victim of Crime

As a part of the Michigan Constitution and statutory law, the state guarantees that victims of crime have the right:

- To be treated with fairness and respect throughout the criminal justice process.
- To be reasonably protected from the accused throughout the criminal process.
- To determine if the defendant has been released from custody.
- To a timely disposition of the case following the arrest of the accused.
- To confer with the prosecution.
- To receive an explanation of procedures to follow if threatened or intimidated by the defendant.
- To be present throughout the entire court proceedings and trial unless you are excluded as a witness.
- To be free from threats of discharge from your employer because you are subpoenaed by the prosecutor to come to court.
- To request notice if the defendant escapes custody.
- To receive notice of any scheduled court proceedings and any changes in that schedule.

- To receive notice of the defendant's conviction and sentence.
- To make an impact statement to the court prior to sentencing either in person or remotely.
- To receive an explanation of the eligibility requirements and address of the Crime Victim's Compensation Board.
- To receive restitution for any damages suffered by you including medical expenses, lost wages, and damaged property.

Many of these rights are not inherent; you must notify the Prosecutor's Office, in writing, that you wish to exercise them.

When Police are Called

Livingston County has a mandatory arrest policy for domestic violence. This means the police officer will arrest the individual using the violent behavior if they have reasonable cause to believe an assault has taken place, and you are: a spouse, former spouse, live or have lived with the person using abusive behavior, have a child in common, or are in a dating relationship.

Following are things to keep in mind while talking with police officers:

- Even though you may be in crisis, it is important to speak calmly and respectfully.
- Be as specific as possible about what has happened when talking to police officers. For example, tell the officers that "He slapped me twice in the face then kicked me in the right leg," rather than "He beat me."
- Show the police any injuries you have. Notify the police if bruises get worse after they have taken pictures. If the police have not taken pictures, contact the police again and go to the police station to have pictures taken.
- Let police know about any witnesses.
- Show police any no-contact or personal protection orders. Let them know about past assaults or past violent behavior involving your partner.
- Get as much information as possible from the police, such as incident numbers and the name of your investigating officer. If you have any questions about the case or need to add any information, you must contact the officer.

Advocates from LACASA will be available to provide you information about the legal system and domestic violence, as well as discuss safety and your options as a survivor of domestic violence.

If you were strangled during a violent incident, LACASA can provide a medical exam to you at no cost. Law enforcement may make a referral for you to complete this exam.

If No Arrest is Made

If your partner has fled the scene, the police may not be able to make an arrest. A report will still be sent to the Livingston County Prosecutor's Office and charges may be issued. If you feel unsafe, ask the police to take you to a safe place or call LACASA's Crisis Shelter.

If an assault took place and the police were not contacted at the time of the assault, you may still call the police department up to several months after the assault. However, the longer you wait, the harder your case may be to prove. You will be given a time to come in and talk with an officer, and you will need to complete paperwork. If the officer finds that there is enough evidence to seek a warrant, the information will be sent to the prosecutor. If the officer does not find enough evidence at that time, an investigation will take place.

If an Arrest is Made

If your partner is arrested, they will be taken to the Livingston County Jail. There may be further investigation and you may be asked to provide a statement about what happened. This does not mean that you are pressing charges. The Livingston County Prosecutor's Office is responsible for that decision.

If charges are issued, your partner will be arraigned (formally accused of a crime) in front of a district court judge, either in person or by remote video, within 48 hours. However, they could be released in less than 48 hours. If you have any questions, you may call the Livingston County Jail, (517) 546-2445, or if you would like notification of your partner's release, call the Vine System at (800) 770-7657 or visit www.vinelink.com.

When the Individual using Abusive Behavior is Charged

The police will forward the report to the prosecutor's office. The prosecutor's office will make the decision to issue a warrant (press charges). You are a witness in the case and cannot have the charges dropped. Livingston County has a "No Dismissal" policy for domestic violence cases and proceeds once charges are issued. Once charges have been issued, your partner will be arraigned in District Court. Conditions and the amount of bond will be set. In most cases, your partner will be released on bond. For your protection, the court adds a no-contact condition along with the bond. You can call the prosecutor's office to find out the conditions of bond, (517) 546-1850.

No-Contact Condition This is an order that tells the defendant (your partner) not to have contact with you in person, by phone, by mail, or indirectly. If you live with your partner, the court will order them out of the house/apartment in most cases. The order is a condition of the defendant's bond and stays in place as long as the defendant is on bond. If your partner violates the no-contact order, call the police and inform the prosecutor's office.

If you wish to have the no-contact order dropped or amended, call the prosecutor's office to speak to a Victim Advocate about other options. Your safety will be the primary consideration in making the decision. You will be required to complete a safety plan with a LACASA Legal Advocate before the courts consider whether to lift a no contact order. Ultimately, the judge will make the final decision on when and if a no-contact condition will be lifted.

If You Have Been Arrested

Sometimes survivors of domestic violence are arrested for assaulting their partner. This does not necessarily mean that you are a person who uses abusive behavior; abuse is a pattern of violent behavior that one person uses to control another. Livingston County's protocols are written very strictly and require the police to make an arrest if they have reasonable cause to believe that an assault has taken place.

Possible Crime Charges

Domestic Violence: This is a misdemeanor charge and is defined as an assault or assault with battery committed against a current or former spouse, an individual with whom the defendant has had a child, a person with whom the defendant has had a dating relationship, or a current or former resident of the offender's household. The first offense is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for up to 93 days and/or a \$500 fine. A second offense may be a misdemeanor or a felony and is punishable by imprisonment for up to one year and/or a \$1,000 fine. A third or subsequent offense is a felony, punishable by imprisonment for up to two years and/or a \$2,500 fine.

Aggravated Assault: Defined as an assault without a weapon which inflicts serious or aggravated injury. The first offense is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment of up to one year and/or a \$1,000 fine. A second or subsequent offense is a felony punishable by imprisonment for up to two years and/or a \$2,500 fine.

Felonious Assault: A felonious assault is an assault with a dangerous weapon without intent to cause injury or place another in fear of an immediate battery. Any person who shall assault another with a gun, revolver, pistol, knife, iron bar, club, brass knuckles, or other dangerous weapons but without intending to commit the crime of murder, and without intending to inflict great bodily harm less than the crime of murder, shall be guilty of felonious assault. The felony is punishable by up to four years imprisonment and/or a \$2,000 fine.

Assault with Intent to Do Great Bodily Harm Less than Murder: Any person who assaults another with intent to do great bodily harm less than the crime of murder, is guilty of a felony, punishable by imprisonment in the state prison for not more than 10 years or by a fine of up to \$5,000.

Assault with Intent to Maim: Any assault with intent to maim or disfigure is a felony punishable by up to ten years imprisonment or a fine of up to \$5,000.

Assault with Intent to Commit Murder: Any person, who shall assault another with the intent to commit a crime of murder, shall be guilty of a felony, punishable by imprisonment in the state prison for life or any number of years.

Assault with Intent to Do Great Bodily Harm Less than Murder (Assault by Strangulation or Suffocation): Any person, who assaults another with intent to do great bodily harm less than the crime of murder, or assaults another person by strangulation or suffocation, is guilty of a felony, punishable by imprisonment in the state prison for not more than 10 years or by a fine of up to \$5,000. "Strangulation or suffocation" is defined as intentionally impeding normal breathing or circulation of the blood by applying pressure on the throat or neck or by blocking the nose or mouth of another person.

Stalking: This is a misdemeanor and is defined as a willful course of conduct involving repeated or continuing harassment of another individual that would cause a reasonable person to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated, threatened, harassed, or molested; and that actually causes the victim to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated, threatened, harassed, or molested.

Aggravated Stalking: This is a felony by imprisonment of up to five years and/ or \$5,000 fine. It includes one or more of the following: making credible threat of injury to victim or family members, violating a Personal Protection Order two times or more, violating a bond condition or probation, or having a previous conviction for stalking.

Kidnapping: This is a felony involving the forcible confinement or movement of another person against his/her will. It is punishable up to life in prison.

Criminal Sexual Conduct (Rape): Criminal Sexual Conduct (CSC) is the legal term that is used in the state of Michigan. This term is used because touching and penetration both fit into this category. There are four different degrees of CSC. First, second and third degree are felonies, and fourth degree is a misdemeanor.

Generally, first and third degree involve some form of forced or coerced penetration. This can include: vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse; or inserting a finger or other object into another person's genital or anal opening. Second and fourth degree CSC involve forced or coerced sexual contact. The state of Michigan defines sexual contact as the intentional touching of the victim's or assailant's intimate parts, or the clothing covering those intimate parts, for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification, done for a sexual purpose or in a sexual manner. This can include touching of the groin, genital area, inner thigh, buttocks, breast or the clothing covering those parts.

There are many different circumstances and factors that go into deciding the degree of a CSC charge. For more information, please contact a LACASA Legal Advocate.

The Criminal Proceedings in Court

The process is different for misdemeanor and felony charges. Misdemeanor cases take place in district court, while felony charges are arraigned in district court and are bound over to circuit court for trial. LACASA Legal Advocates are available to accompany you to court, answer questions, and provide support.

The Victim-Witness Coordinator at the Prosecutor's Office is the person in charge of ensuring your rights. They will notify you of charges against the assailant and send you information regarding your rights as a crime victim.

Included with the information will be two forms which you should review carefully. The first form is the Victim Impact Statement. If your partner is convicted, your statement will be forwarded to court and may be considered at sentencing. Legal Advocates at LACASA can provide assistance in completing this form. The second form is the Rights Requested by Victim. This needs to be completed and returned to the prosecutor's office if you wish to receive notices of future court hearings. If you do not return this form, you will be notified only of the sentence date and disposition of the case.

If you have any questions regarding the legal proceedings during the course of prosecution, call the Victim-Witness Coordinator at the prosecutor's office.

Misdemeanor Charges

Arraignment: At the arraignment, the defendant will enter a plea of guilty, not guilty, no contest, or stand mute. However, the defendant can change their plea to guilty at any time during the following stages.

Pre-Trial Conference: This is a conference with the prosecutor, the defendant, the defendant's attorney and the magistrate. They will meet to discuss whether the defendant will plead guilty to the crime charged, or a different offense. If the defendant does not plead guilty, they may choose between a jury or a bench (judge only) trial. If the defendant chooses a jury trial, a jury selection will be scheduled before the trial date.

The prosecutor may offer the defendant a plea bargain to a deferred charge (the Spouse Abuse Act). As the victim of this crime, you have the right to consult with the prosecutor before the plea is offered. You may want to be at the pretrial conference, however, you are not required to attend. If the defendant pleads guilty, a sentencing date will be set.

Spouse Abuse Act: Often at the pretrial the prosecutor will offer first time offenders of domestic violence a special plea that may be referred to as the Spouse Abuse Act. The law reads that if the defendant does not have a previous conviction for domestic violence, the court, after the person pleads guilty or is found guilty, may defer entry of judgment of conviction and place the offender on probation with specific terms and conditions that may include counseling. There may only be one discharge and dismissal under this law. This provision may be utilized only with consent of the offender and the prosecuting attorney, in consultation with the victim. If the defendant assaults anyone or violates the court's order to receive counseling, the probation shall be revoked and the guilty charge is entered into the defendant's permanent record.

Trial: The prosecutor must prove that the defendant is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt of committing the crime. The prosecutor may call witnesses, including you, to testify in an effort to do this. The defendant is not required to call witnesses, nor are they required to testify, but they may if they wish. You may receive a subpoena. If so, you must be present and may need to testify. If the defendant is found guilty, the judge will refer them to the probation department for a pre-sentencing report.

Sentencing: If the defendant is convicted or pleads guilty, the probation department will prepare a pre-sentencing report. At sentencing, the judge will consider the probation department's report, its recommendation, as well as any statement that you make.

Your input is an important part of the pre-sentencing report. If you have completed a Victim Impact Statement previously, it will be forwarded to the court as part of this report. If you have not yet completed a Victim Impact Statement, you can submit one any time before sentencing. You also have the right to make a statement at sentencing. The judge may order the defendant to serve time in jail, do community service, enter counseling, or make restitution, or all of the above.

NOTE: If the assailant has utilized the 'Spouse Abuse Act' jail time is not a sentencing option for the judge, except if there is a violation.

Appeal: The defendant has the right to appeal their conviction or sentence. Those defendants who plead guilty or no contest may appeal only with permission of the court.

LACASA advocates are available to provide support any time during the criminal justice process.

Felony Charges

Preliminary Exam: This is a hearing that takes place before a judge in District Court after arraignment and pre-trial conferences. The prosecutor will present witnesses to prove that a crime has taken place and that there is probable cause to believe the defendant committed the crime. The defendant will be represented by an attorney who will cross examine the witnesses. You may receive a subpoena and if so, you must be present and may have to testify. If the judge decides that a crime was committed and there is probable cause that the defendant committed it, the defendant is bound over (sent) to circuit court for trial. The prosecutor may also offer the defendant the opportunity to plead guilty to a lesser charge at a previously held exam conference that you do not need to attend.

Circuit Court Arraignment: The defendant is advised of the charges against them in front of a circuit court judge, and enters a plea of guilty, not guilty, no contest or stands mute. Usually this arraignment is waived in writing by the defense attorney and the defendant does not have to appear.

Pre-Trial Conference: This is a conference between the prosecutor, the defendant and/or their attorney. The court may hear motions to determine whether evidence will be admitted or whether there is some legal reason why the defendant should not be tried. The defendant will be given the opportunity to plead guilty or may be allowed to plead guilty to a lesser crime. If the defendant pleads not guilty, a trial date will be set.

Trial: The prosecutor will try to prove that the defendant is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt of committing the crime. The prosecutor may call witnesses to testify in an effort to do this. The defendant is not required to call witnesses, nor are they required to testify, but can if they wish. You may receive a subpoena. If so, you must be present and may need to testify. If the defendant is found guilty, the judge will refer them to the circuit court probation department for a review of sentencing guidelines and a pre-sentence report.

Sentencing: If the defendant is convicted or pleads guilty, the probation department will prepare a pre-sentencing report. At sentencing, the judge will consider the probation department's report, its recommendation, as well as any statements that you make. Your input is an important part of the pre-sentencing report. If you have completed a Victim Impact Statement previously, it will be forwarded to the court as part of this report. If you have not yet completed a Victim Impact Statement, you can submit one any time before sentencing. You also have the right to make a statement at sentencing. The judge may order the defendant to serve time in jail or prison, do community service, be placed on probation, or to enter counseling. In circuit court cases, the defendant will likely be incarcerated for at least some time. The judge also has the option of ordering the defendant to make restitution to you.

Appeal: The defendant has the right to appeal their conviction or sentence. Those defendants who plead guilty or no contest may appeal only with permission of the court. Additional sentencing information: Individuals convicted of misdemeanor or felony domestic violence are banned for eight years of possessing/using/buying a firearm or ammunition.

Crime Victim's Compensation

There is a state-funded program based on the Michigan Crime Victim Compensation Act of 1976 that may be able to provide financial assistance to domestic violence victims for medical and counseling bills, as well as loss of earnings. This program provides assistance for victims who do not have insurance or public assistance to cover bills resulting from their victimization including, but not limited to, location expenses related to the crime, security systems, and transportation related to the incident.

Below are the basic guidelines to qualify for compensation from the Crime Victim Compensation Fund:

1. The crime must be reported to the police and the victim must cooperate with the police and the prosecutor.
2. Medical expenses must have been at least \$200 or a loss of two continuous weeks of earnings must have occurred.
3. The claim must be filed within five years from the date of injury.
4. The victim who is filing the claim must not be criminally responsible for the crime or have contributed to the crime.

There are exceptions to these guidelines and LACASA Legal Advocates are available to assist with Crime Victim Compensation forms.

"I want you to know that... I am about to graduate from U of M with a Master's degree. I'm sure it must be frustrating to see women like me who don't seem to be learning anything from the counseling - but believe me, it does help! Thank you for being there." - Anonymous

Chapter 6

What about the PPO?

- 66.2% of female stalking victims reported stalking by a current or former intimate partner.¹

You do not deserve to be hurt. LACASA can help.

¹National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2020). Domestic violence. Retrieved from https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2497/domestic_violence-2020080709350855.pdf?1596811079991.

What About the PPO?

A Personal Protection Order (PPO) is an order from the court to your partner that will restrict their contact with you. If the order is violated by your partner, there may be criminal penalties ranging from fines to serving up to 93 days in jail. A PPO that has been served also gives the police warrantless arrest authority. This means that if your partner is in violation of the PPO and you call the police, they will be able to arrest them. The PPO will usually stay in effect for about a year, but the judge could order it to stay in effect for a longer period of time.

PPOs can be requested ex-parte (without a hearing). This means that you will not need to go before the judge. You will need to provide written testimony of the most recent assault or stalking behavior and any relevant past behavior. If the PPO is signed by the judge, your partner will need to be served with a copy of the PPO. However, the order goes into effect immediately when the judge signs it.

Your partner will have 14 days to respond to the order after they are served. They may request a hearing to contest the order. If your partner requests a hearing you will need to go before a judge to provide testimony.

A PPO can prohibit your partner from:

- Entering on to the premise where you live
- Assaulting, attacking, beating, molesting, or wounding you
- Threatening to kill or physically injure you or your children
- Removing minor children except when in compliance with court ordered visitation
- Interfering with your efforts to remove your children or personal property from a premise that is solely owned or leased by the assailant
- Following or appearing within your sight
- Calling or sending communications
- Approaching or confronting you in a public place
- Appearing at your workplace
- Interfering with you at your place of employment or engaging in conduct that impairs your employment
- Owning or purchasing a gun
- Any other specific act or conduct that interferes with your personal liberty

Who is Appropriate for a PPO?

If you have any of these relationships with your partner:

- Spouse
- Former spouse
- Dating or formerly dating
- Have a child in common
- Resided in the same household

OR

- If the person using abusive behavior does not fall into one of these relationships but has perpetrated two separate assaults or incidents of stalking against you.

Filing for a PPO

You do not need an attorney to file for a PPO. The paperwork is available at the county clerk's office and you can fill it out on your own or a Legal Advocate from LACASA can help you. The forms are also available at <https://milivcounty.gov/clerk-circuit-court/ppo/>

Safety with a PPO

- Keep your PPO with you at all times.
- Call the police if your partner violates the PPO.
- Think of alternative ways to keep safe if the police do not respond right away.
- Inform family, friends, and neighbors that you have a PPO in effect.
- If you have children, give a copy of your PPO to your child's school and daycare provider.

Extreme Risk Protection Order

The Extreme Risk Protection Order Act (ERPOA) MCL 691.1801 went into effect on February 13, 2024. This act provides a process for certain individuals to request an order prohibiting a restrained individual from possessing or purchasing firearms and ordering an individual to relinquish their firearms. If a court finds that a person poses a serious risk of injuring themselves or others with a firearm, that person is temporarily prohibited from possessing firearms. This new provision may provide a survivor with some peace of mind if their partner owns any type of firearm. If you have questions regarding this process, contact a LACASA Legal Advocate.

Chapter 7

What About Divorce & Custody?

- Supporting children's healthy attachment to a survivor-parent is crucial to their development and resiliency following exposure to domestic violence.¹
- There are approximately 100,000 contested child custody cases each year in the United States.
- Studies indicate that two-thirds of them likely involve domestic violence.¹ The number one protective factor in helping children heal from exposure to domestic violence is the presence of a consistent, supportive, and loving adult, most often their non-abusive parent.¹

You and your children deserve to be safe. LACASA offers resources and support.

¹Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody. Facts (rcdvcpc.org)

What about Divorce and Custody?

In criminal court cases, the prosecuting attorney represents the case as a representative of the State of Michigan. In civil court proceedings, both parties are represented by private attorneys or may represent themselves. Divorce, custody proceedings, personal protection orders (PPO), and personal injury lawsuits are some of the actions that take place in the civil arena. However, the prosecutor may assist in the PPO violation hearings.

Finding an Attorney

In most civil actions, you will need an attorney, with the exception of a personal protection order. You do have the right to represent yourself on issues involving divorce, custody, parenting time, and property division; however, we do not recommend it because these are very serious matters that can have lifelong repercussions.

Do not let the cost of an attorney stop you from filing for divorce or custody. You may qualify for legal aid and, if you do not, you may be able to find an inexpensive attorney or work out a payment plan. Many attorneys offer a free or inexpensive initial consultation. Use this appointment to ask a potential attorney if they would be willing to work out a payment plan. In some divorce situations, your attorney may be able to require your spouse to pay your attorney fees as part of the divorce settlement. It is important to ask the attorney if they have experience working with survivors of domestic violence.

Divorce

To receive a divorce in Michigan, you must live in the state for six months and in the county for ten days before filing. Michigan allows no-fault divorce, but fault may be considered in determining property division, spousal support, or custody. This means that you do not have to prove adultery, cruelty, or other fault grounds. With no-fault divorce, one spouse can get a divorce even if the other does not want one. You do not have to be living apart to file.

Separate Maintenance

Separate maintenance is available in Michigan and means that you and your spouse can live apart with clearly defined responsibilities or liabilities for care of children and financial obligations. It can also provide for spousal support. Separate maintenance is only granted if both spouses consent to it. With separate maintenance, your legal status is not clear and many attorneys advise against it. Separate maintenance status can be converted to a divorce proceeding by either party.

Custody

If there is no custody order from the court, both parents have equal rights to the custody of the children. It is recognized that there are many different types of families with children. Additionally, depending on where you file, procedures may differ.

You can establish temporary physical custody of your children by filing a motion with the court. If the other parent contests temporary custody, the Friend of the Court may then do an investigation and make a recommendation to the court about permanent custody arrangements.

If parentage is not established - if one parent's name is not on the birth certificate, or they have not legally acknowledged parentage, then the other parent who is listed on the birth certificate has legal custody of the children. The other parent may still try to establish parentage and initiate custody proceedings. Because of this, it is important to establish custody through the court. If both parents have been recognized on the birth certificate, or through the court as the legal parent, the other parent will need to get a custody order from the court to establish custody.

Parenting Time

Parenting time is a specified time when the non-custodial parent has time with the child. The Friend of the Court may make a recommendation about parenting time as well as custody. If the court believes that the child is in danger, parenting time can be supervised or suspended until safeguards are established.

Exchanging children for parenting time has proven to be very dangerous for some survivors of domestic violence. It often gives the person using abusive behavior an opportunity to further harass or assault. For your safety, it is recommended that parenting time exchanges take place through a third-party or at a public location, such as the police station, fast food restaurant, or supervised visitation/exchange program.

It may be helpful to address any questions or concerns about custody and parenting time with an attorney.

Chapter 8

How Can I Help a Survivor of Domestic Violence?

- It may take five to seven attempts for a survivor to leave an abusive relationship.¹
- Strong social supports and spirituality are directly linked to the resiliency of domestic violence survivors. Family, friends, advocates, and spiritual support can be invaluable.¹

LACASA provides support and services for family and friends of domestic violence survivors.

¹Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody. Facts (rcdvcpc.org)

How Can I Help a Survivor of Domestic Violence?

Friends and family are very important supports for survivors of domestic violence. Your role as a support person is essential, but you may have some unanswered questions. Why is this happening? Why does the survivor stay? What can I do to help?

Why is This Happening?

Chapter One of this handbook describes the dynamics of abuse. Learning about the dynamics of domestic violence may give you a greater understanding of what your friend or family member is going through.

Why Does A Survivor Stay?

There are numerous reasons why survivors stay in abusive relationships. Many survivors hold on to the hope that their relationship will get better, and their partner will change. They believe their partner who promised the abuse would never happen again. Most survivors love their partner and are committed to the relationship; they just want the abuse to stop. Survivors may also be financially dependent on their partner and worry how they will survive financially if they leave.

A survivor may fear leaving the relationship after being told repeatedly that they or a loved one will be harassed, harmed, or killed if they leave. Leaving an abusive relationship becomes the most dangerous time for a survivor and family. Individuals using abusive behavior often use increasingly violent tactics if they feel they are losing power and control over their partner. Separating or divorcing from an abusive partner is often more difficult when there are children due to custody and visitation issues. They may use the children to continue to be controlling and abusive. Whether or not there are children, breaking away can be very dangerous and safety plans are essential (See Chapter Four, pages 20-26).

Survivors do leave abusive relationships. Support people may become frustrated when the person they care about returns to abusive relationships. It may take several attempts for a person to leave the relationship. Many survivors report that support from family and friends, individual counseling, and support groups assisted them and gave them time to reach decisions that helped keep them safe.

It can be difficult or dangerous to successfully end an abusive relationship, but there are several factors that increase the likelihood a survivor attempts to leave. These factors include an increase in the severity of violence, a reduction in remorse from their partner, or violence involving children or pets. Increased access to supportive services and survivor-specific resources can also be an important factor in deciding to leave.

What Can You Do to Help?

Educate yourself on the dynamics of domestic violence and keep in mind that the survivor is not to blame for the violence they have experienced. Recognize that using abusive and controlling behaviors is a choice made by an individual, and that no one asks to be treated this way. It is critical for your support to be unconditional and without judgment, whether or not your family member or friend chooses to leave the situation. Ways to support survivors include, but are not limited to:

- Listen and give the survivor time to talk.
- Do not take charge; let the survivor make their own decisions.
- Continue to provide support.
- Provide supportive statements such as “I believe you,” “It is not your fault,” and “What can I do to support you?”
- Let the survivor know they are not alone and supportive services are available.
- Help the survivor explore options and choices.
- Help the survivor establish and then support their safety plan.
- Set aside time when you do not talk about the situation.
- Emphasize and appreciate the survivor’s value, personal worth, and importance as often as you can and in a way that resonates with the survivor.

Supporting a survivor can feel overwhelming and stressful. If you find yourself in this position, be sure to take care of yourself as well. You can also utilize resources like LACASA to learn more about navigating this supportive role.

Chapter 9

LACASA Services

LACASA Services

LACASA is a nonprofit agency in Livingston County serving individuals and families that have been impacted by domestic violence, sexual violence and child abuse.

LACASA provides a wide range of services designed to meet the needs of survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence and child abuse. LACASA's services are available to support you in whatever decisions you make. All services for survivors and their children are free and confidential.

In addition to services for survivors and children, LACASA provides services for family and friends, perpetrators of violence, and the community. For more information about LACASA services, accessibility and eligibility, call (866) 522-2725.

24-Hour Helpline

LACASA offers a 24-hour help line that is staffed 365 days a year: If you need immediate assistance, counseling, information, a referral, or just someone who will listen, please call our toll-free number at (866) 522-2725 or text (517) 777-8005

Crisis Shelter

LACASA's Crisis Shelter is available for survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence child abuse, and survivor's children. The Crisis Shelter provides a secure, confidential, and non-violent environment safe from abuse. While in the shelter, residents have access to counseling, legal and medical advocacy, group support, and help exploring options for housing, employment, and childcare. Call LACASA's 24-hour Helpline for assistance.

Safe Pet Place

LACASA understands that no pet should have to be left behind when seeking safe shelter. LACASA can provide shelter to family pets of shelter residents through our on-site kennel facility and pet-friendly rooms.

Counseling

LACASA offers free and confidential one-on-one counseling for survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, and child abuse. Counseling services allow survivors to process their feelings and experiences, explore options for healing and moving forward, and create safety plans. LACASA offers both daytime and evening appointments.

Support Groups

Daytime and evening support groups are open to any survivor of domestic violence, sexual violence, or child abuse. These groups provide survivors a chance to share experiences, explore options, and make connections with others who have lived through interpersonal violence.

Transitional Supportive Housing

LACASA offers Transitional Supportive Housing for families experiencing domestic and sexual violence. Transitional Supportive Housing provides families with a safe environment while making the transition from an abusive relationship to a violence-free lifestyle. While in transitional supportive housing, families receive counseling, support services, and assistance with budgeting, job training, and life skills.

Children and Youth Services

LACASA provides services in a secure, friendly setting to children who have witnessed or experienced domestic violence, sexual violence, and child abuse. Children are given the opportunity to learn about their feelings and ways to stay safe. They are also provided opportunities to participate in various activities and interact with peers who may have similar experiences. Children learn that they are not alone and that help is available.

SANE Program

The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program is a community coordinated effort in response to the crime of sexual violence. The SANE program's mission is to provide a response to survivors of sexual violence for the purpose of evidence collection and treatment at LACASA for Livingston County and surrounding areas, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. This program is for both adults and children.

Domestic Violence/Strangulation Program

The Domestic Violence/Strangulation Program is a community coordinated effort in response to the crime of domestic violence. The program's mission is to provide a response to survivors of domestic violence for the purpose of evidence collection and treatment at LACASA for Livingston County and surrounding areas, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. This program is for anyone who has been strangled in an intimate partner relationship.

CARE Project

The CARE Project (Child Abuse Response Effort) is a multi-disciplinary approach to investigating child abuse cases in Livingston County. This multi-disciplinary team includes members from the prosecutor's office, local law enforcement agencies, the Department of Health and Human Services, LACASA, and various other human service agencies. The CARE Project provides a safe environment for children, who are suspected of being seriously physically or sexually abused, to complete a forensic interview. The project's goals are to minimize the trauma to child survivors and their families, reduce the number of duplicate interviews children must endure, and increase the rate of prosecution. During each interview conducted by a specially trained forensic interviewer, a LACASA advocate meets with the family to provide information, resources, and support.

Legal Advocacy

LACASA Legal Advocates are available to help survivors understand and utilize the criminal justice and civil legal system for protection. Legal advocates are not attorneys, do not practice law, and do not give legal advice. Legal advocates provide information about legal rights, accompany survivors to court, provide follow up on domestic violence that has been reported to the police, and advocate on behalf of survivors with the prosecutor's office, police, and probation officers. Legal advocates also assist survivors in filing personal protection orders (PPOs).

On-Call Response Team

LACASA' On-Call Response Team operates a 24/7 response effort from advocates who are trained to respond to incidents of domestic violence. This team takes calls from police or hospital staff who encounter survivors and then responds to the scene in order to make services accessible to the survivor involved. If an arrest is made, someone from the LACASA On-Call Response Team will make contact with survivors. The LACASA On-Call Response Team member will offer information about options as a survivor of domestic violence and help create a safety plan.

Individual Advocacy

LACASA provides individual advocacy for survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault, and their children. These services may involve accompanying the survivor to meetings, accessing services or funds from other organizations, advocating with other agencies on behalf of the survivor, or assisting them in navigating other systems within the community.

Healthy Families

LACASA provides a Healthy Families program for new parents in Livingston County. Healthy Families offers new parents of infants a long-term resource contact they can count on for help raising a healthy family. Home visits are provided by family support workers, and parents are able to attend ongoing workshops and support groups. New parents learn information and skills about infant and child development, parent and infant interaction, parenting coping techniques, and how to attain personal parenting goals.

Information and Referrals

LACASA provides information and referrals to community services. This may include assistance with housing, financial needs, job training, health care, and additional counseling services. Referrals are offered on-site or through the helpline.

Family and Friends Services

Services are provided to family and friends of survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, and child abuse on both an individual and group basis. Services include offering education about domestic violence, sexual violence, child abuse, the dynamics of violence, and strategies to hold individuals using abusive behavior accountable and reduce violence in the family.

Domestic Abuse Intervention Program

Intervention services are offered for people who use abusive behavior, threats, and/or force in their relationships. Services are provided by trained professionals who specialize in abusive behavior.

CASA

The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program at LACASA provides highly-trained community volunteers to advocate for the best interest of children who come into the court system as a result of abuse or neglect.

Social Change/Community Coordination

LACASA works with many institutions, departments, and agencies to improve the systemic response to survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence, sexual violence, and child abuse. Services include assistance on writing policies and protocols, developing employee assistance programs on domestic violence, sexual violence, and child abuse, consultation, providing training and education, and working as partners with other agencies to deliver services to survivors and their children.

Prevention and Education Services

LACASA's prevention and education services increase community awareness about domestic violence, sexual violence, child abuse, and how to prevent violence. Education and training is provided to adults, youth, and professional members of the community. LACASA offers parent education classes, school-based prevention programs, and community workshops.

Chapter 10

Resources

Police Agency Resources

- Livingston County Sheriff's Department**517-546-2440
 150 S Highlander Way, Howell MI 48843
milivcounty.gov/sheriff
- Livingston County Jail**.....517-546-2445
 150 S. Highlander Way, Howell MI 48843
milivcounty.gov/jail
- Michigan State Police: Brighton Post**.....810-227-1051
 4337 Buno Rd., Brighton MI 48116
michigan.gov/msp
- Brighton Police Department**.....810-227-2700
 440 S. Third St., Brighton MI 48116
brightoncity.org/services_departments/police
- Fowlerville Police Department**.....517-223-8711
 213 S. Grand River Ave., Fowlerville MI 48836
fowlerville.org/departments/police_department
- Green Oak Police Department**810-231-9626
 9400 Whitmore Lake Rd., Brighton MI 48116
greenoakpolice.com
- Hamburg Police Department**.....810-231-9391
 10409 Merrill Rd., Hamburg MI 48139
hatp@hamburg.mi.us
- Howell Police Department**516-546-1330
 611 E. Grand River Ave, Howell MI 48843
Police@CityofHowell.org
- Pinckney Police Department**.....734-878-3700
 220 S. Howell St., Pinckney MI 48169
police@villageofpinckney.org
- Unadilla Police Department**.....734-498-2325
 126 Webb St., Gregory MI 48137
twp.unadilla.mi.us/police-department

Livingston County Courts

Livingston County Prosecutor’s Office 517-546-1850

210 S. Highlander Way, Howell MI 48843

Victim Rights..... 517-546-8358

milivcounty.gov/prosecutor/victim-assistance

Friend of the Court..... 877-543-2660

210 S. Highlander Way, Howell MI 48843

milivcounty.gov/foc

44th Circuit Court..... 517-546-3060

204 S. Highlander Way, Howell MI 48843

224 N. First St., Brighton MI 48116

milivcounty.gov/circuit

53rd District Court 517-548-1000

204 S. Highlander Way, Howell MI 48843

milivcounty.gov/district

Juvenile Court..... 517-546-1500

204 S. Highlander Way, Howell MI 48843

milivcounty.gov/juvenile

Circuit Court Probation 517-546-4212

210 S. Highlander Way, Howell MI 48843

District Court Probation 517-546-5950

204 S. Highlander Way, Howell 48843

milivcounty.gov/district/probation

Emergency

LACASA 24-hour Helpline

Call: 866-522-2725

Text: 517-777-8005

lacasacenter.org

Ambulance, fire, police..... 911

Livingston County Community Mental Health 800-615-1245

<http://www.cmhliv.org>

24-hour Protective Services (Adult & Child)..... 855-444-3911

www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/adult-child-serv/abuse-neglect

National Runaway Safeline Call/Text 800-786-2929

www.1800runaway.org

United Way Regional Call Center..... 866-561-2500

www.CentralMichigan211.org

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline..... 988

Health Related Services

LACASA Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner

Call: 866-522-2725

Text: 517-777-8005

lacasacenter.org

Livingston County Health Department 517-546-9850

www.milivcounty.gov/health

Trinity Health-Howell 517-545-6000

Trinity Health-Brighton 810-844-7575

Trinity Health Behavioral Services 844-237-3627

www.trinityhealthmichigan.org

Ascension Brighton Center for Recovery 877-976-2371

healthcare.ascension.org/locations/michigan/midet/brighton-ascension-brighton-center-for-recovery

Michigan HIV& STI Hotline 800-872-2437

www.miunified.org

Counseling

LACASA

Call: 866-522-2725

Text: 517-777-8005

lacasacenter.org

Domestic Abuse Intervention Program

Call: 866-522-2725

Text: 517-777-8005

lacasacenter.org

Livingston County Catholic Charities 517-545-5944

www.livingstoncc.org

Livingston County Community Mental Health 800-615-1245

<http://www.cmhliv.org>

Livingston Family Center 810-231-9591

www.livfc.org

Trinity Health Behavioral Services 844-237-3627

www.trinityhealthmichigan.org

Other Resources

LACASA Legal Advocacy

Call: 866-522-2725

Text: 517-777-8005

lacasacenter.org

Legal Services of South Central Michigan 888-783-8190

lsscm.org

Department of Health & Human Services-Livingston 517-548-0200

www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/adult-child-serv

Livingston Essential Transportation Services – LETS 517-546-6600

www.milivcounty.gov/lets

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program 517-546-5459

www.milivcounty.gov/health/personal-health/wic/

Livingston County Michigan Works! 517-546-7450

www.mwse.org

Oakland Livingston Human Services 517-546-8500

www.olhsa.org

Child Connect for Family Success 517-548-9112

Salvation Army 517-546-4750

www.centralusa.salvationarmy.org/livingstoncounty

LOVE, INC. 517-552-3620

www.livingstonloveinc.org

Livingston Educational Service Agency 517-546-5550

www.livingstonesesa.org

The Arc Livingston 517-546-1228

<http://www.arclivingston.org>

Parent Helpline 855-427-2736

parentsanonymous.org

MSU Extension Service 517-546-3950

www.canr.msu.edu/livingston

Housing

showmetherent.com

General Resources on Domestic Violence

Websites, Books, Articles, and Podcasts

For Survivors

Understanding the Impact of Domestic Violence

<https://cdv.org/understand-cdv/the-impact/>

I'm a Survivor- Misty Chaviers (2019) [Audio Podcast]

Getting Unstuck from PTSD- Resick, P, Stirman, S., LoSavio, S.
The Gilford Press, NY, 2023

How to Be the Love You Seek: Break Cycles, Find Peace, and Heal Your Relationships- LaPera, Nicole. Harper, 202.

Why Does He Do That?-Bancroft, Lundy, Berkley Books, NY, 2002.

The Batterer as Parent- Bancroft, Lundy,Sage Publishing Inc., NY, 2002

Should I Stay or Should I Go?- Bancroft, Lundy, Berkley Books, NY, 2011

When Love Goes Wrong: What to Do When You Can't Do Anything Right.-Jones, Ann and Schechter, Susan. Harper Perennial, New York, NY, 1992.

You Can Be Free: An Easy-to-Read Handbook for Abused Women.-NiCarthy, Ginny and Davidson, Sue, Seal Press, Boston, MA, 1989.

Keeping the Faith: Questions and Answers for the Abused Woman. Rev. Marie M. Fortune, Harper, San Francisco, CA, 1987.

The Emotionally Abusive Relationship: How to Stop Being Abused and How to Stop Abusing.-Engel, Beverly, John Wiley & Sons, New Jersey, 2002.

For Women of Color and Women with Disabilities

Uniting Three Fires Against Violence- unitingthreefiresagainstviolence.org

Chain, Chain, Change: For Black Women Dealing With Physical and Emotional Abuse.-White, Evelyn C., Seal Press, Seattle, 1985.

Mejor Sola Que Mal Acompanada: Para la Mujer Golpeada/For the Latina in an Abusive Relationship.-Seal Press, Seattle, 1985.

Escape: A Handbook for Battered Women Who Have Disabilities.-Finex House, Jamaica Plain, MA.

For Survivors of Same-Sex Abuse

Violence in Gay and Lesbian Domestic Partnerships.-Renzetti, Clare and Miley, Charles, The Haworth Press, 1996.

Naming the Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering.-Lybel, Kerry, Seal Press, Seattle, WA, 1986.

Men Who Beat the Men Who Love Them.-Island, David and Letellier, Patrick, Harrington Park Press, New York, NY, 1991.

For Children

Children in the Crossfire: Violence in the Home- How Does it Affect Our Children?-Roy, Maria, Health Communications, Inc. Deerfield Beach, FL, 1988.

When Dad Hurts Mom: Helping your Children Heal the Wounds of Witnessing Abuse—Lundy Bancroft, Berkley Publishing, New York, NY, 2004

When Mommy Got Hurt.-Lee, Eilene, et al. Kidsright, Charlotte, NC, 1996.

Helping Children Cope with Divorce.-Teyber, Edward, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, 1992.

Dating Violence - For Teens and Their Families

In Love and In Danger: A Teen's Guide to Breaking Free of Abusive Relationships.-Levy, Barrie, Seal Press, Boston, MA, 1996.

What Parents Need to Know About Dating Violence.-Levy, Barrie, Seal Press, Boston, MA, 1995.

Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger.vfn-Levy, Barrie, Seal Press, Seattle, WA, 1990.

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info@lacasacenter.org

24-Hour Helpline

Call: (866) 522-2725

Text: (517) 777-8005



LACASA

www.lacasacenter.org