

## ABOUT RESTRAINING ORDERS

Ending an abusive relationship can be the most dangerous time for a victim. Violence often begins or gets worse when a victim breaks up with their abusive partner. Getting a restraining or protective order can be a powerful tool to ending an abusive relationship safely.

### What do I need to know?

A restraining order—also sometimes called a protective order—is a court order that makes it illegal for the abuser to harm you, come near you or contact you.

Although the specific details of restraining orders vary by state, every state has two basic requirements: showing that there is a certain relationship between the abuser and the victim and showing that there has been abuse in the relationship. Most states allow you to get a restraining order against your husband or wife, close family members, someone you had a child with, or someone you lived with. In some states, you may also get protection against someone you dated, were engaged to, or extended family members. Because these orders are meant to protect you from being hurt, you will need to show the court that your partner has hurt you or that you are at risk of being hurt by your partner, to get the protection order.

If you qualify for a restraining order, it can help keep you safe. Most states make it a crime for an abuser to come near or contact the victim in any way. You will need to contact the police if your abuser violates the order. Your abuser could face criminal penalties for violating the restraining.

### What can I do?

A restraining order can't guarantee your safety or change your abuser. But, especially when combined with a safety plan, it can help keep you safer during a difficult time. To decide whether a restraining order is right for you, consider these steps:

- Get information about restraining orders in your state by contacting Break the Cycle or a domestic violence agency in your area.
- Talk to a professional to help you decide whether a restraining or protective order is right for you.
- Know the resources in your local area that can help you get a restraining or protective order when you are ready.
- A restraining or protective order can't keep you safe on its own, so get help to write a safety plan.

You have the right to a safe and healthy relationship...  
free from violence and free from fear.