



## Domestic Violence and Public Benefits



### What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence occurs when a partner, spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend, or other household or family member harms another. Domestic violence includes hitting, hurting, threatening, and stalking.



### Should I report domestic violence to my caseworker?

You do not have to report domestic violence to any caseworker. However, you may choose to report domestic violence to a caseworker to waive some program requirements. If you choose to tell your caseworker, you can ask to talk to them in private. Everything you tell your caseworker is confidential; however, caseworkers must report child abuse.

If you are a victim of domestic violence and inform your caseworker, some requirements in the Ohio Works First (OWF) Program and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or food stamps) may be waived. Some program requirements that are waived are:

- **Work Requirements:** You may be temporarily excused from working, looking for work, going to school, or attending job trainings if any of these activities would put you or your children in danger of domestic violence or interfere with your ability to leave a domestic violence situation.
- **Child Support Cooperation:** You may also be temporarily excused from cooperating with child support rules that require establishing paternity, setting up a child support order, or enforcing a child support order if the agency thinks that cooperation is not in the best interests of the child or that cooperation will make it difficult to escape a domestic violence situation.
- **OWF Time Limits:** Typically, a person can only receive OWF benefits for thirty-six (36) months. However, if you are a victim of domestic violence this time limit may be extended if losing OWF will place you or your children in danger of domestic violence or interfere with your ability to leave a domestic violence situation. You would apply for this extension by asking for a "Hardship Extension."



### How do I apply for a hardship extension?

If you are asking for a hardship extension because you used your thirty-six (36) months of OWF cash assistance, you should first call your local Job and Family Services Office and ask to apply for a hardship extension. You should explain what the reason for your hardship is, which may include domestic violence. If you supply any documents or applications, be sure to keep a copy for your records and ask for a receipt.

If your application is denied, you will receive a notice denying your application. If you do not agree with the denial, you should request a hearing by completing the hearing request form. Supply a copy of the hearing request form to:

- The Bureau of State Hearing via U.S. Regular Mail, via fax at (614) 728-9574, or via email at BSH@jfs.ohio.gov  
*and*
- The Local Job and Family Services Office in person or via U.S. Regular Mail. If you drop the form in person, be sure to obtain a receipt.

If you are refused an application or your application is denied, please call Southeastern Ohio Legal Services or The Legal Aid Society of Columbus right away. Our contact information is below. Our offices might be able to help you.



### **How does domestic violence affect subsidized housing?**

If you receive subsidized housing (such as housing choice voucher, public housing, and tax credit housing) and you report domestic violence, you have legal protections. Generally, you cannot be denied subsidized housing benefits because you are a victim of domestic violence. Similarly, you cannot be evicted because you are a victim of domestic violence.

Additionally, if you or a member of your household is unsafe in your unit because of domestic violence, you can request an emergency transfer to a safe unit in subsidized housing. If a transfer is possible, your landlord must follow your request.

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**The information on this flyer is not legal advice.  
If you are seeking representation or legal advice, please contact LASC or SEOLS.  
An attorney-client relationship does not exist between you and LASC or SEOLS.**

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**Contact for Services: Intake line: 1-844-302-1800**

[www.columbuslegalaid.org](http://www.columbuslegalaid.org)

[www.seols.org](http://www.seols.org)

LASC provides services in Central Ohio and has offices in Columbus and Marion.

SEOLS provides services in thirty-four counties in Southeastern Ohio and has offices in Athens, Chillicothe, New Philadelphia, Newark, Portsmouth, and Steubenville