

New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
2004 Domestic Violence Handbook

Getting Help From An Advocate

There is no one best way to try to protect yourself from future harm by your abuser. Whether you are working on a safety plan, needing information about your legal options, thinking about going to court, dealing with the police, in the middle of a legal proceeding, needing help from the local Department of Social Services or Human Resources Administration (DSS/HRA), or anything else, you don't have to figure it all out on your own. In making decisions about what is likely to work best for you, it can be helpful to talk to a local domestic violence *advocate*. Advocates understand the criminal justice and Family Court systems and the Department of Social Services system, and they are also familiar with your community. You can also speak to an advocate about your immigration status, and they can provide you with appropriate referrals.

In addition to giving you helpful information, domestic violence advocates can often go with you to court, to the police station or to DSS/HRA to guide you through the process and to offer you practical and emotional support. While this Handbook is intended to help you understand your legal rights, using the legal system can be a confusing and difficult process. Getting help from someone who has experience working with victims of domestic violence and who knows how to work with the different systems can make things easier for you.

To contact the domestic violence program nearest you, see the **Resource List** in the back of this Handbook.