

The HOPE Center's Services

The HOPE Center offers a wide variety of services for victims of Domestic Violence. All victim services through the HOPE Center are **free and confidential**.

24-hour hotline

Emergency Shelter

Crisis Intervention - available for men, women, and children who are or have been victims of domestic violence

Medical Advocacy - medical accompaniment to provide support and information at area hospital emergency rooms

Court System Advocacy - accompaniment, support, encouragement and information for victims within the legal system

Prevention Education Programs - classroom programs in area schools on violence prevention K-college; speakers for organizations and community groups; trainings for police, medical personnel, teachers, counselors, and other professionals.

Resources

Allegheny County

Allegheny County Jail Release Notification.....	412-392-8582
Center For Victims.....	412-392-8582
Childline.....	1-800-932-0313
CYF.....	412-473-2000
WC&S's MENS Program (Anger Man).....	412-678-1055
District Attorneys Office.....	412-350-4400
Neighborhood Legal Services.....	412-255-6700
Night Court.....	412-350-3240
PFA.....	412-350-4441
Pittsburgh Action Against Rape.....	1-866-363-7273
Public Welfare Department.....	412-565-2146
SAVIN (Inmate Notification).....	1-866-972-7284

Westmoreland County

Assistant District Attorney.....	724-830-3949
Blackburn Center.....	1-888-832-2272
Catholic Charities (Anger Management).....	1-866-409-6455
Childline.....	1-800-932-0313
Children's Bureau.....	724-830-3300
Court Administrator (PFA's).....	724-853-2207
Department of Public Welfare.....	724-832-5200
Laurel Legal Services.....	1-800-253-9558
SAVIN (Inmate Notification).....	1-866-972-7284
Victim/Witness Programs.....	724-830-3272
Westmoreland Courthouse.....	724-830-3000

1-888-299-HOPE (4673)

24 HOUR HOTLINE

Administrative Office

P.O. Box 67

Tarentum, PA 15084

724-224-1100

www.akhopecenter.org

Working to eliminate domestic violence since 1979

What is Domestic Violence?

Notes

Domestic Violence is defined as abusive and/or violent behavior between a current or former husband/wife, current or former sexual/intimate partner, parent, child, brother, sister or other family members.

Forms of Abuse:

Physical: strangling (applying pressure to your throat with their hands and/or an object), punching, pushing, pulling hair, kicking, hitting, slapping, restraining

Emotional/Verbal: destroying property, intimidating behaviors, name calling, threats to harm you, your family and/or pets, keeping you away from friends, and family members

Sexual: performing unwanted sexual acts against your will, physically attacking the sexual parts of your body, and treating you like a sex object

Stalking: following you repeatedly (on foot or vehicle), repeated attempts to contact you (phone calls or letters), harassing you (hang-up calls, unwanted gifts), intimidating you repeatedly (watching you from outside of your home or work)

Financial: Hiding and controlling bills, checking, savings, funds, etc..., limiting or denying money

Confidentiality

It is the policy of the Alle-Kiski Area HOPE Center, Inc. to hold confidential all communications, observations, and information made by and between or about our clients, both adults and children. All paid and non-paid staff, as well as volunteers, working with or for the Alle-Kiski Area HOPE Center are expected to abide by this policy.

Criminal Hearings

If you are a victim of domestic violence, call 911 as soon as possible. The police will respond and the defendant may be arrested. However, if you have visible injuries, the police must arrest under Pennsylvania law. Once an arrest is made, the police may ask you to submit a written statement of the events and possibly take pictures of your injuries. The defendant will be arraigned and a preliminary hearing will be scheduled at your local District Justice. An Assistant District Attorney will discuss the case with you as well as your options, however, only the District Justice has the power to withdraw the charges completely. You have many options at the preliminary hearing such as: the defendant may be ordered to anger management classes, drug and alcohol evaluation & treatment, and mental health evaluation & treatment. If you choose not to attend the preliminary hearing, a subpoena can be issued. Once a subpoena is issued, you must show up for court. If you do not, you may be arrested.

Private Criminal Complaints

If you are a victim of domestic violence and the police have not pressed charges, you can file charges on your own by speaking with the District Attorney at your local District Justice office. He or she will meet with you and discuss your situation. Private Criminal Complaints can be filed for harassment, stalking, trespassing, etc. Please call your local District Justice for times and dates that the District Attorney will be in the office.

Legal Advocates are available to attend criminal hearings, PFA hearings, Indirect Criminal Contempt hearings, and others upon request. Please call our toll-free number 1-888-299-4673 and ask to speak with a Legal Advocate.

Protection From Abuse Orders (PFA)

The Court can protect you and your family by:

- Ordering the abuser from abusing, threatening, harassing, and/or stalking you and your children
- Evicting or excluding the abuser from your home
- Awarding temporary custody of your minor children
- Prohibiting the abuser from having any contact with you and your children, either in person, by telephone, in writing, or through 3rd persons, (this applies to any place where you may be found including school, business, work)

You **do not** need any visible injuries to apply for a PFA. A PFA may be granted if the person has placed you in fear of bodily injury, tried to or has caused you physical harm, sexually assaulted you, or restrained you from leaving a room or area. You may file against a family or household member, current or former spouse, and current or former intimate partner.

Indirect Criminal Contempt (ICC)

A violation of a PFA (ICC) shall result in an arrest. If your PFA is violated, contact your local police department. If the police do not arrest, an ICC warrant can be issued by your local District Justice or night court. You will need to take a copy of your PFA and request to file for an indirect criminal contempt.

Receipt of Information

I received information on the basic rights and services available for victims of crime.

Name

Signature

_____/_____/_____
Date

Safety Planning

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- Call the police if you are in danger
- Pack a survival kit (keep it with someone you trust) that may include: birth certificates, insurance information, medications, deed, lease, credit cards, legal documents, school records, green card, passport, work permit, driver's license, cash, check books, clothing, extra set of car keys
- Photograph your injuries and keep all evidence of abuse (torn clothing, hair, etc...)
- Establish an emergency escape plan and rehearse it
- Plan with your children: Identify a safe place for them to go (a room with a lock or a neighbor's home)
- Reassure your children that their job is to get to safety and seek help from an adult, not to protect you
- Know where you can go for help and keep emergency phone numbers in your purse or car
- If you are injured, immediately go to the hospital emergency room and ask that they document the abuse and request a medical advocate (save your discharge papers. They can be used as evidence in court.)
- Arrange a signal with a neighbor to contact the police should you be unable to do so
- Have a "code word" with your friends or family so they can call 911, if you can not make the call yourself. Don't forget to give your location. (Hi, I'm home already. I'm sorry, I forgot to pick up the **apples** today or The store was out of **cupcakes**, just wanted to let you know. I'm already at the kid's school.)
- Notify your children's schools if you feel that the abuser might try to take the children without authorization.

Where to Apply for a PFA

Allegheny County

Emergency PFA's can be filed at your local Magisterial District Justice. Please contact your local District Justice for hours of operation. Emergency PFA's can be filed at the Municipal Courts Building, 660 First Avenue, in Pittsburgh between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Emergency PFA's are only valid until the next business day at 5:00 p.m..

Applications for a **Temporary PFA** are accepted every Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00p.m. to 2:30 p.m. with temporary hearings being heard that day. If a Temporary PFA is granted, a hearing for the Permanent PFA (protection up to 3 years) will be scheduled at that time. Temporary PFA's can be filed at the Family Court Building, 440 Ross Street-3rd floor, Room 3030, in Pittsburgh. This is an all day process, please plan on staying at the courthouse for most of the day. Free child care is available, however, space is limited.

Westmoreland County

To file an **Emergency PFA**, call 911 or your local police department for video conferencing between 4:00 p.m. to 8:30 a.m. Monday-Friday and on weekends 4:00 p.m. Friday to 8:30 a.m. Monday. Also available all day on holidays. The Emergency PFA is good until the end of the next business day at 4:00 p.m.

Applications for a **Temporary PFA** are accepted every Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. (The court breaks for the lunch hour between 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.) Temporary hearings are heard on that day. If a Temporary PFA is granted, a hearing for the Permanent PFA (protection up to 3 years) will be scheduled at that time. (This hearing will be in approximately 2 weeks.) PFA's can be filed at the Court House, 2 North Main St., Greensburg, Room 401 (4th floor).

Court Room Orientation

Allegheny County Family Court Building
440 Ross Street
Room 3030– 3rd floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

What you will do:

- Plan to arrive between 8:30 a.m. to 11 :00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. to complete your paperwork.
- Enter the building at the Ross Street Entrance
- Proceed through security. Take the elevator to the 3rd floor.
- Upon exiting the elevator, go to room 3030, a deputy is available near the elevator, if you need assistance.
- Upon your arrival a receptionist will ask you a couple of questions and then have you fill out paperwork.
- Childcare is available on the 1st floor. Space is not guaranteed. However, please do not let this stop you in filing.
- Advocates will review the PFA process with you and familiarize you with the forms that will be completed.
- After you complete the required forms with the assistance of an advocate, s/he will offer suggestions as to what you should be prepared for in the courtroom and the days agenda.
- Advocates will review additional victims' services offered by HOPE and other area providers.
- Advocates will be available in the afternoon to assist with other information, referrals and to answer any further questions.
- You will go before the judge. An advocate will be available if you are in need of any assistance or accompaniment.
- If the temporary PFA is granted, the permanent PFA hearing will be scheduled at that time.
- An advocate will be available to review the process for the permanent PFA and will assist you with planning for the hearing. If you are in need of accompaniment to the permanent PFA hearing please talk with your advocate.
- Advocates will review information outlining violations of the PFA , Indirect Criminal Contempt (ICC) procedures.
- If the PFA is not granted, advocates are available to provide information and referral for other services that will assist in your safety and discuss safety planning options.
- If the PFA is denied, you have the right to ask for a final hearing. If you choose not to and another incident occurs, you are encouraged to apply for a PFA again.
- Please call HOPE's toll-free hotline: **1-888-299-4673** for immediate assistance or crisis intervention.

Court Room Orientation

Westmoreland County 2 North Main Street
4th Floor– Room 401
Greensburg, PA 15601

What you will do:

- Plan to arrive between 8:30 am & 3:00 pm (Closed 12:00 to 1:00 pm)
- Enter the main entrance. Proceed through security. The court administrator and/or advocates will assist you.
- Advocates will review the PFA process with you and familiarize you with the forms that will be completed. It will take approximately 30– 45 minutes to complete the paperwork. Advocates will assist and provide accommodations as needed.
- You will complete a narrative section concerning your current and past abuse experiences with the defendant (the person you are filing against). If you need assistance to complete this, the advocates are there for you.
- After the PFA petition is completed, advocates may be available to offer additional services by HOPE or referrals to other area providers. Safety plans will also be discussed.
- A lawyer is recommended for your Final Hearing. You **will not** need one for today. At your final hearing you may bring a lawyer of your choice or we can sign you up for a free attorney. This will be the time you will make an appointment for the free attorney.
- An advocate will then escort you to the courtroom. At this time we ask that all cell phones and pagers are to be turned off. Hats are to be removed prior to entering the courtroom. No food and/or drink are permitted in the courtroom.
- Generally, the estimated waiting time to see a judge can be anywhere between 5 minutes to 1 1/2 hours. This varies due to the judges availability between hearings.
- Upon entering the courtroom the advocate will direct you where to sit.
- The judge will ask you a few questions. This is when you will testify to your current incident. You may also testify to past abuse.
- If the temporary PFA is granted, the judge will tell you when your Permanent/Final PFA Hearing will be. If the PFA is denied, you have the right to ask for a final hearing. If you choose not to and another incident occurs, you are encouraged to apply for a PFA again.
- An advocate will be available to review the process for the Permanent/ Final PFA and will assist you with planning for the hearing. An advocate will also be there the day of your permanent PFA hearing.
- Advocates will discuss PFA violations (ICC) and how to report it. Additional safety planning may also be discussed at this time.
- Please call HOPE's toll-free hotline: **1-888-299-4673** for immediate assistance or crisis intervention.