



Domestic Violence: The police are involved, now what? Transcript

Domestic Violence: The police are involved, now what?

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FEMALE NARRATOR: Police involvement can be stressful and scary for victims of domestic violence. You may fear retaliation, loss of income, impact on your family, and potentially immigration consequences. Once the police are involved, what can you expect? What happens to you, to the abuser, and what does the process look like?

Once the police are involved, the following five things may happen next: Law enforcement arrival and arrest, Bond hearing, Outreach from law enforcement, State's Attorney's Office, and/or victim services providers, your participation in the process as a witness, including potential involvement of other family member witnesses, and Contact from the offender. The Offender may reach out to you personally, or through an investigator or an acquaintance.

Let's look at each of these items in detail. First, Law Enforcement arrives on the scene. When the Police arrive, they will speak to you and any witnesses, including children. They'll ask you a series of questions about what happened and may ask you to write a statement. They will also ask you a series of questions designed to assess the risk the offender poses to you and your family. If the risk is high, they will call your local crisis center or domestic violence service provider to connect you to support services. Whether you speak to the service provider is your choice.

If you are injured, police may contact medical services. If you have been strangled or choked, it is particularly important that you see a medical provider as you may have life-threatening, non-visible injuries.

If arrested, the offender will go to jail; if the offender is NOT arrested, you can go to your local commissioner's office and file charges yourself. The police may not arrest if they are not sure exactly what happened or if there is no visible injury. This does not necessarily mean that a crime did not occur.

Whether the police arrest the offender, or you file charges, it's important to safety plan with your local crisis center or domestic violence service provider. Safety planning may include housing, contact with the offender, support, and services. You may also choose to seek a protective order. If the offender is arrested, there will be a Bond hearing. Bond hearings typically occur within 24 hours of arrest, and depending on the severity of the offense, the offender may get a bond within a few hours and be released.

The State's Attorney, the offender's attorney, and the Judge will be present at this hearing. The judge listens to each party and decides whether or not to release the offender, with or without conditions.

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Conditions may include GPS (tracking), a curfew, mental health or substance abuse treatment, limitations on contact with you, your family, and any witnesses, including at your workplace or school, and your children's daycare or school. You can find out the conditions of bond by calling the State's Attorney's Office after the hearing. You should notify the State's Attorney's Office or law enforcement if any violation of conditions occurs. If it is an emergency, call 911 first.

After the arrest, you may be contacted by law enforcement, the State's Attorney's Office and/or a victim services provider. The police may follow up with additional questions, take photographs of you or the location where the crime occurred, and inquire about your welfare. A victim service provider may reach out to you about safety planning or other support, and the State's Attorney's Office will contact you about the court process and what to expect, including the set-up in the courtroom and protections they will put in place to help you feel comfortable when you testify.

Your role as a witness involves one thing: telling the truth about what happened to you. You will be asked questions and you should answer them to the best of your ability; if you don't know the answer, you say can say that; if you don't understand a question, you can say that too.

If your children are witnesses, the State's Attorney's Office will talk to you about the best way to help your children feel comfortable with the Court process, including working with professionals specializing in children and the courts.

While the case is ongoing, the offender, an investigator, or an acquaintance may reach out to you about the case. It is up to you to decide whether to talk to them.

Unfortunately, many offenders try to manipulate you into dropping the case or lying about what happened. They may say that your case will get you or the offender deported or in trouble. They may threaten you or try to scare you. If you are comfortable, you should let the State's Attorney or police know if that happens.

Services are available to support you and your family during this difficult, and sometimes scary, time. Knowing what to expect can help you prepare for what lies ahead. Remember: You are not alone.

Website address: Hruth.org

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