

FACT SHEET ABOUT MINORS AND MARRIAGE IN KENTUCKY

Provided by the Office of Victims Advocacy, Kentucky Office of the Attorney General

What is the minimum age of marriage in Kentucky?

Kentucky law has changed so that the minimum age of marriage is 18, with very limited exceptions to marry at age 17.

What happens after my petition to marry is granted ? Will I be emancipated?

After the judge grants a petition to marry, the minor is “emancipated” by the petition, meaning that the minor ***shall be considered to have all the rights and responsibilities of an adult.*** The minor will be able to act as an adult ***except*** for specific constitutional or statutory age requirements, including but not limited to voting, the use of alcoholic beverages, and other health and safety regulations relevant to him or her because of his or her age.

What happens if there is violence, abuse or exploitation in my marriage?

You have a right to be free from violence in your relationship. If your partner or spouse has:

- Threatened or intimidated you
- Hurt you physically
- Made you afraid of doing something for fear of physical abuse
- Threatened you with a weapon
- Threatened to kill you or threatened to commit suicide
- Shown extreme jealousy
- Hurt you sexually or forced you to engage in sexual acts
- Attempted to strangle or strangled you
- Hurt your children
- Hurt your pets
- Stalked and/or monitored your movements
- Threatened to share intimate photo/videos without your consent

Help is available. You are not alone. Confidential assistance is available, free of charge, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week across Kentucky.

There are fifteen regional domestic violence programs in Kentucky. In addition to providing safe, secure shelter for victim/survivors and their children, these programs offer a variety of support services to both residents and nonresidents. Domestic violence program staff support survivors by:

- Accompanying survivors to court, helping them understand their legal options and connecting them to legal resources.
- Offering individual counseling, support groups and supportive children's services.
- Providing case management, safety planning, self-sufficiency planning/services and referrals to other community resources.

A list of these programs, contact information, services available and the counties served by each can be found at <https://kcadv.org/get-help-now/member-programs> or call **National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-7233**, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

There are also thirteen rape crisis centers providing services free of charge across Kentucky. A list of these programs, contact information, and services available is available at the Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs at www.kasap.org or by calling the **National Rape Crisis Hotline at (800) 656-4673**, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What other options are available for victims of domestic violence and abuse?

Both criminal and civil legal options may be available depending on the facts and circumstances of the individual case.

Criminal

Criminal charges may automatically be initiated if law enforcement is called to the scene. If law enforcement is not called to the scene or charges are not initiated at that time, the victim may also be able to file a criminal complaint against the person for abusive or threatening behavior. The circuit clerk can explain and where to file the criminal complaint. Contact information for the local circuit court clerk can be found at courts.ky.gov. In addition, the county attorney can advise victims as to their legal rights and how to initiate a criminal action. A list of county attorneys and their contact information can be found at <https://ag.ky.gov/safeguarding-kentuckians/find-your-commonwealths-and-county-attorneys>. Victims may also contact the Office of Victims Advocacy at (502) 696-5312 or (800) 372-2551 for assistance in determining how to contact their county attorney or circuit court clerk.

Civil

A petition for a domestic violence order (DVO) or interpersonal violence order (IPO) may also be an option. These orders, filed on forms provided by the local circuit court clerk, can provide more immediate protection than filing criminal charges and protection while the more lengthy criminal process is ongoing. Often, it is possible to both obtain a DVO or IPO and file criminal charges. However, one is not dependent on pursuing the other. An advocate at the local domestic violence and/or rape crisis center may be able to help you file for a protective order.

Information on how to obtain a protective (EPO/DVO or TIPO/IPO) can be found in the brochure from the Kentucky Administrative Office of the Courts at:

<https://courts.ky.gov/resources/publicationsresources/Publications/P123ProtectiveOrderBooklet.pdf>.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Legal Services, Self Help, Resources: <http://kyjustice.org/>

Office of Victims Advocacy, Crime Victim Information Line: 1-800-372-2551,

<https://ag.ky.gov/about/branches/OVA>