



# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: AWARENESS, ACTION, HEALING.

## AWARENESS

Whether you, a friend or a family member is experiencing violence within the home, remember **you are not alone**. Domestic Violence occurs in homes across our community regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or gender. Domestic Violence affects everyone.

Domestic violence includes the use of physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional abuse and economic deprivation. Many forms of domestic violence can occur at one time within the same intimate relationship, and generally said violence occurs behind closed doors outside the purview of friends and family.



## ACTION: MAKE A PLAN

If you find yourself or someone you love in a possible domestic violence situation, the priority is safety. Consider the following resources that can help you or your loved one find safety:

1. **TALK TO SOMEONE.** Isolation is often a characteristic of a domestic violence situation because isolation is a tool utilized by an abuser to ensure a domestic violence victim does not escape from the abuser's power and control. If you feel isolated in your relationship, it will be scary to even think about talking to anyone especially if a message or information may get back to your abuser. However, you are not alone, and you cannot get out of this situation alone. Reach out to someone, anyone. Maintain connections and conversations with your family and friends by phone, online, or through activities. If you do not feel comfortable talking about your domestic violence situation with someone you know, there are various anonymous resources available. Call The National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or visit their website at [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org).
2. **CALL 911.** Do not hesitate to call 911 if you find yourself, your child, or someone you love in harm's way. Those experiencing any form of domestic violence tend to hesitate to reach out for emergency assistance for a number of reasons. However valid your reasons may be, your safety is the priority. Call.
3. **MAKE AN EXIT PLAN AND "GO-BAG."** Even if you do not desire to leave any time soon, an exit plan and "go-bag" is a personalized and unique plan that you and your children utilize should a domestic violence situation escalate. An exit plan is a written or memorized step-by-step plan on what should happen if a violent situation occurs and/or if you make the decision to leave. In your exit plan, you want to know who you or your children will contact immediately, where to go, and what will be needed to live as you and your children find a location away from your abuser.



In your “Go-Bag,” think about the specific needs of you and your children. Your “Go-Bag” should be small enough to store in a safe location, such as the trunk of your car, your workplace, or at a trusted friend’s home, but should be big enough to include all of the “important” necessities. For example, your “Go-Bag” could include:

- At least two sets of clothing and a pair of shoes.
- First Aid Kit.
- Disposable or Digital Camera with extra batteries (in particular to take pictures of any injuries which may be inflicted by the abuser).
- Cash and prepaid credit/gift cards.
- Prepaid cell phone or a cell phone with a new contract and phone number with charging cord. Keep it charged. Remember: even if your cell phone no longer has a plan, you can still dial 911.
- Spare set of keys.
- Current medications and prescriptions for you and your children.
- List of important phone numbers such as the phone numbers of your family members, trusted friends, your attorney, your accountant, and your doctor.
- Birth Certificates and Social Security Cards.
- Driver’s License and/or Passports.
- Custody, marriage, and divorce documents.
- Restraining orders or other Legal documents.
- Health Insurance cards and medical records.
- Keepsakes.

In putting together your “Go-Bag,” keep in mind that once you go, you may not be able to return to your home. If you have children in the home, take them with you.

4. **CONTACT YOUR FAMILY LAW ATTORNEY and FILE FOR A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ORDER OF PROTECTION.** Every family situation is unique

and being informed as you navigate the legal system is imperative. As soon as possible you want to contact your family law attorney to figure out how to keep yourself and your children protected. Many times, your situation may call for the immediate filing of a Domestic Violence Order of Protection. Do not wait. The more time that passes between a domestic violence incident and pursuing a protective order, the harder the preservation of evidence becomes. Delays may also lead a Judge to question the need for a protective order if days or weeks have passed since the date of the incident.

In preserving this or other legal claims, be conscious to the reality that evidence is needed to support a claim in Court. Take pictures, save emails and texts, identify witnesses, and think through various forms of evidence.

#### **HEALING: THIS IS NOT YOUR FAULT**

Domestic Violence stems from the assertion of power and control over an intimate partner. Abusers have a skewed sense of right from wrong and generally believe that they have the right to control and restrict their partners. Some abusers may even enjoy the assertion of power and control.

Regardless of why it happens, Domestic Violence is not okay and is never justified. Utilize the resources available to you. Most counties have organizations that can assist victims of domestic violence with various needs such as temporary housing, pro bono legal assistance, job training, and counseling. Remember, you are not alone, this is not your fault, and there are people waiting to help you. For more information, please visit [www.moderlegalnc.com](http://www.moderlegalnc.com).

