

## Legal Options

This brochure is an introduction to the legal services available for your protection. The staff of the Domestic Violence Center can help you to further understand your legal options, provide court accompaniment, support you during legal proceedings, and - in some cases - our attorneys can represent you.

### You can make your own decisions...

No one will ever force you to take legal action. Our first concern is for your safety. The Domestic Violence Center's services are designed to give you the information and support needed to live a life free from violence.

**Start your journey toward freedom and safety today by calling us:**

### Domestic Violence Center of Chester County

**P.O. Box 832  
West Chester, PA 19381-0832  
Administration: 610-431-3546  
Fax: 610-431-2462**

#### Agency Services

24-Hour Hotlines  
Emergency Shelter  
Bridge Transitional Housing  
Phase IV Transitional Housing  
Legal Center  
Court Accompaniment  
Counseling  
Support Groups  
Case Management  
Medical Advocacy  
Children's Programs  
Education Programs  
Community Education and Training  
Information and Referrals  
Bilingual (Spanish/English) Services  
Bilingual (Spanish/English) Outreach

The Domestic Violence Center of Chester County works to assure safety and justice for victims of domestic violence regardless of gender, race, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or political affiliation

**24-hour Hotlines  
1-888-711-6270  
610-431-1430**

Member agency

United Way of Chester County

United Way of Southern Chester County

The Domestic Violence Center of Chester County, Inc. is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) charitable organization. A copy of the official registration may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling, toll-free in Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999.

Registration does not imply endorsement.



**Have you experienced Domestic Violence?**

**You have**

# LEGAL OPTIONS



## DVCCC

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CENTER  
of Chester County

Freedom Through Empowerment



**24-Hour Toll-Free Hotline  
1-888-711-6270**

All services are free and confidential.

[www.DVCCCPA.org](http://www.DVCCCPA.org)

## The Police and the Criminal Court System

If you are injured or in danger, call **911!** The police can help you get to a safe place and obtain medical treatment, if necessary. Many Chester County police are trained and will call our hotline for information and support. Feel free to call on your own when you are safe.

**The abuser will be released from jail if he/she is able to post bail.** You should make the police and district justice aware of an abuser's history of domestic violence. They will consider this information in setting bail. The abuser can be ordered to have no contact with you as a condition of his/her bail. Ask the arresting police officer to notify you if and when the abuser makes bail. DVCCC Advocates can assist you in setting up SAVIN/VINE Link - a program that notifies you of defendant's bail.

If the abuser is found guilty or pleads guilty, the sentence could include a fine, jail time, court-mandated counseling, or a combination of these.

Some studies have shown that even if there is not a finding of guilt, **putting an abuser through the judicial system and holding him/her accountable for his/her actions can reduce the chances of continuing abuse.**

## The Civil Court System and Protection From Abuse (PFA) Orders

A PFA is a civil court order designed to **protect victims of abuse and prevent further violent incidents.** PFAs can include the following clauses: no abuse, no contact (even through third parties), removal of the abuser from the home, temporary child custody, and/or confiscation of weapons. No orders alike; a Family Court Judge will decide what is appropriate in each, individual case.

**If you wish, someone from the Domestic Violence Center of Chester County can accompany you through every step of the PFA process.**

### How to obtain a PFA

DVCCC Legal Department Assists with Preparation, Representation, and Court Accompaniment. Calling DVCCC can get the process started.

Another option is to independently petition a Protection From Abuse Order at the Chester County Courthouse in West Chester, from Monday to Friday, between the hours of 8:30 am and 4:30 pm.

**After a hearing in the Court of Common Pleas, a Final Order (effective for up to 3 years) may be granted if the judge decides that there is sufficient evidence of abuse.** The Final PFA may contain the same conditions provided in the Temporary PFA Order, or these may be modified.

## Emergency Protection Orders

In the evenings (after 7pm), on weekends, or during holidays you may seek an **Emergency Protection Order.** Call the police or the Domestic Violence Center of Chester County to find out how. An EPO will last until the next day the Chester County Courthouse in West Chester is open.

**Any violation of an Order is a criminal offense, and should be reported to the police.** The abuser will be arrested, and a violation hearing will be held within one week. Penalties for violating a PFA Order can include up to six months in prison and/or a fine up to \$1,000.

*Please call us.  
Don't wait until it happens again.*

**24-hour Hotline:  
1-888-711-6270 (Toll-Free)  
610-431-1430**

**Kennett Square, PA**  
610-444-7550 Ext. 233 & Ext. 243

**Oxford, PA**  
610-932-8557, Ext. 211

**Jennersville, PA**  
610-444-7550 ext.2001

**Coatesville, PA**  
610-384-2774

**Phoenixville, PA**  
(By Appointment Only)  
1-888-711-6270