

Navigating the Legal System in a Controlling or Abusive Relationship

Laurel House Legal Program

Laurel House recognizes the lack of availability of affordable civil legal representation in our community. The legal system is complex and can be especially challenging to an unrepresented victim or survivor of domestic violence.

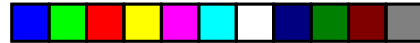
While various state and federal laws offer protections and remedies for victims of domestic violence, a lawyer may be necessary to identify and pursue these protections and remedies. The Laurel House legal program provides victims of domestic violence, dating violence and stalking with civil legal representation free of charge. Services provided include assistance with seeking protection from abuse orders, custody and support judgements, and general legal consultations for issues related to domestic violence.

Our legal team helps provide necessary tools and resources to increase physical safety and economic stability for clients and their children. To be referred to these services, please contact your Laurel House advocate or counselor.



610-277-1860

www.laurel-house.org



Before You Leave

Know the warning signs.

ANY of the current behaviors may escalate in the middle of a divorce or separation.

- **Isolation:** Controls and limits what you do, whom you see and where you go.
- **Psychological and Emotional Abuse:** Threats made with the intent of harm or humiliation. Name-calling, putting you down, blaming.
- **Economic Abuse:** Controls family finances. Refuses to share financial information with you. Refuses to give you money.
- **Physical Abuse:** Attempts to hurt or frighten you. Slapping, pushing, pinching, hair pulling, forced drug or alcohol use.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Rape or making you perform sexual acts against your will.



Develop a safety plan. Just some of the *many* plans you need to consider will include:



- Identifying a domestic violence center like Laurel House that can help you consider your options and will offer counseling, court accompaniment, and shelter, if needed.
- Determining when and how to tell your partner you are leaving.
- Identifying a safe place to stay (and how to get there) if there is a chance of violence.
- Keeping all important documents offsite in a safe place (bank accounts, birth certificates, wills, etc.), as well as a change of clothes, and cash on hand so you don't need to return to your home.
- Informing **TRUSTED** friends or family about previous, current, or potential violence so they can check in on you and notify the police if they suspect danger.

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