

Note: If you know that a sex offender or a person who has been convicted of a dangerous crime against children will be around our child, the co-parent must be notified immediately.

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence, child abuse, and child neglect are a feature of family life for many in the United States. For some, these events are unique to the period leading up to and during the separation or divorce. For others, a long history of violence, abuse or neglect convinces one or both parents that a separation or divorce is necessary. Physical violence, threats of violence, sexual assault, and child abuse are illegal. Specific definitions of domestic violence vary from state to state. But federal laws say it is illegal to injure—or threaten to injure—anyone related by blood or marriage, or with whom you are living together or are in an intimate relationship. This is true regardless of your cultural or religious heritage, citizenship status, or personal beliefs about discipline or the proper relationship between husbands and wives.

Domestic violence constitutes the willful intimidation, assault, battery, sexual assault, or other abusive behavior perpetrated by one family member, household member, or intimate partner against another. In most state laws addressing domestic violence, the relationship necessary for a charge of domestic assault or abuse generally includes a spouse, former spouse, persons currently residing together, or those who have resided together within the previous year, or persons who share a common child.

Victims of violence should understand that ignoring abuse will not make it stop. Abuse becomes more serious with time, and victims must realize that an abusive relationship is unhealthy and unsafe. Also, remember that a victim of domestic violence may be either male or female. Children can also be victims—physically, emotionally, or both.

Who can be protected?

The IDVA (Illinois Domestic Violence Act) defines household or family members who can be protected as follows: spouses, former spouses, parents, children, stepchildren and other persons related by blood or by present or prior marriage, persons who share or formerly shared a common dwelling, persons who have or allegedly have a child in common, persons who share or allegedly share a blood relationship through a child, persons who have or have had a dating or engagement relationship, persons with disabilities and their personal assistants, caregivers and high-risk adult with disabilities. 50 ILCS 60/201 and 750 ILCS 60/103(6)(8).

In Illinois, the Domestic Violence Division hears matters concerning:

- Civil orders of protection

- Criminal actions involving relationships defined by the Illinois Domestic Violence Act, including:
 - All matters through the preliminary hearing or indictment in which the most serious offense charged is a Class 1, 2, or 3 felony
- Class 4 felonies
- Misdemeanors
- Aggravated stalking
- Civil no-contact orders
- Stalking no-contact orders

Main Location & Contact Information

Domestic Violence Courthouse

555 W. Harrison St.

Chicago, Illinois 60607

Main- (312) 325-9000

Fax- (312) 325-9017

Office of the Presiding Judge - Suite 4400

For Court Forms, visit the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County's website

<https://services.cookcountyclerkofcourt.org/forms/>



The National Center for Victims of Crime describes the following behaviors as indicative of an abusive personality prone to domestic violence:

- **Intimidation:** certain looks, gestures, or actions; smashing things; destruction of property or hurting pets; brandishing weapons.
- **Emotional Abuse:** making the victim feel guilty; calling the victim names; embarrassing, humiliating, or demeaning the victim; playing mind games; telling the victim they are crazy; doing or saying things that make the victim feel that they are crazy.
- **Isolation:** keeping the victim from going places like visiting family or friends, attending social groups, etc.; listening to phone conversations or opening personal mail; following the

victim around and/or questioning them about their whereabouts; using jealousy to justify actions.

- **Minimizing, denying, and blaming:** making light of the abuse, saying it wasn't that bad; denying the abuse happened; saying the abuse was the victim's fault.
- **Excessive domination:** acting like the master of the house; treating the victim like a servant; making all the big decisions; defining the victim's role/job; patronizing or in any other way treating the victim like a child, not as an equal adult.
- **Economic abuse:** preventing the other parent from working outside the home; making them ask for money; limiting money; making them account for all expenditures; not allowing them access to information about family finances.
- **Using children:** making the victim feel guilty about their parenting skills; making the victim responsible for all the children's misbehavior or mistakes; undermining the victim's authority and effectiveness with the children through criticism; telling the children that the victim is stupid or dumb—can't do anything right; threatening to take the children away or kill them; telling the victim that the Department of Child and Family Services will take the children away.
- **Coercion and threats:** threatening to take the children away; threatening to destroy property; threatening to harm family or friends; making physical threats and/or actions toward the victim; threatening to leave the victim; threatening to commit suicide.

What are the effects of domestic violence on children?

Spousal abuse can have lasting emotional effects on children living in the same household. They often develop coping skills and strategies to intercede and protect the parent who is the victim of abuse. A parental victim may develop strategies to redirect the abuser away from the children, and as a result may be abused while trying to protect the children. Children who grow up in a household where a parent has been abused may imitate that abuse in relationships later in life.

You can help your children by:

- **Helping them feel safe.** Children who witness or experience domestic violence need to feel safe. Consider whether leaving the abusive relationship might help your child feel safer.
- **Talking to them about their fears.** Let them know that it's not their fault or your fault.
- **Talking to them about healthy relationships.** Help them learn from the abusive experience by talking about what healthy relationships are and are not. This will help them know what is healthy when they start romantic relationships of their own.
- **Talking to them about boundaries.** Let your child know that no one has the right to touch them or make them feel uncomfortable, including family members, teachers, coaches, or other authority figures. Also, explain to your child that he or she doesn't have the right to touch another person's body, and if someone tells them to stop, they should do so right away.
- **Helping them find a reliable support system.** In addition to a parent, this can be a school counselor, a therapist, or another trusted adult who can provide ongoing support. Know that school counselors are required to report domestic violence or abuse if they suspect it.
- **Getting them professional help.** Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a type of talk therapy or counseling that may work best for children who have experienced violence or

abuse. CBT is especially helpful for children who have anxiety or other mental health problems as a result of the trauma. During CBT, a therapist will work with your child to turn negative thoughts into more positive ones. The therapist can also help your child learn healthy ways to cope with stress.

Resource PDF link to talk to your child about Domestic Violence found below:

https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//children_domestic_violence_listening_talking_to_your_child.pdf

For more information from the CDC on Violence Prevention, please click on the link below:

<https://www.cdc.gov/violence-prevention/about/index.html>

What is an Order for Protection?

Orders of protection are governed under the Illinois Domestic Violence Act (IDVA). Under the IDVA, a victim of abuse must have a family or household relationship with the person abusing them. A petition for an order of protection may be filed only by those persons who: (a) are being abused by a family or household member; (b) are filing it on behalf of a minor child or adult who is being abused by a family or household member, and who, because of age, health, disability, or inaccessibility, cannot file the petition on their own; or (c) are filing it on behalf of a high-risk adult with disabilities who has been abused, neglected, or exploited by a family or household member.

There is no cost to file an order of protection. For more information about the Illinois Domestic Violence Act of 1986, see [750 ILCS 60/101 et seq.](#)

For assistance with domestic violence issues, like filing for an Order of Protection, please contact the following organizations:

- The Remote Orders of Protection Assistance Project: (312) 229-6020
- Sarah's Inn, Metro Family Services and Family Rescue Hotline: (708) 689-3422
- Ascend Justice Remote Order of Protection Hotline: (312) 239-0413

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, we strongly encourage you to seek legal advice.

Where can I get an Order of Protection?

There are several options:

- Criminal Court: if the person who has been hurt (the petitioner) signs a criminal complaint against the person who hurt him or her (the respondent). The State's

Attorney's Office then prosecutes the respondent and helps the petitioner get an Order of Protection. The petitioner can only keep the Order if she, or he, follows through with the criminal case.

- Civil Court: If the petitioner chooses NOT to press charges the Order of Protection can be granted by a judge in an independent action. In Civil Court, the petitioner can have his or her own attorney or can represent him or herself; this is called pro se.
- Child Support Court, Divorce Court, Juvenile Court and Probate Court: A petitioner can also request an Order of Protection in other courts where they are parties to a pending action against the respondent.

The Order of Protection is the same, no matter which court grants it.

For more information please click on the link below

<https://www.cookcountyclerkofcourt.org/domestic-violence-resources>

How can I get help in an emergency?

Immediately dial 911 and request help from the police

Local Resources for victims of domestic violence

Domestic Violence Victim Services

Domestic Violence Courthouse for Chicago

555 West Harrison Street
Chicago, IL 60607-4313
(312) 325-9500

Ascend Justice - [Domestic Violence Legal Clinic](#)

Formerly known as Pro Bono Advocates
(312) 325-9155
Languages: English, Spanish

[Legal Aid Chicago](#)

(312) 341-1070

ii. Languages: English, Spanish. Free interpreters for all other languages

[Family Rescue](#)

24-Hour Crisis Hotline: (312) 325-9300, (800) 360-6619 (Hablamos Español)
TDD (773) 375-8774

Chicago Metropolitan Battered Women's Network

24-Hour Emergency Domestic Violence Hotline: (877) 863-6338

TDD (877) 863-6339

Language: English, Spanish (+153 languages)

Office: (312) 527-0730

Metropolitan Family Services

(312) 986-4000

Languages: English, Spanish, Arabic

Locations: Multiple throughout Chicago

Life Span

(312) 408-1210

Languages: English

Greenhouse Shelter - Connections for Abused Women and their Children (CAWC)

24-Hour Hotline: (773) 278-4566, (773) 489-9081

Language: English, Spanish, French, Russian, Polish, Ukranian

CPD, Domestic Violence Advocacy Project

(312) 742-5290

Languages: English

National domestic-violence centers usually provide:

- A 24-hour crisis line
- Temporary shelter
- Advocacy and counseling for victims
- Advocacy and counseling for the children of victims
- Legal information, court accompaniment, and assistance with restraining orders
- Welfare/economic support
- Support groups for battered women and their children
- Information and referral
- Community education
- Outreach to schools, including education on teen dating violence and support for victims
- Batterers treatment
- Sexual-assault services

Child Abuse

Abuse means any willful act or threatened act that results in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes or is likely to cause the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired. Abuse of a child includes acts or omissions. Corporal discipline of a child by a parent or legal custodian for disciplinary purposes does not in itself constitute abuse when it does not result in harm to the child. The legal definition of a child is any person under the age of eighteen.

Any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, abandonment, or neglect by a person responsible for a child's welfare is required to report that information to the state's toll-free hotline, an appropriate law-enforcement agency, or (in the case of a child's death), the medical examiner responsible for the city, town, county, or other area where the death occurred.

Children Exposed to Violence

- *Psychological health*: depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, isolation, shame, fear, guilt, and low self-esteem
- *Physical health outcomes*: poor overall health, have illnesses requiring medical attention, attempt suicide, or be involved in self-injury. Exposure to child abuse and neglect has profound effects on brain development and cognition.
- *Academic difficulties and failure*: Exposure to violence increases the risk that children will drop out of school or do more poorly in school.
- *Behavioral problems*: substance abuse or dependence, teen pregnancy, aggression, conduct disorder, delinquency, and violence, including dating violence and intimate partner violence.

Other Kinds of Child Maltreatment

Abandonment is a situation where the parent, legal custodian, or the caregiver responsible for a child's welfare, although able to care for the child, doesn't provide for the child's support and makes no effort to communicate with the child—legally, this is a willful rejection of parental obligations. Token or inadequate efforts to support or communicate with the child may result in a court declaring the child to be abandoned.

Mental injury means substantially decreased ability to function intellectually or psychologically within the normal range of performance and behavior.

Neglect occurs when a child is deprived of necessary food, clothing, shelter, or medical treatment, or when a child is permitted to live in an environment where such deprivation or environment significantly impairs or threatens to impair the child's physical, mental, or emotional health.

Harm to a child's health or welfare can occur when any person inflicts upon the child (or allows to be inflicted) physical, mental, or emotional injury. In determining whether harm has

occurred, the following factors are considered: the child's age; any prior history of injuries to the child; the location of the injury on the child's body; the number of injuries; and the type of trauma inflicted.

Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect: Signs and Symptoms The following material is reproduced with permission of the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information (2003).

The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single sign does not prove child abuse is occurring in a family; however, when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination, you should take a closer look at the situation and consider the possibility of child abuse. If you do suspect a child is being harmed, reporting your suspicions may protect the child and get help for the family.

Contact your local child-protective services agency or police department.

<https://dcfs.illinois.gov>

For more information about where and how to file a report, call the Child help USA® National Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-4-ACHILD).

Recognizing Child Abuse

The following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect.

The Child:

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance;
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention;
- Has learning problems that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes;
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen;
- Lacks adult supervision;
- Is overly compliant, an overachiever, or too responsible; or
- Comes to school early, stays late, and does not want to go home.

The Parent:

- Shows little concern for the child, rarely responding to the school's requests for information, for conferences, or for home visits;
- Denies the existence of—or blames the child for—the child's problems in school or at home;
- Asks the classroom teacher to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves;

- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome;
- Demands perfection or a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot give; or
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of emotional needs.

The Parent and Child:

- Rarely touch or look at each other;
- Consider their relationship entirely negative; or
- State that they do not like each other.

None of these signs taken alone proves that child abuse is present in a family. But when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination, there is the possibility of child abuse.

Types of Abuse

The following are some signs often associated with physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. It is important to note, however, these types of abuse are more typically found in combination than alone. A physically abused child, for example, is often emotionally abused as well, and a sexually abused child also may be neglected.

Signs of Physical Abuse

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the child:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes;
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school;
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home from school;
- Shrinks at the approach of adults; or
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the parent or other adult caregiver:

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury;
- Describes the child as 'evil,' or in some other very negative way;
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child; or
- Has a history of abuse as a child.

Signs of Neglect

Consider the possibility of neglect when the child:

- Is frequently absent from school;

- Begs or steals food or money from classmates;
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses;
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor;
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather;
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs; or
- States there is no one at home to provide care.

Consider the possibility of neglect when the parent or other adult caregiver:

- Appears to be indifferent to the child;
- Seems apathetic or depressed;
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner;
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs; or
- States that there is no one at home to provide care
- Consider the possibility of neglect when the parent or other adult caregiver:
- Appears to be indifferent to the child;
- Seems apathetic or depressed;
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner; or
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs.

Signs of Sexual Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the child:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting;
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities;
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting;
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite;
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior;
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14;
- Runs away; or
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver.

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the parent or other adult caregiver:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex;
- Is secretive and isolated; or
- Is jealous or controlling with family members.

Signs of Emotional Maltreatment

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the child:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression;
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example);
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development;
- Has attempted suicide; or
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent.

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the parent or other adult caregiver:

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child;
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems; or
- Overtly rejects the child.

This fact sheet was adapted, with permission, from Recognizing Child Abuse: What Parents Should Know. Prevent Child Abuse America, © 2003.

Understanding Emergency Intervention

Emergency Intervention is a procedure in which a case is referred by a judge, deemed appropriate per FCS Emergency Intervention criteria, and accepted by FCS. The case is assigned to an FCS mediator (who serves as the court's intervener, not as a mediator) for an assessment of what would best serve the interests of the child(ren) in a given and limited situation, where without such intervention, the child(ren) may be in "imminent danger." It is designed to provide recommendations for an interim period –on a temporary, limited time basis.

Emergency Intervention may be appropriate when a judge has reason to believe that a child may be in imminent danger due to allegations of:

1. Suspected abuse or neglect,
2. Abduction (real or threatened), or
3. A dramatic change in parenting effectiveness and capabilities (sudden and/or dramatic changes in parenting capacity constituting a danger to the child).

A determinative question is: Is there a possibility that if the judge does not act today, may the child be injured or worse?

The Emergency Intervention Process

The judge must have all parties — including the parents, the child(ren), and attorneys (including any GAL or Attorney for the child) — present for the Emergency Intervention to commence. All children of the relationship must be present, not just the child at issue.

All minor children must be signed into the [Children's Room](#) located at [69 W. Washington St., Suite 1000](#). Once all parties are present, the judge will then call an FCS "Resource Person" or a mediation supervisor to make a request for an Emergency Intervention.

Because the case is presented to the court as an "emergency," the judge must call on the same morning that the Emergency Intervention is to occur, and a status hearing must take place to conclude the process. There are no "appointments" given for an Emergency Intervention. The reason for this policy is because due to the nature of the presenting family crisis, family circumstances could change rapidly, and it is possible that not all parties or attorneys may be present on that day.

Once it is determined that the Emergency Intervention will occur, the judge will enter a court order referring the parties to FCS, and will direct the parties and attorneys to report to the FCS office at [69 W. Washington St., Suite 1000](#). The court's order must also indicate the time for all parties, including the Emergency Intervener, to appear in court for a status hearing before the end of the day. The court status hearing must occur on the same day.

The Intervener meets with and interviews both parents and all the children. The Intervener determines whether or not to meet with the parents together or separately. The Intervener must inform all parties interviewed that there is no confidentiality or privilege attached to the Emergency Intervention procedure; therefore, the Intervener may convey to the judge what was said during the process. If time and circumstances permit, the Intervener may meet with other available involved parties, such as stepparents, grandparents, or other family members. Due to time constraints, there is no guarantee that the Intervener will meet with other parties, unless the judge requires it.

Mandatory Reporters

FCS Emergency Interveners are mandated to report any suspicions of abuse or neglect of any minor child(ren) to the Department of Children and Family Services. Emergency Interveners must explain the mandated reporting requirements of the *Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act*, [325 ILCS 5/1 et seq.](#)

Finalizing Intervention Recommendations

When the Emergency Intervention is complete, the Intervener, all parties, and attorneys must appear at the designated time in the referring judge's courtroom. Children should remain in the [Children's Room](#), and not be present in the courtroom as the Intervener makes their report to the judge. The Intervener appears at the status hearing to make recommendations. The Intervener's recommendations may be in writing and/or presented orally. If the parties reach their own agreement resolving the emergency issue during the Emergency Intervention, the Intervener may offer the agreement as part of the recommendations if the Intervener feels that the parties' agreement serves the best interests of the child(ren).

For more information and a list of FAQ regarding Emergency Intervention please visit the Family Court Services website at:

<https://www.cookcountycourt.org/departments/family-court-services/emergency-intervention>

What are the consequences of filing a false child-abuse report?

In some instances, a parent may be tempted to file a false child-abuse report against the co-parent. This is usually done to gain some kind of advantage over the other parent. You should never resort to this, and parents are strongly discouraged from this type of action. According to most state statutes, a person who knowingly and willfully makes a false report of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, or who advises another to make a false report, is guilty of a felony in the third degree. However, anyone making a report who is acting in good faith is immune from liability.

Important Phone Numbers

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)....1-800-THE-LOST

Runaway Helpline..... 1-800-786-2929

Child Abuse Hotline1-800-962-2873

In Cook County, report suspected child abuse or neglect online [here](#). In an emergency, call 1-800-25-ABUSE (800-252-2873).

Choosing a Mental-Health Professional

One of the hurdles in finding a qualified therapist to help your family is wading through the various kinds of mental-health professionals. At a minimum, you will want to seek a professional who holds a license in marriage and family therapy, mental-health counseling, or social work. These professionals will have either a master's degree or a doctorate. Keep in mind, however, that the individual therapist is always more important than their degree, certification, licensure, or other qualification. Most of the professional's expertise will come as they specialize in their work. You will want to make sure that a professional you choose has experience with divorce issues and helping families in transition.