

## SHOULD I GET A RESTRAINING ORDER?

Making the decision to apply for a restraining or protective order can be very difficult. If you have decided to end your relationship, a restraining order can help to reduce or stop the abuse that may happen after a break-up. While a restraining order is not for everyone, it may be the right choice for you.

### What do I need to know?

A restraining order makes it a crime for your abuser to come near or contact you in any way. There are many ways that a restraining order can protect you:

- A court order can encourage the police, school officials and other authorities to help protect you from the abuser.
- You do not have to wait for the abuser to hurt you before calling the police—you can call as soon as the abuser contacts you or comes near you.
- Going to court will establish an official record of the abuse.
- You may be able to get custody and visitation orders that also protect your child or children.
- You maybe able to make the abuser move out of a home that you share.
- Your abuser may face criminal penalties for contacting you.

While the restraining order is a powerful tool, it can't guarantee your safety or change your abuser. Here are some other things a restraining order **cannot** do:

- Guarantee the abuser will be out of your life, especially if you have a child together.
- Guarantee the abuser won't still be able to intimidate, harass or scare you.
- Stop peer or gang retaliation.

### What can I do?

If you have decided to end your relationship, do so as safely as possible. Learn more about your legal rights and consider making a restraining order part of your safety plan. Contact Break the Cycle or a local domestic violence agency to talk about your options.

You have the right to a safe and healthy relationship...  
free from violence and free from fear.