

Domestic Violence Considerations in Child Support Cases

Nothing is more important to us than the safety of our customers. Your child support worker may have already discussed ways we can help you obtain support services more safely. We also want you to be aware of the following:

Research shows that domestic violence is primarily about power and control, and that the most dangerous time for victims can be when they leave their abuser. Requesting paternity establishment and/or child support can signal to batterers that they have lost control for good, and therefore can sometimes trigger threats and/or violence. Enforcement actions may trigger threats/violence as well.

If it is unsafe to communicate with you by email or text, please tell your child support worker. **If you think you're in immediate danger**, call 911 or your local police or sheriff's department.

Below is a list of our local domestic violence agencies: The advocates can help with confidential advice, safety planning, threat assessment and support. They can also help you apply for a protection order, get emergency housing and/or access other community resources.

WEBSITE LINK Phone number is XXX.XXX.XXXX.

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Neither our office nor our attorney represents either party in a child support matter. In other words, we don't represent either you or your ex-partner. We work for and represent the State of XXXXX, whose job it is to establish paternity and establish, modify and enforce support orders pursuant to the law.

Custody and Visitation:

1. A child support order may declare your abuser to be the legal father of your child (possibly giving him more rights to the child that he currently has), and may grant your abuser the right to visitation.
2. Abusers often threaten to and/or hire lawyers to obtain custody or "50/50" visitation:
 - a. Our paternity orders typically state XXXXX
 - b. If you want supervised visitation or any visitation language other than the standard language, it is your responsibility to ask the judge and persuade the judge that your wishes should prevail. Tell your caseworker of your concerns.
 - c. **If your ex hires an attorney, we strongly recommend you try to do the same. A layperson going up against a skilled attorney is not a fair fight.**
 - d. **If you receive a "Counterclaim" or "Crossclaim" or any legal document that requires you to answer, you must file an Answer with the court within 20 days. DO NOT WAIT. CONSULT AN ATTORNEY IMMEDIATELY IF POSSIBLE, BUT IN ANY EVENT FILE A RESPONSE (EVEN IF HAND-WRITTEN) WITH THE COURT WITHIN 20 DAYS.**

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IF YOU NEED A LAWYER:

The XXXXXX Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault has staff attorneys that may be able to represent you for free. You need not have been physically abused to qualify for representation. Threats or verbal abuse may qualify. You may fill out the application for these services at the following link: WEBSITE LINK Phone number xxx.xxx.xxxx.

Information about numerous other resources for those who cannot afford an attorney are available at the following website:

WEBSITE LINK

SELF-HELP FORMS

You can file requests with the court yourself, without a lawyer. The forms are at the following link:

WEBSITE LINK

VOLUNTEER REFERENCE ATTORNEYS

There are local attorneys who volunteer for brief one-on-one visits with community members to provide instruction in filling out legal forms and navigating the court system.

These sessions are generally held twice per month between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. at:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXX
YOUR CITY, STATE ZIP

You can find the next session here: WEBSITE LINK

The Clerk of District Court’s office at XXX.XXXX will also know the next Volunteer Reference Attorney day.

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have further questions. We're here for you when you need us.