

New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence 2009 Domestic Violence Handbook

Federal Law

Some domestic violence crimes are punishable under federal law, as well as under state law. For example, if your abuser travels from one state to another with the *intent* to violate an order of protection or to injure, harass, or intimidate you, **and** then actually violates that order or causes you bodily injury, this is a federal crime. If your abuser has ever **forced you** to cross a state line with the intent to injure, harass or intimidate you, this is also a federal crime.

Federal law also prohibits interstate stalking. For example, if your abuser crosses a state line with the intent to injure or harass you, **and** then actually causes you to have reasonable fear of death or serious bodily injury to yourself or a member of your immediate family, this is also a federal crime.

These laws are particularly helpful if your abuser has abused or threatened you in two or more states. For example, you may work in New Jersey or Pennsylvania but live in New York, and your abuser has injured or harassed you in both states. Under such circumstances, it can often be difficult to know which police department to contact for help. In such a case, you should inform the District Attorney in either state as soon as possible. He or she will tell you how to proceed. Additionally, these laws can be used to increase the penalties against your abuser. A domestic violence advocate can also help you with this process.

Under federal law, if a person is convicted of a misdemeanor domestic violence offense they will lose their right to obtain a gun permit or to legally carry a gun. This law includes police officers, corrections officers, and military personnel.