

Domestic violence

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What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence refers to violence within the family or partnership. It inflicts both physical and emotional injuries. There are different forms of domestic violence. Domestic violence is prohibited in Switzerland.

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence includes physical, psychological, sexual and economic forms of violence. Domestic violence may occur within the family or partnership: between married people or people who are or were in a relationship in the past. It does not matter whether or not they live together. Violence between parents and children or between other relatives such as siblings, uncles and aunts is also domestic violence. There are different forms of domestic violence. Often, different forms of violence occur at the same time. Examples include: hitting, making threats, insulting, bullying, strangling, locking inside the home, pulling by the hair, controlling behaviours, stopping someone from making calls, forcing someone to have sex, forcing someone into marriage, taking away someone's money and neglect. Domestic violence often occurs in a cycle. It evolves into a spiral that continues to escalate. In the beginning, tension builds in a relationship. This is followed by an outbreak of violence, and then by calm, reconciliation and remorse. After that, tensions build up again and violence recurs. Breaking out of a cycle of violence is difficult and almost impossible without support. It's important to get help. Separation violence is a particular form of domestic violence. Separations are dramatic life events. Before, during and after a separation, the risk of experiencing domestic violence increases significantly. Even in relationships that are not characterised by serious relationship conflicts and domestic violence, violence can occur during separations. Conflicts associated with separation can escalate and lead to serious or fatal violence. It's important for those affected to seek support in separation situations.

Who is affected?

A lot of people in Switzerland suffer from violence in their families or partnerships. It's important for victims to get help.

Anyone can be affected by domestic violence, regardless of age group, social situation or other factors.

Experiencing violence can have a negative impact on a person's health and lead to psychological or psychosomatic illnesses.

Domestic violence is a burden on children. It can have severe consequences for their development. Children suffer not only when they experience violence directly, but also when they witness violence between their parents. For this reason, children affected by violence need support.

Violence is never the answer.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-aargau.ch/en/haeusliche-gewalt/domestic-violence

Advice and protection for victims

Various agencies support victims of domestic violence. In most cases, this support is confidential and free of charge. An interpreter may also be provided. It's important to get help.

Important to know

Every person has the right to a life free of violence. For those affected, it can be difficult to get the help they need or talk about their experiences. A trusted person, the police or a professional counsellor can help.

Where do I find help?

In an emergency: alert the **police** (tel. 117).

Women with or without children can get protection in the women's shelter **Frauenhaus Aargau-Solothurn**. The hotline is available day and night (062 823 86 00).

Anyone affected (including men) can seek advice here:

Opferberatung Aargau, 062 835 47 90, www.opferberatung-ag.ch

Opferberatung Aargau advises and informs people who experience violence in their families and with their relatives. This help is free of charge. Victims can plan their next steps together with a specialist. The employees are subject to a duty of confidentiality. This means that they are not allowed to inform anyone about the conversations. Not even the police.

Anlaufstelle gegen Häusliche Gewalt, 062 550 20 20, www.ahg-aargau.ch

The centre contacts people affected by violence after a police operation and offers counselling. Victims without police involvement, family members, neighbours, superiors, etc. can also contact the centre. Counselling is free of charge and confidential.

Tel 143 – Die Dargebotene Hand (Helping Hand), 143 (24h), English hotline 0800 143 000, www.143.ch

Help hotline for anyone affected. Talking about it helps!

ZwüscheHalt, 056 552 08 70 (Zurich), www.zwueschehalt.ch

ZwüscheHalt in Zurich, Bern and Lucerne offers accommodation and counselling for men affected by violence, with or without children. A financial contribution is required.

Children have a right to a life without violence. There are special counselling services for them. You can find them here.

www.kinderschutz.ch/angebote/beratungs-und-meldestellen

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-aargau.ch/en/haeusliche-gewalt/beratung-und-schutz-fur-betroffene

Help for violent people

Anyone who hurts others physically or emotionally must take responsibility and get help. A change of behaviour can be achieved by attending counselling sessions.

Important to know

Are you afraid of losing control and shouting at, hitting or threatening another person? Do you sometimes find it difficult to deal with your anger? Demonstrate courage and get help.

Violence is prohibited in Switzerland and will be punished.

Where can I find help?

Lernprogramm gegen Häusliche Gewalt, 062 550 20 20, www.ahg-aargau.ch

The educational programme against domestic violence (Lernprogramm gegen Häusliche Gewalt) teaches people how to resolve conflicts without violence. The programme takes place in group settings and is aimed at adults (+18). In some cases, it is possible to complete the programme in a one-on-one setting. If required, a translation service can be organized.

Tei 143 – Die Dargebotene Hand, 143 (24h), English hotline 0800 143 000, www.143.ch

Anyone who needs someone to talk to right away can contact the Helping Hand service (Die Dargebotene Hand) by phone, text message, chat or email. There is always someone there. Even at night. They can be contacted without providing a name (anonymously).

Violence is never the answer.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-aargau.ch/en/haeusliche-gewalt/hilfe-fur-gewaltausubende-personen

Children and adolescents

Children and adolescents who experience violence at home need help. They have the right to a life free of violence.

Important to know

When children experience domestic violence at home, this has a negative effect on their development. This happens even if children aren't the direct targets of violence. Some children suffer silently, while others show different symptoms. For example: difficulties at school, bed-wetting, headaches, eating or sleeping disorders, problems in dealing with other children or aggressiveness.

Where can children and adolescents find help?

Children and adolescents who experience violence at home should talk about it with someone outside the family. For example: teachers, school social workers, parents of friends or neighbours.

The following centres advise children, young people and their caregivers:

Fachteam gegen häusliche Gewalt des Schulpsychologischen Dienstes, 062 835 41 19, www.ag.ch/schulpsychologie

Kinderschutzgruppen der beiden Kantonsspitäler, Aarau: 062 838 56 16, Baden 056 486 37 05

ask! – Jugendpsychologischer Dienst (from 16 years), Aarau and Baden, 062 832 64 40 or online, www.beratungsdienste-aargau.ch

Jugend, Ehe- und Familienberatungsstellen, list of centres by district www.jefb.ch

Pro Juventute, 147 (24h), www.147.ch

Pro Juventute can be called day and night. Their specialists do not tell anyone about the conversation. They listen and help victims find solutions. Calls to Pro Juventute are free of charge. Callers do not have to give their names. Pro Juventute can also be contacted by text message, chat or email.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-aargau.ch/en/haeusliche-gewalt/kinder-und-jugendliche

Sexual violence

Sexual violence can happen anywhere: in public, at work, online or within a partnership and the family. Sexual violence is a form of domestic violence. It can be reported to the police. Even if a victim does not want to report it to the police, it is important to get a medical examination after the assault.

What is sexual violence?

Sexual violence refers to acts of a sexual nature that are forced or coerced upon someone. Examples include: sexual harassment or sexual assault, sexual coercion, sexual abuse in childhood, sexual exploitation or rape. Sexual violence may also take place online. For example, when intimate videos or photos of a partner are shared on social media without consent.

Sexual violence occurs in all social classes and age groups and can affect **anyone**. Sexual violence is prohibited and punished in Switzerland.

Important to know

Most sexual offences are not committed by strangers, but by partners, ex-partners, acquaintances and colleagues. Those affected often feel ashamed and suffer from feelings of guilt. It takes courage to seek help. Following rape, however, it is important to have a medical examination. A report can also be made to the police at a later date.

Where can I find help?

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual violence:

Medical examination

Seek medical attention **within 72 hours** where possible.

- You can arrange a medical examination and documentation of your injuries with your **family doctor's practice**.
- Otherwise, please contact the **Aargau Medical Emergency Hotline**, 0900 401 501 (CHF 3.23 per minute, on landlines).

Forensic examination

- Aarau Cantonal Hospital offers free forensic examinations for victims of physical and sexual violence.
- Your information is treated **confidentially**.
- The injuries suffered during the violence are documented and evidence secured.
- Upon request, you may be referred to the Aargau victim counselling service.
- **Contact:** forensic examination centre for victims of violence, 062 838 64 62.

Open hours: Monday to Friday from 8am to 12pm noon and from 1.30pm to 4pm.

www.ksa.ch/gewaltopfer

Securing evidence

- If you cannot visit a family doctor's practice or hospital straight away, keep evidence like clothing safe in a paper bag.
- Chat logs and SMS messages may also serve as evidence. Save this data.

Additional support

- The Aargau victim counselling service offers legal and psychological support.
- It also provides information about the advantages and disadvantages of reporting the crime to the police.
- The costs of treatment are assumed by the victim support service, regardless of whether or not you decide to report the crime to the police.
- **Contact:** Aargau victim counselling service, 062 835 47 90 or chat, www.opferberatung-ag.ch

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-aargau.ch/en/haeusliche-gewalt/sexualisierte-gewalt

Psychological violence

Psychological violence often begins with seemingly small acts. The victims and those around them usually don't recognise it as such for a long while.

What is psychological violence?

Psychological violence may take the form of domestic violence. It includes violent acts such as insults, humiliation, intimidation, making others feel guilty, shouting at others, death threats, stalking, neglect of children or older people, jealous behaviour or psychological torment. The destruction of property or torture of pets are also forms of psychological violence.

Psychological violence also encompasses social and economic behaviours. Exerting power and control plays a significant role here.

- Social violence: For instance, someone may be stopped from meeting family members or friends. Or they may be watched when meeting coworkers.
- Economic violence: For example, someone may be prohibited from working or they may be forced to work. Their finances may be checked, restricted or taken away, or they may be financially exploited.

Important to know

Psychological violence occurs in all parts of society. It is more difficult to recognise than physical violence. However, psychological violence is also banned in Switzerland and offenders are punished.

Psychological violence is often more subtle and less externally visible than physical violence, but it can have just as severe and also fatal consequences. Victims may suffer from a lower self-esteem, sleep and eating disorders, difficulties concentrating, anxiety or depression. It is therefore important to get help at an early stage.

Where can I get help?

In the event of danger or a specific threat, the police can help (117).

Free counselling and support are available from the following centres:

Anlaufstelle gegen Häusliche Gewalt, 062 550 20 20, www.ahg-aargau.ch

Opferberatung Aargau, 062 835 47 90 or Chat, www.opferberatung-ag.ch

Tel 143 – Die Dargebotene Hand (24h), 143, www.143.ch, English hotline 0800 143 000

Frauenhaus Aargau-Solothurn, 062 823 86 00 (24h helpline),
www.frauenhaus-ag-so.ch

ZwüscheHalt, 056 552 08 70 (Zurich), www.zwueschehalt.ch (shelter for men with or without children; a financial contribution is required)

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-aargau.ch/en/haeusliche-gewalt/psychische-gewalt

Staling

Stalking is a form of violence and is very stressful. It is important to talk about it and get advice.

What is stalking?

In a relationship, stalking can occur during or after separation. A stalker may be someone from the victim's immediate environment, such as a friend, acquaintance, neighbour or colleague, but they may also be strangers.

Stalking refers to the excessive watching, contacting, following and harassing of a person. This is done against the will of the victim. Stalking may also take place online. Stalkers may use Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, email or GPS systems.

Who is affected?

Stalking happens in all parts of society and can affect **anyone**. In a relationship, stalking often occurs during separation. Many victims experience a severe impact in their daily life and may suffer from constant stress.

Important to know

Stalking is banned in Switzerland and offenders will be punished.

The following list provides some **recommendations for victims**:

- Set firm boundaries in good time in case of unwanted contact.
- Say to the stalker in clear terms that you do not want any contact.
- Do not respond to any further attempts at contact under any circumstances.
- Note down the date and time of any stalking incidents.
- Keep any gifts and photos safe.
- Take screenshots of messages.
- Inform friends, neighbours or your employer.

Where can I get help?

In the event of danger of a specific threat, the police can help (117).

Free counselling and support are available from the following centres:

Opferberatung Aargau, 062 835 47 90, www.opferberatung-ag.ch

Anlaufstelle gegen Häusliche Gewalt, 062 550 20 20, www.ahg-aargau.ch

Protection and accommodation:

At the women's shelter **Frauenhaus Aargau-Solothurn**, women with or without children can find protection, counselling and accommodation. It can be reached by telephone anytime, day or night (062 823 86 00).

ZwüscheHalt, 056 552 08 70 (Zurich), www.zwueschehalt.ch

ZwüscheHalt in Zurich, Bern and Lucerne offers accommodation and counselling for men affected by violence, with or without children. A financial contribution is required.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-aargau.ch/en/haeusliche-gewalt/stalking

Right of residence

Victims of domestic violence often fear that they may lose their right of residence if they separate from their partner. It is important to get information from a counselling centre. Counselling does not put your right of residence at risk.

Important to know

If you obtained your right of residence in Switzerland through marriage (family reunification) and experience domestic violence, you may also be able to stay in Switzerland after separation, depending on the situation.

Temporarily living somewhere other than at your marital address (e.g. at a women's shelter or a friend's apartment) does not result in the loss of a residence permit.

Since the legal situation in the case of separation is complex and every situation is different, it can be helpful to seek advice.

It is important to keep evidence of violent incidents. We recommend the following:

- Take photos of injuries and screenshots of threats or insults that you receive on WhatsApp, Facebook etc.
- Keep the evidence somewhere safe. For example, with a friend or at work.
- Inform some people in your environment about the violence, such as someone in your circle of friends, from work, the neighbourhood or school.

Where can I get help?

In case of any questions about the right of residence following a separation, you can obtain advice here:

Opferberatung Aargau, 062 835 47 90 or chat, www.opferberatung-ag.ch

An expert will explain the current legal situation and help you with the next steps. The advice is free and confidential. A translation service can also be provided.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-aargau.ch/en/haeusliche-gewalt/aufenthaltsrecht

Forced marriage and female circumcision

Forced marriage and female circumcision are prohibited in Switzerland. Besides specialist centres, victim counselling services can also provide help.

What is forced marriage?

If someone marries due to family pressure and against their will, this is called forced marriage. This is also the case if someone stays in a marriage against their will. Examples of the coercion involved include (death) threats, blackmailing, psychological pressure or physical violence. Women as well as men may be forced into a marriage. Victims of forced marriage are often younger than 18.

Important to know

Forced marriages are prohibited in Switzerland and offenders will be punished. Victims of forced marriage find themselves in a situation of extreme psychological stress. For them, professional help is often vital.

Where can I get help?

The following centres provide free and confidential advice to victims:

Opferberatung Aargau, 062 835 47 90, www.opferberatung-ag.ch

Nationale Fachstelle Zwangsheirat, helpline 0800 800 007, www.zwangsheirat.ch

What is female circumcision?

Female circumcision involves the cutting of female genitalia. There are different forms and practices of female circumcision. Many circumcised girls and women suffer adverse health and psychological effects as a result of circumcision.

Important to know:

Female circumcision is prohibited in Switzerland and offenders will be punished. Parents may also face prosecution if they arrange the circumcision of their child outside of Switzerland.

Where can I get help?

The following centres provide advice to victims:

Fachstelle Sexuelle Gesundheit Aargau, 062 822 55 22, www.seges.ch

The centre in Aarau provides free and confidential advice to victims.

Frauenklinik Kantonsspital Aarau, 062 838 50 63 or tel. 062 838 50 70, www.ksa.ch

Advice, gynaecological examinations and defibulation in pregnancy. If necessary, a translation service can be organised.

Caritas Schweiz, 041 419 23 55, www.caritas.ch

Caritas Schweiz provides free and confidential advice to families affected.

Opferberatung Aargau, 062 835 47 90, www.opferberatung-ag.ch

The Aargau victim counselling service can also provide support.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-aargau.ch/en/haeusliche-gewalt/zwangsheirat-und-madchenbeschneidung