

## Get Help

For help planning for your safety,  
or to talk to someone 24/7:

### The National Domestic Violence Hotline

[thehotline.org](https://thehotline.org)

1-800-799-7233

text 'START' to 88788 to connect with NDVH

If you have a speech or hearing disability or impairment, you can reach an advocate by videophone (206-518-9361) or instant messenger (DeafHotline) Monday–Friday, 9AM–5PM (PST) or email [deafhelp@thehotline.org](mailto:deafhelp@thehotline.org).

To find free, confidential support for survivors of abuse in Texas:

### TCFV Service Directory

[https://tcfv.org/wp-content/uploads/2024-TCFV-Service-Directory\\_web-pages.pdf](https://tcfv.org/wp-content/uploads/2024-TCFV-Service-Directory_web-pages.pdf)

To report suspected abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disabilities and adults age 65 and over:

### Adult Protective Services (APS)

1-800-252-5400

If you are in need of a certified language interpreter, you may request one when you reach out to any of the contacts listed above.

*Some information in this brochure was taken from fact sheets created by Disability Services ASAP (A Safety Awareness Program) of SafePlace in Austin, Texas, as well as National Domestic Violence Hotline resources for abuse in disability communities.*

You are not alone.

Most people need help to get out of an abusive relationship. Abuse is never your fault. You have the right to live free from violence, and you can ask for help to make the abuse stop.

### Here are some steps you can take:

- » Talk to someone you trust—a friend, neighbor, doctor, therapist, advocate, or the police—and tell them what is happening.
- » If the first person you talk to doesn't believe you or can't help, keep telling others until someone does. You deserve to be heard.
- » If you are in immediate danger, and it is safe to do so, call 911.

If your rights are being violated,  
you can request support at:

### Disability Rights Texas

#### Phone

512-454-4816 Voice/TDD  
800-252-9108 Toll Free  
866-362-2851 Video Phone

#### Email

[info@disabilityrightstx.org](mailto:info@disabilityrightstx.org)

#### Website

[disabilityrightstx.org](https://disabilityrightstx.org)



# Domestic Violence and Living with Disability



888.450.TCFV (8238)  
WWW.TCFV.ORG

## What is Domestic Violence, Family Violence or Caregiver Abuse?

Domestic violence, family violence, or caregiver abuse happens when someone uses power and control to hurt, scare, or control another person. This can include stopping someone from doing what they want to do, or forcing them to do things against their will.

People with disabilities experience abuse at higher rates than non-disabled people. In some cases, abuse can even cause temporary or permanent disability. An unsafe partner or care provider might use tactics such as manipulation, put-downs, isolation, physical harm, or destruction of property.

Abuse can happen anywhere—at home, at work, or where you receive care. The person causing harm may be a spouse, partner, family member, roommate, or care provider.

If you are being abused, you are not alone. You have the right to safety, support, and respect.

### Do any of the following feel familiar in your relationship with a partner, family member, or care provider?

- » Do they look at you or act in ways that scare you?
- » Do they threaten to “out” your disability—especially if it’s non-visible or carries social stigma?
- » Do they take your disability check or prevent you from accessing your own money?
- » Do they make decisions for you without asking or without legal authority to do so?
- » Do they control where you go or who you see, or keep you from friends or family?
- » Do they refuse to help you with necessary tasks, such as using the bathroom, or do they take away or break your mobility aids, communication tools, or service equipment?
- » Do they withhold medications, give you the wrong dose on purpose, or mix medications unsafely?
- » Do they stop you from seeing a doctor or getting medical help?
- » Do they take, use, or damage your belongings without permission?

- » Do they hurt or threaten your pets or service animal?
- » Do they threaten to leave you without care or say they’ll put you in a nursing home or institution?
- » Do they minimize the abuse, blame you, or say it’s your fault?
- » Do they say you’re a bad parent or unfit to parent because of your disability?

### Does someone in your life...

- » Invalidate or minimize your disability—by calling you lazy, saying you’re “not allowed” to have a pain flare-up, or accusing you of faking your condition?
- » React with aggression or physically harm you when they’re angry?
- » Force you to have sex or do sexual things you don’t want to do—especially if your disability affects your ability to give clear, informed consent?
- » Use your disability as an excuse to justify their harmful or controlling behavior?

If you answered “yes” to even one of these questions, you may be in an abusive relationship.

### What can you do to stay safe if you are experiencing abuse?

There is no “right” way to respond to abuse. Your safety matters most. Here are some options that may help:

- » If it is safe to do so, you can say “No” or “Stop” to the person hurting you.
- » If you are able, go to a safe place as soon as possible. This could be a friend’s house, a trusted neighbor’s home, or a public place.

No one deserves to be hit, threatened or abused in any way. If you are being hurt by someone, make plans to keep yourself, your children, pets and service animals safe. Here are some additional safety ideas that others have found helpful:

- » During arguments, try to stay near an exit or phone if you can.
- » If you feel unsafe, avoid rooms with potential weapons, such as the kitchen or bathroom.
- » Practice leaving your home safely—know which doors, windows, or elevators are most accessible for you.

- » Identify other safe places you could go, even just temporarily.
- » Ask neighbors or friends to call 911 if they hear a disturbance.
- » If you have a pet or service animal, think about who you trust to care for them temporarily, or talk to an advocate who may be able to help.
- » Keep copies of important documents (like ID, medication list, social security card, or power of attorney forms) in a safe, easy-to-reach place, or leave them with someone you trust.
- » If you feel comfortable, tell a doctor, counselor, or boss about what’s happening. Consider giving them a photo or description of the person causing harm.
- » Have someone walk with you to and from your car, bus, taxi or paratransit service.

## You Have Rights: Know Them, Use Them

As a person with a disability, you have rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This includes rights related to safety, access to services, and equal treatment.

### You have the right to:

- » Equal access to programs, services, and activities—such as family violence shelters, housing services, and public health programs.
- » Request reasonable accommodations to participate in safety or support services such as bringing your service animal with you to a shelter, or requesting mobility aids or assistive devices.
- » Access buildings and spaces without structural barriers. *Note: Newer buildings are usually built to meet accessibility standards. Older buildings may still have barriers—like stairs without elevators. Under the law, these must be addressed unless doing so would cause significant difficulty or expense.*