

It's Not Okay, It's against the Law, and there is Protection!

### **What is an Order of Protection?**

An order of protection is a court order, signed by a judge, which prohibits the person who has harmed you or threatened to harm you, from having further contact with you. There is no requirement that the abuse be reported to law enforcement. There is no filing fee for orders of protection.

### **Who is Eligible for an Order of Protection?**

You can petition for an order of protection if the person abusing you, or threatening to abuse you, is a family member, intimate partner or former intimate partner. There is no relationship requirement for victims of sexual assault, incest or stalking.

### **Where Do I File for an Order of Protection?**

An order can be filed in Jefferson County Justice Court. If you and the respondent have any court actions filed in District Court (i.e. divorce and/or custody action), the order must be filed in District Court.

### **How Can I File for an Order of Protection?**

Order forms are available in the Victim Advocate office or in the Justice Court Office. The Friendship Center also has order forms, and can assist you in completing the necessary paperwork. The advocate can also accompany you to court to file your order of protection, and can attend the hearing with you, to make the order permanent.

### **Safety Planning**

An order of protection is only one part of a safety plan. No one thing can guarantee your safety at all times. There are some other things you can do to help you stay safe:

- ◆ Trust your instincts – If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't
- ◆ Obtain an order of protection
- ◆ Report all violations of your order of protection to law enforcement
- ◆ Change locks on doors and assess outdoor lighting around your house
- ◆ Create an escape plan from your home
- ◆ Teach children to call 911
- ◆ Devise a code word for "danger" – Share it with children, family, friends, neighbors and co-workers
- ◆ Alert trustworthy neighbors about your situation
- ◆ Have a safety plan for necessary communication with your abuser
- ◆ Keep your vehicle locked at all times
- ◆ Alert your employer of your situation and provide them with a copy of your order of

- protection
  - ◆ Avoid places where your abuser goes
  - ◆ Keep an emergency bag packed with: clothing, money, emergency phone numbers, credit card, toys for children and prescription medications
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24/7 service is available. Call (406) 225-4075 (Sheriff's Office) and ask for Heather.  
The dispatcher will contact Heather to return your call.