



JUSTICE FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

NEIGHBORHOOD LEGAL SERVICES

Because Justice is for All



**Criminal
Justice Information
for Domestic
Violence Survivors**

Domestic Violence Criminal Cases

A criminal case begins when a crime is committed. The criminal process is different than the civil process involved with obtaining a Protection from Abuse (PFA) or other civil protection order. Civil protection orders are issued in cases involving “domestic violence.” The PFA and the criminal process are two different processes despite being based upon the same facts and allegations.

A crime can be classified as “domestic violence” if it involves:

- Physical assault
- Sexual assault
- Threats to harm
- Harassment
- Stalking
- Trespass or vandalism

What Happens After a Crime is Committed?

- Once the police investigate and charges are filed, the Defendant will be arrested or ordered to appear at an arraignment hearing.
- The Defendant will be told the charges against him or her.
- A **Preliminary Hearing** will be scheduled, usually in a Magisterial District Office. The Victim of the Crime should receive notice of this hearing. This hearing just determines if there is evidence to support the charges being brought against the defendant.
- The case will either be "**held over for trial**" or "**bound over**" to the Court of Common Pleas, Dismissed, or a Guilty Plea will be accepted.
- A bond may be set by the judge. Bond (or bail) is the amount of money a Defendant must pay in order to guarantee that they will return to court and answer the charges against them. If this amount is not or cannot be paid, the Defendant will remain in jail. Sometimes, Defendants are released on their own Recognizance. This means that the judge trusts the Defendant to return to court without paying any money.

What Happens After a Crime is Committed?

- Usually No Contact with the victim is a condition of any bond. No contact means no contact. If this condition is broken, the victim should immediately report the violation to the District Attorney's office or law enforcement. A Bond Revocation Hearing may be scheduled by the District Attorney. If a violation is proven, the Defendant will remain in jail until the resolution of the case
- If the case is bound over for trial, a Formal Arraignment is scheduled. The victim does not need to appear at this stage in the proceedings. The Defendant is just formally presented the charges against them at this phase.
- Pretrial Conferences are the next step. Preliminary matters are discussed and possible settlements/plea deals are explored during this time before the trial takes place.
- The trial can occur before a Judge or a Jury. At the conclusion of the trial, the Defendant will be found Guilty or Not Guilty. If found guilty, a sentence or a penalty will be imposed.

Important Numbers for Allegheny County

Inmate Locator/Jail Release (PA SAVIN)

[866-972-7284](tel:866-972-7284)

Allegheny County District Attorney- Domestic
Violence Unit

[412-350-4406](tel:412-350-4406)

Pretrial Services (regarding bail/release
conditions)

[412-350-4732](tel:412-350-4732)

Adult Probation

[412-350-2320](tel:412-350-2320)

State Parole

[412-365-3540](tel:412-365-3540)

Pittsburgh Municipal Court

[412-350-6715](tel:412-350-6715)



NEIGHBORHOOD
LEGAL SERVICES

If you need any of the following services or
information, contact your VOCA attorney at
Neighborhood Legal Services:

- Victim's Rights
- Referral to other victim service programs
- Victim Impact Statement assistance
- Emergency Financial Assistance access
- Victim's Compensation
- Emergency Justice-related assistance of
services
- Child Care assistance
- Transportation Assistance
- Interpreter Services



NEIGHBORHOOD
LEGAL SERVICES

How to Get Help

Visit our website and apply online at

www.nlsa.us

and choose "Get Legal Help"
or call

1-866-761-6572

NLS provides interpreters and translation services.
All services are confidential

Allegheny County Office

928 PENN AVENUE | PITTSBURGH, PA 15222-3757

Beaver County Office

STONE POINT LANDING, SUITE 204A

500 MARKET STREET | BRIDGEWATER, PA 15009-2998

Butler County Office

HOLLY POINTE BUILDING, SUITE 306

220 S. MAIN STREET | BUTLER, PA 16001

Lawrence County Office

TEMPLE BUILDING, SUITE 329

125 EAST NORTH STREET

NEW CASTLE, PA 16101-3751



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