

Information on domestic violence

What is domestic violence?

You are affected by violence within the family or in an (ex-) partnership. Domestic violence is known as physical, emotional or sexual abuse within the family, in a current or dissolved partnership. For example:

- Physical abuse in the partnership
- Physical abuse of children by parents
- Threats or emotional abuse in the partnership
- Being stalked by the ex-partner
- Rape in the marriage
- Sexual assault in the family
- Ill-treatment by caring and nursing relatives
- Abuse of parents by their children
- Threat and enforcement of forced marriage

How can we help you?

The victim support service helps you to find ways to get away from the abuse. We inform you of your rights and can arrange further help for you and your children:

- We listen to you so that you can relate what you have experienced.
- We help you to consider how the abuse can be ended.
- We assist you in deciding what the next steps are, for example in regard to a separation/divorce.
- We arrange further assistance, such as a lawyer, psychological help or financial support.
- We can also help find a safe place for you and your children.

What are your general legal rights?

- As the person concerned you are free to choose which victim support centre you want to help you (locations in the whole of Switzerland). For further information go to www.opferhilfe-schweiz.ch.
- You are eligible for legal, social and psychological counselling.
- The services of our counselling centres are free of charge. The counsellors are bound to professional secrecy. We support you regardless if an offence has been reported or not.
- Depending on your financial situation expenses can be covered by the victim support service, for example for psychotherapy, emergency sheltered housing or lawyers' fees.

- Under certain circumstances you can make a claim for financial assistance and compensation within 5 years after the last criminal offence. This deadline is valid for criminal offences from 01.01.2007.

What are your legal rights in the criminal proceedings?

- You may be accompanied by a trusted person to the questioning by the police and the prosecuting authorities.
- You can ask if an encounter with the accused can as far as possible be avoided (this applies at the hearing and at chance meetings).
- You can request access to the documentation of the prosecuting authorities.
- You can ask to be informed on important decisions. This could be for example notifications of the release from prison of the accused person or the lifting of a restraining order.

What are your legal rights when you have been sexually abused?

- You can insist that you are questioned by someone of the same gender and that a person of the same gender supports you as an interpreter.
- You can refuse to make a statement on your intimate genital parts.
- You can request that you do not meet with the accused person.
- You can ask that at least one person of the same gender is present at the questioning and that the public is excluded from the court proceedings.

The legal rights of children and juveniles (up to 18 years old)

- The juvenile victims are in principle not allowed to be questioned more than twice during the whole criminal procedure.
- The questioning is carried out by a qualified specialist and is normally recorded in image and sound (video).
- A confrontation with the accused person can only be ordered at the request of the child/juvenile and if a fair hearing of the accused person cannot otherwise be granted, this means if the questioning could not be filmed on video.