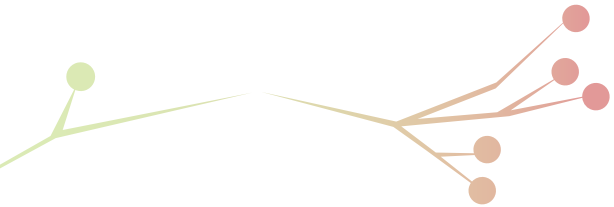
Emergencies



What to do in an emergency



If you are in danger, you should call 911 immediately.

If you call and hang up, the 911 operator will call you back to see if anything is wrong. If you don't answer, the police will come to find out what is wrong.

If calling the police doesn't seem right for you, call someone you trust to help.

If you cannot use the phone, try to go somewhere safe. This might be the home of a friend or relative, or a public place.

If you or someone you know is having a mental health crisis, call the **Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team** at **1-888-429-8167**, or go to the closest emergency department.

It is important that you are prepared in case you have to act quickly. Here are some things to consider:

- Where can you go in an emergency?
- How will you get there? Is there someone who can come and get you? Can you take a car, taxi, or bus?
- Is there someone you can call to let them know what is happening and where you are going?
- Is there someone you can leave your pets with?
- If you need to go to a transition house, do you know how to get there?

It may be a good idea for you to get legal and other advice now, even before there is an emergency.

EMERGENCY BAG CHECKLIST

You may want to pack an emergency bag in case you need to leave quickly. You should pack what you would need for a few days. You may want to leave the bag with a friend.

If you don't feel safe packing an emergency bag, you may want to make a list of things to take, and make sure you know where they are kept.

Some items you may want to bring are:

- money, financial statements, credit cards
- clothes for yourself and the children for a few days
- house keys, car keys
- a cell phone and charger cable
- copies of your lease, mortgage, mortgage statements or deeds
- car registration, driver's license, car insurance identification
- important papers – birth certificates, marriage certificates, social insurance numbers, divorce papers, custody documents, court orders, restraining orders, income tax returns, work permits
- health cards for yourself and the children
- medical and vaccination records
- any medicine you or the children may need
- First Nations status card
- immigration/citizenship papers, passports for you and the children
- the children's favourite toys, books, and special blanket
- picture of your partner (for identification)
- your address book and list of important phone numbers
- your favourite possessions, or other things that will bring you comfort.

If you can, keep electronic copies of important paperwork where you can access them easily. For example, you may want to scan documents or take photos of them and send them to yourself or a friend by text message or email.

Leaving in an emergency

If you are afraid of your partner, you might want to leave your home even if you do not call the police.

If you want to leave, you can ask someone you trust or the police to wait while you get your things. You can ask the police to take you to a safe place like a transition house, motel, or the home of a friend or relative. If you have children, you have the right to take your children with you.

LEGAL INFO

If you take your children with you, you will need to apply for custody of the children as soon as possible. Do not take the children out of the province without talking to a lawyer first.

The police will not help you remove your children later without a court order.

If you leave in an emergency and decide not to go back for a while, the police can return with you to get the rest of your personal belongings. They will protect you, but they're not allowed to help you carry things. They will not usually enter the property. You may want to bring a friend to help, or to be a witness.

What happens when the police are called?

When the police come, their first job is to stop any abuse and make sure everyone is safe. The police will ask you and your partner questions.

For safety reasons, the police will try to ask you and your partner questions separately rather than in the same room.

The police might arrest your partner if you've been hurt, or if it is likely that the assault will continue or happen again.

The police will need to know who might have seen or heard anything. They may ask other people about what happened. They may interview your neighbours, friends, or anyone else who might have seen or heard something. If anyone has physical injuries or must go to a clinic or hospital, the police may want to talk to the medical staff who treated them.

The police may take pictures of injuries, people involved, or damage to property where the abuse happened. They may ask you to go to the police station to have pictures taken.

You can decide whether or not to talk to the police about what happened. If you decide to talk to the police, you should give as much detail as you can. You should let them know about any injuries to people, and any damage to belongings or the home.

The police will arrest and remove the person who has been charged with an offence. If police think both you and your partner have been violent or caused damage to belongings or the home, they may charge both of you with an offence. This does not mean that you are guilty or that you have a criminal record.

If you are arrested, you have the right to speak to a lawyer. You should speak to a lawyer before you say anything more to police.

If you decide not to leave and your partner is not arrested, you should write down the names of the police officers who come in case you need to talk with them later.

Assault and making threats are criminal offences. If the police think a criminal offence has occurred, they must lay charges.

Police Priorities

Priority 1
Stop the abuse and make sure everyone is safe.

Priority 2
Ask questions and take pictures.

Priority 3
Arrest and take away anyone who is being charged with a crime.

The police's main concern is for everyone's safety.

What happens if the police lay charges?

The police might lay charges. This means they believe the person has broken the law or committed a crime, and the person will have to go to a court to talk about what happened.

If the police lay charges, they may need help collecting evidence of the abuse. You should prepare to share your story by doing these things:

- identifying torn or bloody clothing and any weapons used (a weapon can be anything that is used to hurt a person)
- taking photos of injuries, broken furniture, or other damage
- saving any threatening text or voicemail messages, letters, emails, Facebook posts, etc.
- keeping a record of times and dates, what happened, and any injuries

You should also keep a record of the names and badge numbers of any police officers involved.

If the police do not take pictures, you can ask a friend to do it. Pictures can be good evidence in a trial because your camera or phone keeps the date for each picture. If you print the photos, the person who took them should sign and date them because they may be important evidence in a trial. Typically, however, the police take photos and gather evidence. It is the job of the police to collect evidence. You can help the police by telling them about possible evidence. Evidence like photos, torn clothes, or broken items help to show police and the court what happened.

If the police lay charges, they will take the accused person from the home. They will usually hold them at the police station, usually for under 24 hours. In some situations, the police do not let an accused person leave the police station until a judge decides on their release.

Whether police release your partner depends on the kind of charges they face, how much force your partner used, and if your partner has a previous criminal record.

If your partner is charged with domestic assault, police may release them if they agree to some rules. This is called an "undertaking" or a "recognizance" with a no-contact order. Your partner would sign these rules.

A **no-contact order** means someone is not allowed to contact you directly or indirectly.

Direct contact is if your partner speaks to you in person or on the phone, writes to you, leaves voice mail, emails, texts, or comes near you.

Indirect contact is when your partner communicates, or tries to communicate, a message to you through another person, or by leaving something for you where they know you will find it.

Your partner may also have to:

- not contact or communicate with you, your children, or other people
- stay away from your home, workplace, or other locations
- not drink alcohol or use non-prescription drugs
- not have or use firearms
- follow any other rules that the police or judge feel will help to keep you safe

The police, crown attorney, or judge can also put other rules in place that they feel will help. The court expects your partner to follow these rules until the criminal case is over in court.

LEGAL INFO

If an accused person does anything they said they would not do, or if they break any of the court's rules, they could face more criminal charges.

For more information on no-contact orders, see page 38.

You might want the no-contact order changed because you want to have contact with your partner. But only the accused person can apply to court to make this change. The court will consider whether you would like contact with your partner, but the bigger concern of the court is protecting public safety.

If your partner does not follow their release conditions, they can be held in jail until the charges are dealt with by the court.

SAFETY

If you feel that your partner may violate a no-contact order, you may want to prepare a safety plan before your partner is released. For more information on safety planning see the section starting on page 45.

If the police lay charges, they may suggest you talk to services such as a transition house or provincial Victim Services. You do not have to leave your home or stay in a transition house to get help from a transition house or Victim Services. These agencies can give you emotional or practical support.

They can also give you information about community resources and how the police do their work.

The police must tell you about what happens to your partner if they are arrested for assault.

If your partner has abused you, you can talk to the police to find out the rules your partner must follow when they are released.

You can also ask for a copy of any paperwork related to your case. If there is a no-contact order, you should keep it with you at all times.

You can get information from the police who made the arrest, police Victim Services, or a provincial Victim Services office. For more contact information see the Resources section at the end of this book.

If the police lay criminal charges against your partner, you may have to go to court to say what happened.

The provincial Victims' Services Program and some police Victim Services departments can help you get ready to tell your story in court. Transition houses also offer information and support.

RESOURCES

To find the provincial Victim Services office nearest you, call their toll-free number 1-888-470-0773, or visit novascotia.ca/just/victim_services/contact.asp

The judge may say that your partner must go to an intervention program. These programs work with people to help them change the way they act. They encourage people to accept responsibility for their behaviour and to create respectful, non-abusive relationships with their partners.

If English is not your first language, or if you are deaf or hard of hearing, you may need a translator or interpreter when you speak with the police, the court, or transition house staff. Most of them can give you this support. You can find a list of services and contact information in the Resources section at the end of this book.

If you need an interpreter or translator, ask for one as soon as you can. It can take time to get an interpreter or translator.

In small communities, people are likely to know one another. If you are worried about confidentiality and privacy, you can ask for the interpreter's name before the interpreter is given your name, and before you meet. You can refuse an interpreter who is known to you and your family.

RESOURCES

For more information about going to court to testify, you can read Being a Witness in a Family Violence Case at www.legalinfo.org/family-violence-abuse/being-a-witness-in-a-family-violence-case-1

If you need help or information about abuse, call the **Transition House Association of Nova Scotia's** 24-hour toll-free line: 1-855-225-0220.

You can also contact the local transition house in your area. Call 211 to find resources near you. The Resources section at the end of this book has a complete list.

What happens if Child and Family Wellbeing Services gets involved?

Anyone who thinks a child has been hurt, is in danger, or is being neglected must call Child and Family Wellbeing. When Child and Family Wellbeing gets a call about a child, they will investigate. This could mean contacting the child's parents, talking to friends or family, talking to the child's school, or visiting the home. They will suggest ways to help the family and may assign a case worker to the family. They can take a child from the home if they think they need to in order to keep the child safe.

If your child is taken from your home, contact Nova Scotia Legal Aid right away to see if you qualify for their services (nslegalaid.ca, or call 1-866-532-2311 toll-free). Tell them you need a lawyer for a child protection matter and tell them your first court date if you know it.

Five days after your child is taken into care, you will get a letter with a court date.

When you go to court, the judge may order that your child can come home or that they will stay in care.

If your child comes home, the court may order you to allow Child and Family Wellbeing to check in with your family to make sure there are no problems. **You may have to**:

- go to therapy or parenting classes
- get help for alcohol or drug use
- make changes in your home
- make sure the children have no contact with a certain person

If your child stays in care, Child and Family Wellbeing will give you a schedule to visit. You may visit somewhere that a case worker can be with you. You should tell your case worker right away if you will miss a visit. When a child is in care, you go to court again in about 30 days. If you and Child and Family Wellbeing cannot agree where the child will live and how often you can visit, the judge will decide.

You will go to court again about 3 months after your child is taken into care. Then the judge will decide if your child can live with you and what services your family needs. You may have to go to court more times over the next year to see how things are going.

If you are asked to sign anything, or if your child is removed from your home, you should contact a lawyer immediately. Nova Scotia Legal Aid can provide child protection information. Domestic violence outreach services or a transition house can give you information and support, including information about how to get legal advice. See the Legal Matters section of this book, or call 211 or 1-855-225-0220 any time of day for services.

Child protection can be very complicated. It can affect a family for a long time. In some cases, children are removed permanently from their parents. If Child and Family Wellbeing becomes involved with your family, speak to a lawyer as soon as possible.

LEGAL INFO

Sometimes Child and Family Wellbeing will ask parents to sign an agreement to allow services to be put in place while the children stay in your care.

If they ask you to sign this, call Nova Scotia Legal Aid. Nova Scotia Legal Aid can sometimes help parents who need this kind of advice.

RESOURCES

For more information, see the "Your Children" section of this book starting on page 105.

Find the Legal Aid office nearest you at:
nslegalaid.ca/contact-us

For more information about child protection,
visit the Family Law Nova Scotia website:
www.nsfamilylaw.ca/child-protection

Child and Family Wellbeing offices can be found on page 135.

Mi'kmaq Family and Children's Services are listed on page 135.

For more information about domestic abuse and the law visit the Family Law Nova Scotia: nsfamilylaw.ca/family-violence

Cut or tear along this line. Fold up and keep in a safe place.

Safety Alert

If you have experienced domestic abuse, know that you are not alone, and that there are a variety of supports available to you.

If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

If you are seeking help or are looking for information about abuse, you can call the **Transition House Association of Nova Scotia 24-hour toll-free line**: 1-855-225-0220

Women's, Men's, and All Genders Helplines: 211

Help Lines

Crime Stoppers 1-800-222-8477

Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868

Mental Health Crisis Line
Serves all of Nova Scotia (24/7)1-888-429-8167

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre
Crisis Line 902-422-4240

Your local number:

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Quick connect

Community and social services 211
ns.211.ca

HealthLink 811
Hearing impaired 711
811.novascotia.ca

Women's, Men's, and All Genders Helplines:211

Mi'kmaw Family Healing Centres

Millbrook 902-756-3440
Toll-free: 1-800-565-4741

We'koqma'q 902-756-3440
Toll-free: 1-800-565-3440

Transition Houses and Shelters Crisis Lines

Amherst, Autumn House 902-667-1200

Antigonish, Naomi Society. 902-863-3807

Bridgewater, Harbour House 902-543-3999

Digby, Juniper House 902-742-8689
Toll-free: 1-800-266-4087

Halifax, Bryony House 902-422-7650

Kentville, Chrysalis House 902-679-1922
Toll-free: 1-800-264-8682

New Glasgow, Tearmann House . 902-752-0132
Toll-free: 1-800-831-0330

Port Hawkesbury, Leeside Transition House
. 902-625-2444
Toll-free: 1-800-565-3390

Shelburne, Juniper House 902-742-8689
Toll-free: 1-800-266-4087

Sydney, Cape Breton Transition House
. 902-539-2945
Toll-free: 1-800-563-2945

Truro, Third Place 902-893-3232
Toll-free: 1-800-565-4878

Yarmouth, Juniper House 902-742-8689
Toll-free: 1-800-266-4087

Cut or tear along this line. Fold up and keep in a safe place.