



A Guide for International Students

In the U.S., physical violence against another person is a very serious crime and can result in penalties that could affect your visa status. In Virginia, the laws are clear that any form of physical injury or fear of physical injury between spouses (husbands and wives) or persons living together is **absolutely prohibited**.

What is Domestic or Relationship violence?

Domestic violence laws cover abuse by your:

- Spouse or former spouse
- Parents, step parents, children, stepchildren, brothers, sisters, grandparents and grandchildren.
- Father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, or daughter-in-law (if they live in your home)
- The other parent of your child
- Anyone who lives in your home now or lived in your home last year

Should I call the Police if I am being abused?

Yes. The police can also help you get a protective order, which requires the person abusing you to stay away. You have the right to keep your immigration status private and the police should not report you to Immigration if you are reporting domestic violence.

***If you do call the police and the police officer does not speak your language, try to find someone other than your child or abuser to translate for you.*

Can I get a protective order even if I am not a citizen or legal resident?

Yes. Shelters and services for victims of this crime are found in every community and there are many legal protections in place for spouses and family members who are experiencing abuse.

Will my spouse/partner be deported if I take action?

If you seek shelter or assistance from a lawyer, it is unlikely to result in your abuser's deportation (less than 1% of F-1 visa holders are deported). However, if you press charges and your partner is convicted of a crime, it may result in loss of their student visa.

What if I have children in the home?

The YWCA of South Hampton Roads (757-625-5570) can assist you with:

- Finding shelter for you and your family
- Answering legal questions about issues such as custody and protective orders

Legal Aid Society of Eastern Virginia Eastern Virginia (757-827-5078) can assist you with affordable legal representation