

**Resources:**

**National Domestic Violence Hotline**

1-800-799-7233

*If you are hearing-impaired and English-speaking, call 1-800-787-3224*

**Instructions:** An English-speaking operator will answer your call. Say the name of your language and country, and wait for several minutes to be connected to an interpreter.

**Local Services:**

This brochure is also available in: Arabic, Armenian, Bosnian/Croatian, Cambodian/Khmer, Chinese, Dari/Farsi, Hmong, Kurdish, Laoation, Russian, Somali, and Vietnamese. To order call: The Refugee Health Section at (916) 322-2087.

This brochure is revised and produced by the California Department of Health Services, Refugee Health Section, with The assistance from the Domestic Violence Prevention Program, Refugee Health staff from Los Angeles and Merced Counties and Catholic Charities San Diego. Original content written by AYUDA, Inc., and the Family Violence Prevention Fund. 6/99

**NO ONE  
HAS THE RIGHT  
TO HURT YOU,  
EVEN SOMEONE  
YOU  
LOVE:**



**QUESTIONS  
AND ANSWERS  
FOR REFUGEE  
WOMEN**

**Domestic violence** is when your husband, ex-husband, or boyfriend (who lives in your home) hurts you either physically or emotionally, day after day or week after week. In the United States, domestic violence is a “**crime**.” It happens if he:

- Threatens or causes injury to you.
- Forces you to have sex when you don't want to.
- Keeps you from going to the doctor.
- Destroys your furniture, kills a pet, breaks a favorite personal item, etc.
- Controls your money, keeps you from seeing friends and family.
- Won't allow you to leave your home.

**If I Am In Danger. What Can I Do?**

- For emergency help, call 911 and tell the operator what language you speak.
- Go to a “**shelter**.” A “**shelter**” is a safe place, like a large house, where you and your children can stay to sleep and eat. Shelters are usually free and will often have information about other services in your community.
- Go stay with a friend or family member. **Do not** tell anyone where you are staying.
- Call the agency who sponsored you to come to the United States. Ask about getting legal help.

If you leave your home, make every effort to take your children with you. If you can, also take:

- A driver's license or identification card.
- I-94 or green card.
- Bank account records, checkbooks, bank books.

- Birth certificates, marriage documents.
- Welfare papers, Medi-Cal papers, food stamps.
- All immigration documents.
- Social security card.
- Medications.

Also, keep your money stored in a secret place, and keep an extra set of keys and a change of clothes in the same secret place.

If you cannot get the original or copies of documents, write down the information from these documents on a piece of paper. Keep these items in a bag, so when you leave, you can find them quickly. You can also keep copies of these documents at a friend's house.

**Should I Call The Police?**

**Yes.** Domestic violence is a “**crime**”. The police can take you and your children to your family or to a friend's house, or to a safe place like a shelter. If the police believe a crime has been committed, they may arrest your husband or boyfriend. If the police officer does not speak your language, find someone other than your child or husband or boyfriend to interpret for you.

Always ask the police officer to complete an “**incident report**”, which describes what has happened (what got you to call the police). Ask for an “**incident report number**” so you can get a copy of the report. Also ask for and write down the name and badge number (police officer identification number) of the police officer making the report.

If your husband or boyfriend is taken to the police station, he may be released to go back home in as little as two hours. Use this time to find a safe place to go.

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### **How Can I Protect Myself in the Future?**

Consider getting a “**protection order.**” A protection order is also called a “**restraining order**” or “**injunction.**” It can stop your abuser from coming near you, your children, or other family members. You can also ask that your husband or boyfriend be removed from your home and that he not interfere with your immigration status. For a protection order to be effective, you must be willing to call the police to enforce the order.

### **Can I Get A Protection Order Even If I Am Not A U.S. Citizen?**

**Yes.** You do not need to be a citizen or legal permanent resident to get a protection order. A lawyer may be helpful, but not necessary. You can get an application at courthouses, women’s shelters, legal services offices, and some police departments. For information about the protection order policy in the courts where you live, contact: (1) a “**legal services lawyer**” (a lawyer who provides free legal services to low income individuals), **or** (2) the agency that sponsored you, **or** (3) your local refugee assistance program.

### **How Can I Get Lawful Permanent Residency Without My Husband’s Help?**

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) creates ways for undocumented women married to U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents to get their residency. Instead of depending upon your husband to apply for your residency with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), you can apply on your own for yourself and your children. This is called “**self-petitioning.**” You must have a copy of the police report as proof of the domestic violence. Your husband plays no role in the process and he does not have to know you are applying for residency. The law is complicated.

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Talk to a shelter worker, immigration lawyer, or one of the agencies listed on the back of this brochure before you go to INS. You must be married to self-petition. Contact a lawyer immediately if you receive divorce papers from your husband.

If you have been arrested by the INS and you are in “**removal proceedings**” (previously called deportation), you may have the opportunity to apply for release. You must have a copy of the police report as proof of the domestic violence.

### **My Husband Is Threatening To Take My Children Away If I Leave Him. What Can I Do?**

If your husband or boyfriend is threatening to take your children away or take them to his home country, you should get help using the following steps:

1. Get a “**custody order**” (a legal document that gives you the right to keep your children). The order can stop your husband or boyfriend from taking the children from the U.S.
2. Send a copy of the custody order to the U.S. State Department to stop him from getting a visa or passport for the children. Also send a copy to the embassy in the U.S. of your husband’s or boyfriend’s home country.
3. Give a copy of the order to the children’s schools. Tell the school staff not to release the children to anyone but you.

### **How Can I Financially Support (Take Care of) Myself And My Children If I Leave My Husband?**

The law requires that the father of your children financially support them without regard to immigration status. This applies even if you are not living together, and even if you were never married to him.

You should contact an immigration lawyer or the

agency that sponsored you to find out how to get child support in California. Some married women may also be eligible to get additional financial support from their husband. Refugee women may use their I-94 card to show proof of eligibility to work.

### **I Am A Refugee. Am I Eligible To Receive Welfare And Medi-Cal?**

**Yes.** In the first five (5) years after you arrive in the United States, you are eligible for Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Medi-Cal and other public benefit programs, just like a U.S. citizen. Most refugees who have been in the United States for five (5) years or more will no longer be eligible for Food Stamps. Eligibility for Medi-Cal, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, and general assistance for refugees who have been in the United States for five (5) years or more varies from state to state. Please speak to an immigration lawyer or to the agency that sponsored you.

### **Are My U.S. Citizen Children Eligible For Public Benefits And Medi-Cal?**

**Yes.** Your U.S. citizen children are eligible for public benefits just like any U.S. citizen’s children.

### **Will I Be Deported If I Take Any Of These Actions?**

**No.** If you are in the United States **with legal documents**, you cannot be deported for filing a complaint for domestic violence. You can be deported if you have false documents, have committed a crime, or have not followed the conditions on your visa.

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### **Will My Husband Or Boyfriend Be Deported If I Take Action?**

If you get help from a shelter or a lawyer, it is unlikely that your husband or boyfriend will be deported.

If you call the police and your husband or boyfriend is arrested and convicted of a crime, he could be deported, depending on his immigration status and the crime.

**Keep yourself and your children safe.**

**Remember, domestic violence is a crime.**

**It is important to get help.**