



SAFETY IN COURT

After you have left an abuser, there may be many occasions where you will have to see the abuser in court to deal with a protection order, custody, child support, divorce, or criminal proceedings. Since you are in a courthouse surrounded by people and even court officers, you may feel like it is okay to let your guard down. However, please remember that any time you come into contact with the abuser, you have to take steps to protect yourself. Here are some tips to keep you as safe as possible.

Following these suggestions can't guarantee your safety, but it could help make you safer. However, it is important that you do what is right for you. You have to do what is best for you and your children.

Getting to the courthouse

- Try to get to court at a different time than you think the abuser will arrive to avoid seeing him on the street or in line to enter the court. If the abuser is always late, try to arrive early. If the abuser always arrives early, try arriving closer to your hearing time or come with a friend or a **court advocate**. Remember; make sure to leave plenty of time to get through the lines, metal detectors, etc., so that you get to the hearing on time. If you are late, the case may be called without you and dismissed. Call Alternatives to Violence, 970-669-5150 to request a court advocate to go with you to court.
- Bring a friend or family member with you so you won't have to be alone at all during the day.
- If your friend or family member cannot spend the day in court with you, ask that person to drive you to court. It's best to get someone whose car the abuser doesn't know. Ask them to drop you off at the courthouse entrance so you don't have to walk alone through the parking lot.

Once you're inside the courthouse

- Stay together with whoever came with you while inside the courthouse. Ask your people to keep an eye on their surroundings and pay attention to safety considerations. If you need to use the bathroom and it has a lot of stalls, ask your friend to accompany you to the bathroom.
- Sit in the courtroom with friend or court advocate. Court advocate will sit between you and the abusers sight of vision.
- Court house security will keep the abuser away from you. Let the courthouse security know if the abuser sits near you or tries to harass you. Your protection order is still in effect while you are in the courthouse. If your abuser violates the order while in the waiting area or in line at the courthouse entrance, you can report it to a court officer.

Leaving the courthouse

- At the end of the hearing, wait until the abuser leaves the courtroom. Leave with the advocate or friend that accompanied you or ask the courtroom security to escort you out of the courtroom.

- Try to leave out of a different exit other than the main exit. However, even if you wait a long time, be aware that the abuser could still be out there waiting for you so be observant.
- Ask a police officer to escort you to your car if possible.
- Have a friend pick you up at the exit or if you had someone come with you, make sure that they walk with you to your car.