



Domestic Violence Criminal Cases: The Police Are Involved, Now What? (Victim)

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. Knowing what to expect can help you prepare for what lies ahead. You are not alone.

Police Arrive and Arrest (Watch 1:05 – 2:27)

- If the police come to the scene of a crime or respond to a 911 call, they will speak to you and any witnesses including any children.
 - They will ask you questions about what happened and may ask you to write a statement. They will also ask questions so they can understand 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 and connect you to support services. You may choose not to speak to the service provider.
 - If you are injured, the police may contact medical services.
 - If the police officer does not speak the same language as you, they should access a language line. You can request to speak to someone in your native language.
- 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. You can find your local commissioner's office at:
<https://mdcourts.gov/district/directories/commissionermap>
- If you do not want the police involved, you can work with advocates, therapists, and other support staff at domestic violence service providers, local Family Justice Centers, and local health and human services departments.
- Regardless, it is important to make a plan for your safety with your local crisis center or domestic violence service provider. Safety planning may include housing, limits on contact with the offender, support, and other services. You may also choose to seek a protective order.

Bond and Conditions (Watch 02:27 – 03:20)

- A bond is an agreement by a criminal defendant to appear for court. The bond agreement may require that the offender pay a certain amount of money to secure their release and/or agree to certain conditions.

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- For example, the court may require the offender to live at a certain location, to stay away from you, or to wear a device to track their location.
- The Court may also hold the offender without bond, which means that they will remain in jail.
- If the offender is arrested, there will usually be a bond hearing. At the bond hearing, the court determines whether the offender will be released into the community until the trial date. Bond hearings typically occur within 24 hours of arrest.
- 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 to release the offender.
- Depending on the severity of the crime, the danger to public safety, and the offenders' flight risk, the offender may get a bond within a few hours. If the court decides to release the offender, the judge will set terms and conditions of release.
- You can find out the conditions of the bond by calling the state's attorney's office: <https://www.mdsaa.org/maryland-states-attorneys>

Victim Outreach (Watch 03:20 – 03:55)

- 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.
- The state's attorney's office will contact you about the court process and what to expect or you can contact them for more information: <https://www.mdsaa.org/maryland-states-attorneys>

Witness Role (Watch 03:55 – 04:23)

- 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 remember the answer, say "I don't remember." If you don't know the answer, say "I don't know." If you don't understand the question, say "I don't understand."

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- If your children are witnesses, the state's attorney's office will talk to you about the best way to make your children feel comfortable with the court process, including working with professionals specializing in children and the courts:
<https://www.mdsaa.org/maryland-states-attorneys>

Limits on the Offender Contacting You (Watch 04:23 – 04:52)

- While the case is ongoing, the offender, or someone on behalf of the offender, including an investigator or an acquaintance, may reach out to you about the case. It is up to you whether you to decide to talk to them.
- The offender may try to manipulate you into lying or dropping the case. If you are comfortable, you should let the state's attorney or police know if that happens:
<https://www.mdsaa.org/maryland-states-attorneys>

Online Resources

District Court of Maryland Commissioner Stations:

<https://mdcourts.gov/district/directories/commissionermap>

Maryland State's Attorneys' Association:

<https://www.mdsaa.org/maryland-states-attorneys>

House of Ruth Maryland Hotline: 410-889-RUTH (7884) | www.hruth.org
National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 | www.thehotline.org