

Supporting documentation

In order to establish good cause, or prove that you are in a potentially dangerous situation, you will need to provide DHS with some supporting documents. You should bring the following with you when you meet with your FVOAP advocate:

- Police reports about the abuse
- Any court documents about the abuse or relationship
- Sworn statements from people who have personal knowledge about your abusive situation (such as friends/family, doctors, counselors)

DHS realizes that there may be times when no supporting documentation can be provided because of the length of time that you and the abuser have been apart or because you may have never told anyone else about the abuse. Even if you do not have any of the supporting documentation listed above, you may still be able to obtain a waiver. Talk to your DHS caseworker or contact the FVOAP advocates as soon as possible.

I'm a victim of domestic violence and I'm about to run out of time on Cash Assistance. What can I do?

RI Works provides that all new applicants applying for cash assistance after October 1, 2008 have a time limit of 24 months in any 60-month period with a maximum lifetime limit of 48 months. Any month in which you've received cash assistance since May 1, 1997, consecutive or not, will be counted towards your lifetime limit.

If you're approaching your time limit, you can request a reassessment to determine whether or not you're eligible for an extension because of domestic violence. You may be able to get an initial extension of up to three months and it must be approved by DHS. Talk with the FVOAP advocate about this possibility, and to find out what kind of documentation will be needed.

The Family Violence Option Advocacy Program (FVOAP)



How do I get in touch with an FVOAP advocate?

Bilingual advocates available at all offices

Providence DHS (A-L last names)
Pawtucket DHS (A-I last names)
Office Number: 289-2022 ext. 108
Cell Phone: 256-3758

Providence DHS (M-Z last names)
Pawtucket DHS (J-R last names)
Office Number: 289-2022 ext. 107
Cell Phone: 256 -3759

Newport, Wakefield, Warwick DHS
Pawtucket DHS (S-Z last names, English)
Office Number: 619-2555 ext. 106
Cell Phone: 595-1760

Woonsocket DHS
Pawtucket DHS (S-Z last names, Spanish)
Office Number: 289-2022 ext. 110
Cell Phone: 536-4681



The Family Violence Option Advocacy Program (FVOAP)



What is the Family Violence Option Advocacy Program?

The Family Violence Option Advocacy Program (FVOAP) assists DHS clients who are victims/survivors of domestic violence. The FVOAP works with the Department of Human Services (DHS), Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV), RI Works (RI's cash assistance program), and the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Through the FVOAP program, clients may be able to obtain a waiver from certain requirements of the RI Works program or Child Care Assistance Program. The FVOAP also assists victims/survivors with safety planning and provides referrals to various programs and services throughout the state.

Who are FVOAP Advocates?

FVOAP advocates work with but are NOT DHS caseworkers. FVOAP advocates work through a domestic violence agency in RI, with DHS, to provide you with referrals if you are a victim/survivor of domestic violence and to help you with the paperwork necessary to apply for a waiver. FVOAP advocates only make a recommendation to DHS about a waiver; they do not make the final decision. Any questions about eligibility, case processing, resources, income, etc. should be directed to your assigned DHS staff.

What kinds of waivers are available to me?

As a victim/survivor of domestic violence applying for Child Care Assistance Program benefits you may be eligible for a Child Support Waiver. If you are applying for cash assistance through the RI Works program, you may be eligible for a Child Support Waiver and a Work Waiver.

Child Support Waiver

In order to receive cash assistance, you will be asked to provide information about your child(ren)'s other parent (the "absent parent"). DHS uses this information to establish paternity and/or seek child support payments from the absent parent. The Child Support Waiver can exempt you from having to cooperate with child support enforcement if it is determined that pursuing the absent parent will be unsafe for you or your children. The waiver must be reassessed at least every six months and you can keep the waiver as long as necessary to keep you and your family safe. Your FVOAP advocate will help you through the initial assessment and the reassessments every six months.

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Another safety option is the Address Block. If you want to pursue the other parent for child support, but want to keep your location confidential you can request an Address Block. This means that any information sent to the absent parent will not have your home address on it. You also have the option of keeping the Office of Child Support Services from sharing address information with courts, child support agencies, or the other parent without a court order. Additionally, you can ask that your court record be sealed. Talk to your FVOAP advocate about these options.

Work Waiver

RI Works mandates that cash assistance recipients participate in job search or training or education program in order to become financially independent. The work waiver gives you additional time before returning to work or entering a training/educational program if you are a victim of domestic violence. This waiver must be reassessed at least every three months and usually lasts no longer than one year. Your FVOAP advocate will help you through the assessment and reassessment process.

What if I chose not to pursue a waiver?

If you decide that you do not want to pursue a waiver, the FVOAP advocates can still provide you with other kinds of assistance such as immediate crisis counseling and safety planning, including home security measures and job safety. They can also connect you with your local domestic violence agency and provide referrals to help you obtain orders for protection, legal services, housing assistance, basic needs assistance, counseling and support group referrals.

Why might a victim of domestic violence need a waiver?

Victims of domestic violence may seek a Child Support Waiver because:

- Their abuser threatens physical harm or threatens to take the children
- It is unsafe for a victim's location to be revealed
- Their abuser threatens to fight custody/visitation orders if child support is sought
- It is dangerous for the victim to face the abuser in court

Victims of domestic violence may seek a Work Waiver because:

- The victim needs time to receive counseling for self and/or children
- It is dangerous to go to work due to stalking or threats from the abuser
- The victim cannot succeed in work or school because the abuser does things to sabotage the victim like destroy work uniforms or bus passes, refuse to provide childcare, or prevent the victim from studying

What do I do to get a Waiver?

Once you disclose physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to DHS, they will refer you to the FVOAP. The FVOAP advocate will determine the appropriate referral service (such as domestic violence counseling, individual therapy for you or your children, or other community services). Additionally, the FVOAP advocate will help you determine which waiver is best for you, and how you can establish good cause (or prove that you need the waiver).

After meeting with you, the FVOAP advocate will provide DHS with a recommendation as to what waivers you may qualify for. DHS makes the final determination of waiver eligibility. If you are denied a waiver and wish to appeal, contact the DHS staff and your FVOAP advocate immediately.

Remember: The sooner you disclose your safety concerns to the FVOAP advocate or DHS, the sooner you can take the steps necessary to get a waiver in place.