

New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
2004 Domestic Violence Handbook

If You Decide To Leave

If you decide to leave, even for a very short period of time, take your children with you if it's at all possible and you can do so without exposing them to harm or risk of harm, and without violating a custody order. Not only can you better ensure the safety of your children if they are with you, having physical custody of your children may help you get temporary or permanent legal custody of your children if you decide to file a custody petition with the court.

If you decide to leave, try to take the following things with you, because it may be difficult to get them later. However, the safety of your children and yourself is always **more** important than any of these documents or things.

- Orders of Protection
- Custody Orders, paternity documents
- Identification for yourself
- Birth certificates - yours and your children's
- Social Security cards
- Marriage, separation or divorce papers
- School and vaccination records
- Money
- Checkbook, Savings Account Passbooks, Automatic Teller Machine Card, PIN numbers
- Credit Cards and/or account numbers
- Keys - house, car, office, post office box, safety deposit box

- Driver's license, car registration and title
- Medications and prescriptions
- Public Assistance Benefit Identification Card
- Passport, green card, work permit and any other immigration documents
- Several changes of clothes
- Children's favorite toys, security blankets
- Lease/rental agreement, house deed
- Mortgage payment book, current unpaid bills
- Insurance papers
- Address book
- Pictures, jewelry, items of sentimental value
- Pictures of injuries you may have gotten from your abuser
- Any evidence that might help police investigating your case, such as threatening letters or phone message tapes

Make copies of important documents and keys and find a safe place to keep them in case you decide to leave. A safe place can include a hiding place in your home or with a friend, neighbor or family member that you trust.