

If you are still in an abusive relationship:

- Think of a safe place to go if an argument occurs - avoid rooms with no exits (bathroom), or rooms with weapons (kitchen). Remember an average 10 year old child can kick in a bathroom door.
- Think about and make a list of safe people to contact.
- Keep change or a fully charged cell phone with you at all times.
- Memorize all important numbers. Establish a “code word or sign” so that family, friends, teachers or co-workers know when to call for help.
- Think about what you will say to your partner if he/she becomes violent.
- Remember that you have the right to live without fear and violence.
- Maintain copies of important papers, i.e. birth certificates, social security cards, immunization records, immigration documents, and bank information with some spare cash in a secure place known only to you.
- Teach your child how to use the 911 system. It is very important that all family members are familiar with the system, especially children. Remember the life your child saves – may be your own.
- If this isn't possible, just dial 911 and drop the phone. DON'T HANG IT UP! If you hang up, the dispatcher who gets the 911 signal will call back to find out what's going on. This gives the abuser a chance to try to tell the dispatcher that everything is fine or make up some excuse as to why the call was placed.
- If you leave because of an incident of abuse, be prepared. Go to a friend's house, neighbor's house, the police station or to other public place immediately. Help the police to help you. They will ask you questions about the incident and ask you to make a sworn statement.
- If your abuser has violated a restraining order that you have against them, remember to show the police officer your copy.
- You will be asked the standard questions about your abuser: name, race, address, date of birth, height, weight, hair and eye color, etc. Be prepared to give the officer information about your abuser:
 - A photograph of your abuser;
 - Their Social security number;
 - Year, make and model of any vehicles and the LICENSE PLATE NUMBERS

Be SURE to note anything “odd” about the vehicle...cracks, dents, bumper stickers, etc. Officers see lists of many “suspect” vehicles during daily briefing and they will be more likely to remember a bumper sticker than a general vehicle description.

- The abusers place of employment and the address
- Scars, marks or tattoos
- Places they frequent (bars, friend's houses, hang outs, etc.)
- Remember to mention any drug use and if known to carry any type of weapon. Also let the officers know if there are any guns or other weapons in your home, car, etc.

It is VITAL that you obey any court-ordered notice to appear. Deciding that you don't want to participate after you have received notice to appear is an option that can land YOU in jail for contempt of court. Since the case can go forward even without your testimony, it is in your best interest to be active in the process to hold the offender accountable for their actions.

If you have left the abusive relationship

- Change your phone number.
- Screen calls.
- Save and document all contacts, messages, injuries or other incidents involving the batterer.
- Change locks, if the batterer has a key.
- Avoid staying alone.
- Plan how to get away if confronted by an abusive partner.

- If you have to meet your partner, do it in a public place.
- Vary your routine.
- Notify school and work contacts.
- Call a family violence shelter for information and support.

What to do if you are being abused

- Recognize that you are not responsible for the abuse.
- Recognize that violence/abuse is not likely to stop on its own - episodes of violence usually become more frequent and more severe.
- It is important to break the silence. Try to tell someone who will believe you.
- Seek professional help from a qualified counselor who is knowledgeable about partner abuse and is lesbian/gay positive. A lesbian or gay male counselor with the above qualities may help you address the pertinent issues of abuse with more comfort and focus.
- Only you can decide what to do about your relationship - whether to stay or leave is your decision. However, it is important to develop a safety plan in case your safety and/or your children's safety is in jeopardy such as:
 - a safe place to stay;
 - emergency phone numbers;
 - some money;
 - your own bank account;
 - post office box; and
 - bag of essentials.