

# Hide your address from a stalker or abuser

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Washington State has an Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) to keep your address from the person who's been abusing, stalking or harassing you. You can enroll in ACP if you live in Washington State and you're a survivor of abuse, sexual assault, trafficking, or stalking, or if you're an election worker or criminal justice system worker who's been a target of felony harassment.

## The **Address Confidentiality Program (ACP)**

(<https://www.sos.wa.gov/statewide-programs/address-confidentiality-program-acp>), run by Washington State, can give you a safe address for getting mail and legal papers. This can help keep you safe from the person who's targeting you.

If you don't live in Washington State, check Victim Connect to see if your state has an Address Confidentiality Program (<https://victimconnect.org/resources/search-resources/>).

## **Am I eligible to take part in the ACP?**

Yes, if you live in Washington State and **all** of these are true:

- You're a survivor of actual or threatened domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, or stalking; **or** you're an election worker or criminal justice system worker who has been a target of felony harassment.
- You move to a place unknown to the perpetrator.

It's highly recommended that your move be to a place out of public records, if possible. But this isn't necessary for you to take part in the ACP.

### **Can I enroll members of my household too?**

Yes. They can be in the ACP with you. This is true even if they're not related to you.

### **How does the ACP work?**

The ACP will give you a **legal substitute** address and a mail-forwarding service. You can use this substitute address on public records. You can also use the substitute address for personal use, just like any new address.

It's recommended that you use the ACP address for all purposes. This will make it less likely that your home address can be found.

Any mail for you will go to the substitute address. The ACP operates the substitute address. The ACP team will then forward your mail to your actual address.

Your ACP address will be a P.O. Box number, followed by a **Personal Mailbox number (PMB)**.

Everyone enrolled in the ACP program gets the same P.O. Box number, but a **unique** PMB. All ACP addresses are “located” in Olympia, Washington (Thurston County).

When you give your ACP address out, you **must always** include your PMB. If you don’t, your mail won’t be deliverable.

**If you enroll in the ACP, you must let the program know in writing** (<https://www.sos.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-04/06282022%20Change%20of%20Information%20Form%20fillable.pdf>) **via mail or fax about any change of address.** You can’t make address changes by phone or email.

### **Where should I use the PO Box and PMB that the program gives me?**

Here are some examples of places where you should use your new PO Box and PMB. This isn’t a complete list:

- Court papers
- Utility companies
- School
- Doctor’s office
- Bank
- DSHS and other social services

### **How do I sign up for the ACP?**

You can’t enroll on your own. An ACP approved Application Assistant must help you apply. Most application assistants work for the local domestic

violence agency.

Use the Address Confidentiality Program's search tool to find an Application Assistant (<https://www.sos.wa.gov/address-confidentiality-program-acp/how-apply>). If your county has no Application Assistants, try a county near you.

### **Will this keep me safe?**

The ACP can help. It doesn't by itself guarantee your safety. If used correctly, it can be a valuable part of an overall safety plan. It's not a safety plan all by itself.

You should talk with an advocate about making a thorough safety plan.

**Community organizations can help!** If you've experienced domestic violence, harassment, stalking, or sexual assault, or the threat of any of these, get help from your local domestic violence shelter or sexual assault center. Shelters provide safety planning, temporary shelter, legal advocacy, counseling, and other services.

Visit Washington State Domestic Violence Information & Referral (<https://www.domesticviolenceinforeferral.org/domestic-violence-programs>) to search for local programs by county, or for culturally/community specific ([https://www.domesticviolenceinforeferral.org/domestic-violence-programs?field\\_county\\_value=All&field\\_program\\_catagory\\_tid=1](https://www.domesticviolenceinforeferral.org/domestic-violence-programs?field_county_value=All&field_program_catagory_tid=1)) or Tribal programs ([https://www.domesticviolenceinforeferral.org/domestic-violence-programs?field\\_county\\_value=All&field\\_program\\_catagory\\_tid=2](https://www.domesticviolenceinforeferral.org/domestic-violence-programs?field_county_value=All&field_program_catagory_tid=2)).

You can call, text, or chat online with advocates 24/7 at any of these:

- National Domestic Violence Hotline  
(<https://www.thehotline.org/>), 1-800-799-7233
- National Sexual Assault Hotline (<https://rainn.org/resources>),  
1-800-656-4673
- StrongHearts Native Helpline  
(<https://strongheartshelpline.org/>) (a peer support service of the National DV Hotline), 1-844-762-8483

### **How long can I be in the ACP?**

You can take part in the ACP for 4 years and you can renew at the end of the 4-year term.

### **What if it hasn't been 4 years, but I don't need this protection anymore?**

You can withdraw from the ACP at any time. Your withdrawal must be in writing, signed, and mailed or faxed to the ACP.

### **Will the ACP forward all mail to me?**

**Almost all.** The ACP forwards all first-class mail. This includes all registered and certified mail, all personal mail, bills, cards, letters, bank checks, etc.

The ACP **cannot** forward packages, magazines, or junk mail.

### **I'm moving. Will the ACP automatically forward my mail to a new address?**

**No.** You must let the ACP know by mail or fax what your new address is (<https://www.sos.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/Change%20of%20Information%20Form.pdf>) with your signature as soon as you can before you move.

**I want to buy a new home. Can the ACP help me do that confidentially?**

When you buy a house or other real estate, you must sign documents that show your name and the address or location of your property. You show up in public records that anyone can see. But if you're in the ACP, you can take steps to keep your name confidential when you buy a home.

**Can I still vote while I'm in the ACP?**

**Yes, but** carefully read the information you get about voter registration information and ACP-specific voting forms when you sign up for the ACP.

To register to vote, use the Protected Voters registration form at your local county elections office, or you can get a similar form from the ACP. You **shouldn't register to vote online or at any government office** (such as the Department of Licensing, the Department of Social and Health Services, or the Health Benefits Exchange Office).

To change your voter registration record while you're in the ACP, call the ACP at 360-753-2972 for the correct form. **Don't use VoteWA.**

**Do state and local government agencies have to accept my substitute address?**

**Yes.** If you show them the authorization card ACP sends you after you enroll, agencies must accept the ACP substitute address as an actual address. They can't make you give them your actual addresses.

**Some private companies and federal agencies** like Social Security may not accept your ACP address. If that happens, you could use a friend's address or the domestic violence shelter's address. Make sure you get permission first to use that address.

### **Can I still get subpoenas and other legal mail?**

**Yes.** The ACP accepts legal mail.

When the ACP receives service on your behalf, it's treated as if you received service. But your ACP address **can't** be used to accomplish service by hand delivery (called personal service), so someone trying to start a court case against you would have to ask for permission to have you served by mail or some other way.

Be aware that **being enrolled in ACP can shorten how much time you may have to respond to legal matters.** It takes longer for you to get mail because anything the court or an opposing party mails to you first goes to your ACP address and then is forwarded to your actual address.

**If you're involved in any kind of court case, check your mail regularly.**

You may want to agree to accept legal papers by **email**.

### **Can the ACP ever release my actual address?**

Yes, but only if there's a signed court order requiring it **or** a written request by a law enforcement agency's chief officer.

If your abuser is in law enforcement, make sure your ACP application says so. Then your actual address can only be released to a non-law enforcement agency, such as, for example, Adult Protective Services or Child Protective Services, with a signed court order.

### **Can I refuse to accept mail I get through the ACP?**

**No.** You must accept all mail forwarded to you by the ACP. If you refuse your mail, the State may end your participation in the program.

### **Are there alternatives to the ACP that may keep me safe?**

Yes, and you should Speak with a domestic violence advocate about your options before enrolling in the ACP.

#### **1. Get your own P.O. Box**

You can get a P.O. Box of your own in a location that won't easily give away your physical address. But remember that P.O. Boxes cost money.

If you want the P.O. Box to be convenient, your abuser may be able to figure out where you live. In smaller towns, this could be a problem.

#### **2. Use a friend or family member's address**

Be aware that this solution may put your friend or family member at risk if you think your abuser will target them.

Also, your friend or family member could move and not tell you.

### **Where can I learn more?**

Visit the Address Confidentiality Program's website

(<https://www.sos.wa.gov/address-confidentiality-program-acp>). Interpreters provided.

**WashingtonLawHelp.org** gives general information. It is not legal advice.  
Find organizations that provide free legal help on our [Get legal help](#) page.