

# Family Shelter Service

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## ADDRESSING YOUR CONCERNS ABOUT PROSECUTION

*By Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence*

### **I want to prosecute but I'm afraid or embarrassed**

*A crime has been committed and these are the State's charges. You are not responsible for the violence committed against you and you are not responsible for the consequences.*

### **I don't want my partner to lose their job because I'm financially dependent on them.**

*Your partner was willing to risk the family's well-being when the abuse occurred. Jail is a short-term risk, but might result in long-term gain, if it deters the violence. Your local domestic violence organization can refer you to social services in the event you need financial assistance.*

### **I don't want to punish my partner.**

*Your partner's behavior was illegal and they are responsible for their actions. Think back to the incident and remember how afraid you were. If the sentence is jail time, it's the judge that is sending the person who hurt you to jail, not you.*

### **I believe my partner has changed and will never abuse me again.**

*Have similar promises been made in the past? Were these promises kept or were they used to win you back only to have the same thing happen again? Has your partner taken steps to deal with their abusive behavior such as contacting a batterer's program? The introduction of the legal system frequently increases abusive tactics. Your partner may be making promises in an effort to avoid facing legal consequences for their actions. It makes sense that you want to believe it won't happen again. No one is abusive 100% of the time and in fact they may be sorry for what they did. Without help though, there most likely will be another time.*

### **I have made up my mind not to testify and I've already told my partner.**

*Remember, these are the State's charges. You may be compelled to testify anyway. Ask the State's Attorney to communicate this to your partner.*

### **Proceeding with prosecution violates my religious beliefs.**

*This is a difficult situation but keep in mind you have a right to live without fear. The State also needs to stop domestic violence in your relationship and any future relationship the abuser might have.*

### **I'm afraid that proceeding with prosecution will be bad for the kids.**

*Your partner's violence is a much greater threat to the lives, safety and emotional well-being of your children. It is important for your children to see the violence handled seriously to perhaps prevent them from becoming abusers. Boys raised in homes where they witness their father's aggression occurring without negative consequences often become abusers in their adult lives.*

### **I'm afraid my partner will assault me if I proceed with prosecution.**

*You know your partner best. If you feel afraid, this might be the time to consider staying with someone else or at a shelter. A threat to retaliate can compel prosecution. You may get beaten or killed if you don't proceed with prosecution.*

### **I'm afraid my partner will get mad and end the relationship.**

*Your partner's use of violence is destroying the relationship. Your partner didn't worry about making you mad when they chose to abuse you.*

### **What goes on in my home is a private matter and no one else's business.**

*Society has treated domestic violence as private matter for centuries. This has only resulted in injury and death to women. Half of all assaults are never reported to the police because victims feel it is a private matter. Yet, research shows that calling the police following an abusive act appears to reduce the risk of future assault within six months by as much as 62%.*