

TEENS AND RESTRAINING ORDERS

Everyone has the right to a safe relationship. Getting a restraining order to protect yourself is *not* just for adults or people who are married. Many states understand that young people are experiencing abuse, and have made sure that their laws allow teens and young adults to be protected.

What Do I Need to Know?

In general, teen victims must follow the same process that adult victims follow to get protection. However, there are some unique issues that teens face when applying for a restraining order.

- Most states allow you to get a restraining order against someone you are married to or live with. But many teens are not married to or living with their abuser. There are states that allow teens to get restraining orders against someone they dated or had a child with. If you don't think you'll qualify for a restraining order in your state, don't give up. There may be other ways to use the law to help you stay safe.
- If you are under 18, you may need an adult to help you get a restraining order. While there are several states that allow teens under 18 years old to apply for protection by themselves (without their parent or guardian's help), many states require teens to have an adult involved in the process. In these states, teens generally need the help of their parent or guardian to apply for a restraining order. If a teen does not want their parent involved, they may be able to have another adult help them with the process. This adult may be a friend or relative, and is sometimes referred to as a guardian ad litem.
- Often the abusive partner is a teen attending the same school as the victim. The court may not automatically make orders to adequately protect the victim at school. Teens should remember to ask the court to address school issues in the restraining order.

What Can I Do?

Depending on the laws in your state, there are very big differences in what protection is available. If you are thinking about getting a restraining order, you need to find out what specific requirements your state has. Contact Break the Cycle for more information and help deciding if a restraining order is right for you.

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