WHAT IS THE DOVE PROJECT?

The Domestic Violence Emergency (DOVE) Project is a program of the New Hampshire Bar Association's Pro Bono Referral Program that provides victims of domestic violence with emergency legal services. DOVE is operated in partnership with domestic violence services agencies throughout New Hampshire and relies on the donated services of specially trained attorneys.

The DOVE Project provides free legal representation to qualifying clients at final Domestic Violence Restraining Order hearings under New Hampshire RSA 173-B, "Protection of Persons from Domestic Violence." A Domestic Violence Protective Order, also called a restraining order, is designed to protect you from further actual or threatened physical violence. It is available at no cost through District, Superior or Family Division Courts.

WHO QUALIFIES FOR ASSISTANCE?

To be represented by a volunteer DOVE attorney, you must contact a local New Hampshire domestic violence services agency. Call 1-866-644-3574 (available 24 hours) to find the agency in your area. When you apply for assistance through DOVE, domestic violence advocates will ask for details about your situation and finances. They need this information to see if you qualify for representation by a DOVE attorney. In some situations, the domestic violence advocates may refer you to New Hampshire Legal Assistance, a non-profit legal services organization serving low-income and elderly citizens of New Hampshire.

Eligibility for services through the DOVE Project is based on two factors:

- your financial situation shows you cannot afford legal counsel; and
- the circumstances of your case fit the guidelines below.

You should ask for DOVE representation when you need protection from abuse and one or more of the following are true:

- your children from the abusive relationship need a custody, visitation or child support order; or
- you have a developmental disability, mental illness or some other issue that interferes with your ability to represent yourself; or
- you are facing criminal charges or a civil suit as a result of the abuse; or
- the defendant has an attorney.

THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES AGENCY LINK

If you are eligible for a referral based upon DOVE guidelines, the domestic violence services agency will contact its panel of volunteer lawyers who have pledged to represent victims of abuse. DOVE Project lawyers are private lawyers from the community who donate their legal services through DOVE. If the advocate is able to find a lawyer, you will be given the volunteer attorney's name and telephone number to contact. You should do this as soon as possible to allow the maximum amount of time to prepare the case.

THE CLIENT'S ROLE

It is important that your DOVE lawyer receives all the information that relates to the abuse as soon as possible. You can help to prepare your case by gathering the following information:

- medical records of injuries resulting from the abuse as well as the name of the treating physician or hospital, if any;
- police reports;
- names, addresses and telephone numbers of witnesses to the abuse;
- photographs of damages or injuries;
- any contact the defendant has had with you (such as printed e-mail messages, letters, cards, answering machine messages, etc.) that refers to the violence or threatens you; and
- estimates for repair costs of property the defendant has damaged in the course of the abuse.

OTHER LEGAL MATTERS

The DOVE Project handles only domestic violence cases brought under RSA 173-B. The DOVE Project does not handle divorces, child support, or parental rights and responsibilities. If you are low-income and need legal advice in these matters, call the Legal Advice & Referral Center (LARC) at 1-800-639-5290. They may refer your case to the Pro Bono Referral Program for placement with a volunteer attorney, if you need representation in court.

SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE

There are 14 domestic violence services agencies in New Hampshire which will assist you if you are a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault. Services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and are available regardless of your race, gender, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, or physical ability. For help and information call 1-866-644-3574 (available 24 hours) or 1-800-RELAY NH.

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A UNITED WAY AGENCY

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The Domestic Violence Emergency Project

DOVE

Sponsored by the New Hampshire Bar Association's Pro Bono Referral System

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