

Domestic Violence Considerations

- For your safety and that of your client and your staff, safety planning is crucial.
- Carefully review your office security procedures.
- You may wish to obtain a protection order that includes the batterer staying away from you and your office.
- All staff should be particularly careful not to reveal last names of personal contact information.
- Find out the safest way to contact your client and the names of other individuals who will know how to reach him or her.
- Do not leave messages with other family members or on an answering machine or voice-mail unless your client has told you this is safe.
- **Avoid leaving your last name if you do leave a message.**
- Always ask your client first if it is safe to talk. Develop a system of coded messages to signal danger or the batterer's presence or if you should call the police.
- Block identification of your number when calling your client. **Suggest that your client block his or hers.**
- Keep your client's whereabouts confidential, including during discovery.
- If your client fails to respond to your calls, make extensive (but confidential) efforts to confirm that your client is safe.
- Call the police if your client is in danger, and where possible, confirm that a non-responsive client is safe.
- Talk to your client in advance about what to do if he or she disappears—does the client want you to try and locate him or her?



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Domestic Violence Resources

- Local police department
 - Victim witness program
 - Local domestic violence hotline
 - Local domestic violence shelter
 - Local counseling programs
- Check the following online or by phone for local resources on domestic violence:

State coalitions against Domestic Violence can be found at the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence at www.ncadv.org.

For resources for attorneys nationwide on domestic violence including, publications, a listserve, and technical assistance and training for attorneys representing victims of domestic violence, review the American Bar Association website at www.abanet.org/domviol.

For safety planning, look to the Women's Law Initiative, Safety Planning at www.WomensLaw.org.

For information on Technology safety, see this site of the National Network to End Domestic Violence: www.nnedv.org.

**YOU CAN'T HELP IF YOU DON'T KNOW.
YOU WON'T KNOW IF YOU DON'T ASK.**

Domestic Violence Checklist for Lawyers

It is not easy to bring up these issues, but it is critically important. One easy step for lawyers is incorporating the following questions about domestic violence upon intake of every case. If the questions are automatic, it will minimize the stigma and encourage dialogue and disclosure. The following are recommended interview questions:

1. Has your intimate partner ever pushed, slapped, hit or hurt you in some way?
2. Has your intimate partner ever threatened you?
3. Has your intimate partner ever forced you to do something you did not want to do?
4. Is there anything that goes on at home that makes you feel afraid?
5. Does your intimate partner prevent you from eating or sleeping, or endanger your health in other ways?
6. Has your intimate partner ever hurt your pets or destroyed your clothing, objects in your home, or something you especially cared about?
7. Has your intimate partner taken the children without permission, threatened to never let them see you again, or otherwise harmed them?
8. Has your intimate partner ever called you in a repeated and excessive manner? (number of calls, time of calls)
9. Has your intimate partner ever forced you into unwanted sexual activity?
10. Has your intimate partner ever used a weapon to threaten, intimidate or control you?

Think carefully about your manner of speaking and your actions before you begin to ask these questions.