**CT Domestic Violence Laws**

Connecticut has many laws that are intended to help keep victims of domestic violence safe and hold offenders accountable for their actions. These laws, referred to as *domestic violence* or *family violence laws*, apply to victims regardless of their age, gender, economic status, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, education, or immigration status.

Some of the laws (also known as “statutes”) created by the CT General Assembly to help keep victims safe are described below with links to the full statutes. Please note that “C.G.S.” stands for CT General Statutes, which are the laws of the State of Connecticut.

**Family Violence and Family Member Defined**

In Connecticut, it is illegal for someone to physically assault, stalk or threaten you even if that person is a member of your family or household, or is someone you have dated. Connecticut defines family or household member to include any of the following persons regardless of their age:

* Spouse or former spouse
* Parents or their children
* Persons related by blood or marriage
* Persons other than those related by blood or marriage but who presently reside together or have resided together (e.g.; roommates)
* Persons who have a child in common regardless of whether they have ever been married or lived together
* Persons who are currently in or who have recently been in a dating relationship

[C.G.S. § 46b-38a – Family violence prevention and response](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_815e.htm#sec_46b-38a) – states that *“Family violence means an incident resulting in physical harm, bodily injury or assault, or an act of threatened violence that constitutes fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury or assault, including, but not limited to, stalking or a pattern of threatening, between family or household members. Verbal abuse or argument shall not constitute family violence unless there is present danger and the likelihood that physical violence will occur.”*

**Penal Code/Criminal Offenses**

There are many criminal offenses that constitute family violence if they occur between individuals that meet the above definition of family or household member. Some of those offenses are listed below.

* **Assault** – There are several degrees of physical assault that cover different levels of physical injury inflicted by another person, which may or may not include the use of a weapon.

[C.G.S. § 53a-59 – Assault in the first degree: Class B felony](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-59)

[C.G.S. § 53a-59c – Assault of a pregnant woman resulting in the termination of pregnancy: Class A felon*y*](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-59c)

[C.G.S. § 53a-60 – Assault in the second degree: Class D felon*y*](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-59c)

[C.G.S. § 53a-61 – Assault in the third degree: Class A misdemeanor](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-61)

* **Threatening** – There are two degrees of threatening that include threats which intentionally cause you to fear physical injury and that may or may not include the use or threatened use of a firearm.

[C.G.S. § 53a-61aa – Threatening in the first degree: Class D felony](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-61aa)

[C.G.S. § 53a-62 – Threatening in the second degree: Class A misdemeanor](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-62)

* **Stalking** – There are several degrees of stalking that cover crimes in which an individual follows you and causes you to fear for your safety or the safety of others.

[C.G.S. § 53a-181c – Stalking in the first degree: Class D felony](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-181c)

[C.G.S. § 53a-181d – Stalking in the second degree: Class A misdemeanor](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-181d)

[C.G.S. § 53a-181e – Stalking in the third degree: Class B misdemeanor](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-181e)

* **Strangulation** – There are several degrees of strangulation that cover those assaults where someone restrains you by the neck or throat and impedes your ability to breathe.

[C.G.S. § 53a-64aa – Strangulation in the first degree: Class C felony](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-64aa)

[C.G.S.  § 53a-64bb – Strangulation in the second degree: Class D felony](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-64bb)

[C.G.S. § 53a-64cc – Strangulation in the third degree: Class A misdemeanor](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-64cc)

* **Sexual Assault** – There are several degrees of sexual assault, only a few of which are listed below. Remember, just because you are married or in a dating relationship, it is illegal for your partner to force you to participate in any sexual activity that you do not want to do.

[C.G.S. §53a-70 – Sexual assault in the first degree: Class B or A felony](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-70)

[C.G.S. §53a-70b – Sexual assault in spousal or cohabitating relationship: Class B felony](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-70b)

[C.G.S. §53a-71 – Sexual assault in the second degree: Class C or B felony](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-71)

[C.G.S. §53a-72a – Sexual assault in the third degree: Class D or C felony](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-72a)

* **Violation of a Court Order** – Once a judge puts a civil restraining or criminal protective order in place to keep you safe, it is illegal for you abuser to violate it. While some types of violations may result in a contempt of court, others are criminal violations and can result in the arrest or re-arrest of the offender.

[C.G.S. § 53a-223 – Criminal violation of a protective order: Class D felony](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-223)

[C.G.S. § 53a-223a – Criminal violation of a standing criminal protective order: Class D felony](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-223a)

[C.G.S. § 53a-223b – Criminal violation of a restraining order: Class D felony](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-223b)

Please note that the above list is not exhaustive of all of the violent crimes that constitute family violence. For a complete list of Connecticut’s penal code, please visit the [CT General Assembly website.](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm)

**Civil Restraining Order**

Victims of family violence in Connecticut have the right to request relief from the abuse they are suffering in the form of a civil restraining order. This court order will help protect you from further abuse and might include provisions such as requiring that your abuser leave the home or prohibiting your abuser from contacting you. Civil restraining orders can be in effect for up to one year with the possibility of requesting an extension.

[C.G.S. § 46b-15 – Relief from physical abuse](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_815a.htm#sec_46b-15) – states that *“Any family or household member, as defined in section 46b-38a, who has been subjected to a continuous threat of present physical pain or physical injury, stalking or a pattern of threatening, including, but not limited to, a pattern of threatening, as described in section 53a-62, by another family or household member may make an application to the Superior Court for relief under this section.”*

**Criminal Protective Order**

Criminal protective orders are made at the time of arraignment during a criminal proceeding. Family Relations or the state's attorney often request protective orders. They provide similar protection to the civil restraining order, but can only be made following an arrest/arraignment. They typically remain in effect until the end of the criminal case. However, Standing Criminal Protective Orders can be issued and remain in effect for a lifetime or until further action by the court.

[**C.G.S. § 46b-38c -Family violence response and intervention units. Protective Orders.**](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_815e.htm#sec_46b-38c)- states that *"A protective order issued under this section may include provisions necessary to protect the victim from threats, harassment, injury or intimidation by the defendant..."*

[**C.G.S. § 53a-40e - Standing criminal protective orders**](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_952.htm#sec_53a-40e)

**Early Lease Termination**

Victims of family violence in Connecticut have the right to terminate their lease early and without penalty if they reasonably believe that it is necessary to vacate the dwelling due to fear of imminent harm to themselves or their children. Victims must give 30 days notice to their landlord and satisfy certain requirements to prove they are a victim of family violence.

[C.G.S. § 47a-11e – Termination of rental agreement because of family violence](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_830.htm#sec_47a-11e)

**Leave from Employment**

In Connecticut, employers with 3 or more employees must allow workers experiencing family violence to take up to 12 days off in a calendar year for certain issues resulting from the violence, such as the victim needing to seek medical care or attend a related court hearing. The leave only has to be paid if the employee is eligible for paid leave and if the leave will not exceed the maximum amount of leave due to the employee during any calendar year.

[**C.G.S.** § 31-51ss - Leave from employment for victims of family violence](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_557.htm#sec_31-51ss)

**Address Confidentiality**

In Connecticut, if you are a victim of family violence or sexual assault you have the right to keep your address confidential by using the Address Confidentiality Program offered through CT’s Office of the Secretary of the State. This program provides you with a substitute mailing address so that the address of where you live can be kept private.

[C.G.S. § 54-240a – Address Confidentiality Program purpose](http://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_968a.htm#sec_54-240a)

You must apply for the program through one of the state’s [18 domestic violence agencies](http://www.ctcadv.org/about-ccadv/our-members-map/) or one of the state’s sexual assault programs. To learn more about the program, visit the [Office of the Secretary of the State](http://www.ct.gov/sots/cwp/view.asp?q=391912).