

## Domestic Violence & Child Support

When most people hear the words “*domestic violence*,” they think of physical violence. However, in some cases, abusers never physically attack their victims. Other forms of abuse or ways to control victims include emotional, sexual and financial abuse. Many abusers use money as a means of control. An abuser can deny a victim access to money, or housing, or a car, making it difficult to leave or stay away. Abusers can use threats about child support to control their victims. In addition to threatening physical violence, an abuser may say you will never see a dime of child support if you leave or that you will lose custody if you ask for child support.

If you are applying for or receiving cash assistance, you are required to cooperate with child support to get full benefits for your family. But if there is a danger of domestic violence, you should tell the Job Opportunity Specialist (JOS) in the Job center or the child support Caseworker of your fears and you may be excused from that requirement. If you are not applying for or receiving cash assistance, you can decide whether or not you want child support services.

### Domestic Violence Information for Cash Assistance Clients

Under Federal law, if you are applying for or receiving cash assistance or some forms of Medicaid, you will automatically receive child support services.

- You will be referred to an Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) Borough Office. You will be told to bring information about yourself, your child and the noncustodial parent. This information helps OCSE establish paternity and a child support order. You may also have to go to court for a child support hearing and you may be referred to a laboratory for DNA testing.
- If you and/or your children are victims of domestic violence and you believe receiving child support will put your family in danger, you may have a good reason not to cooperate. This is called **good cause**.
- Don't wait to be asked. Tell your child support caseworker that you believe that the noncustodial parent will become abusive if you get child support services.
- Your caseworker can request a **good cause claim** which means you will meet with a Domestic Violence Liaison. The Liaison will decide if it is safe for you to continue applying for child support or if you should be given a full or partial waiver, which excuses you from some or all of the child support requirements.

### Domestic Violence Information for non Cash Assistance Clients

If you are not applying for or receiving cash assistance and the noncustodial parent has abused you or your child, you can decide if you want to receive child support services. Many domestic violence victims are nervous about collecting child support, but want to go forward with a support case because they

need the money. Regardless of the situation, many victims feel that both parents should be responsible for the children they have together.

- If you decide to go forward, you can always change your mind.
- When you go to court to file a petition for child support, let the child support worker and State court staff know of your fears. They will work with you to ensure privacy of case information and security in the court. You can request the court:
  - To remove your address and employment information from petitions, notices and any other court forms
  - Not tell the other parent where you live or work
  - To allow you to leave the court separately from the other parent
  - To order any laboratory DNA testing to establish paternity on different dates
  - To refer you to domestic violence services
- Once you have a child support order, OCSE can provide administrative enforcement without your involvement. If your situation becomes dangerous and you are concerned for your safety or that of your children, you can ask OCSE to close your case at any time.

*If you are experiencing domestic violence, or know someone who is, help is available. The New York City Domestic Violence Hotline (800) 621-HOPE provides information on counseling, shelters, services for children, and legal assistance.*