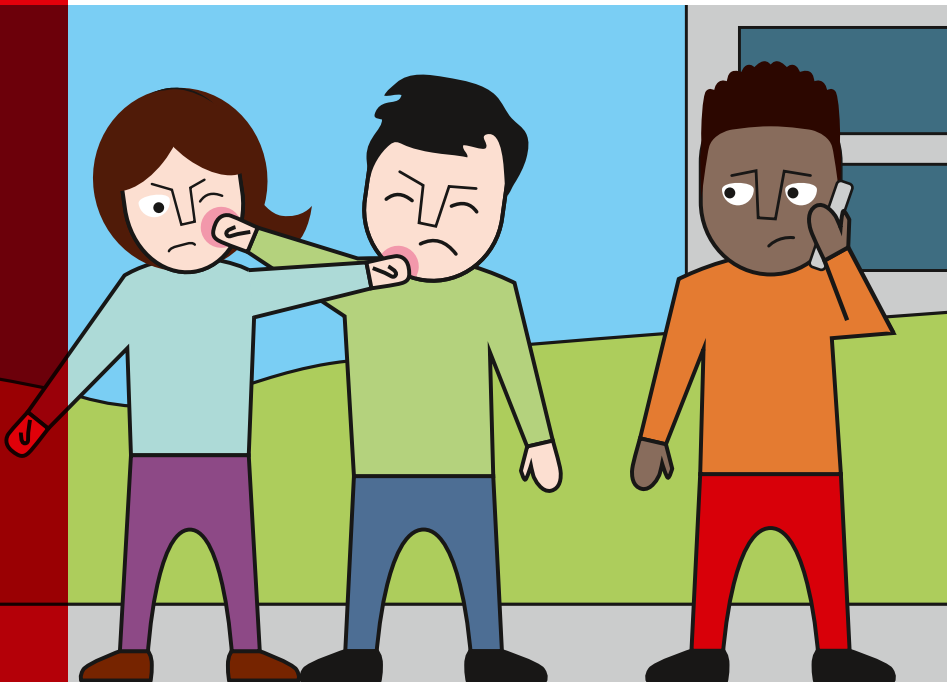




What now?

Help and advice for victims of violence



What now? – Help for victims of violence

The Bern Cantonal Police work round the clock to ensure your safety and security. It is our task to protect people from crime and to make sure that everyone obeys the law.

In general, Switzerland is a safe country. But even here crimes are committed – not only in public places like parks and bars, on trains or buses or at railway stations, but also in the privacy of the home and on the internet. The police are there for you: contact us if you are the victim of an offence or if you witness an offence being committed. If you are in danger, call us immediately on the police emergency numbers 112 or 117.

Advice from the Bern Cantonal Police for your own protection:

Violent crime

Avoid awkward situations and follow your gut instinct. In the evenings and after dark, you are advised to stay in the vicinity of other people.

- > Don't respond to provocation and don't provoke others.
- > Express confidence through your body language, gestures, facial expressions and voice.
- > If you must speak to strangers, address them formally (using the "Sie" form if you speak German) and keep your distance.
- > If you feel threatened, ask others to help you or draw attention to yourself.
- > In an emergency, call the police (dial 112 or 117) – we will always take your call seriously.



Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment, whether verbal, in gestures or through physical acts, is a criminal offence in Switzerland. Sexual harassment can take place in private (for example in social clubs or residential centres) or in the workplace. But it can also occur in public places, such as on trains and buses, in parks, or in cafés and night clubs.

- > Make it clear verbally or with your body language/gestures and, if necessary, active resistance that you don't want this form of attention.
- > Ask bystanders for help or draw attention to yourself, for example by shouting for help or shouting "stop".
- > Inform a responsible person, such as a teacher, club or centre manager, bus driver or security officer.
- > Don't keep it quiet! Speak to a person you can trust, an advice centre and/or the police.

Domestic violence

Our society does not tolerate violence of any kind – not even at home within your own family! Repeated humiliation, taking away money, insults, minor physical attacks as well as serious physical violence, sexual abuse and coercion are prohibited and are criminal offences. In such cases, anyone, including children, neighbours or friends, can contact the police. The police must then investigate.



- > Don't keep it quiet! Speak to an advice centre and/or to the police.
- > Keep a note of important telephone numbers (police 112 or 117, a person you can trust, etc.) on you at all times.
- > Find out in advance where you can get help in an emergency, for example from a neighbour.
- > Keep important documents with a person you can trust.

For persons not directly involved:

- > In emergencies: your own safety comes before intervention – contact the police immediately and don't place yourself in danger!
- > If you suspect domestic violence:
 - Speak to the person concerned about your suspicions.
 - Tell the person concerned that you are there to help them.
 - Tell the person concerned about the advice centres and that they cost nothing.
 - Offer to accompany the person concerned to an advice centre or to the police.
- > Persons not directly involved can also go to advice centres to discuss the situation.

If the police are called, they have various options, including removing the person who is acting violently and prohibiting them from returning to the home for several days. If women and children are in serious danger, they can be accommodated in a women's refuge at a secret location.

Persons who have come to Switzerland to be with their family, but who are then forced to leave the family home due to a violent partner, may be issued with their own residence permit. However, they must provide proof of the violence, along with any doctor's certificates, police reports or reports from victim support centres.

Forced marriage

In Switzerland, you are free to decide who you wish to marry. The law says you must not be forced or pressurised into marriage. A marriage in such circumstances is invalid. You are also free to choose to remain in a marriage or to separate.

- > If you or a friend of yours is affected, tell someone you can trust or contact an advice centre.

Stalking

Stalking is where someone keeps contacting a person against their clearly expressed will, continually harasses or follows them, or gives them gifts. Such behaviour is a huge source of stress for the person concerned. Stalking also includes acts such as malicious phone calls, threatening text messages, constant emailing, loitering around the victim's place of work, unsolicited visits to the victim's home and general spying on the victim. Some stalking behaviour is punishable by law, and the stalker can be banned under civil law from contacting the victim.

- > Make it clear once and for all that you want the person to stop contacting you.
- > After that, stop responding to phone calls, emails, etc. and refuse to accept any more gifts. Even if you find it hard, be consistent and systematic.
- > Tell the people around you: family, friends, colleagues at work and neighbours. They can help you.
- > Keep a record of everything the stalker does, noting the date, time, place and any witnesses.
- > Seek advice! Advice centres and the police are there to help you.

Victims of crime

- > If you are threatened or if there has been an incident, call the emergency numbers 112 or 117.
- > Do not alter the scene of the crime
 - Do not destroy evidence
 - Do not clean up
 - Do not wash the clothes you were wearing at the time
- > Have any injuries documented as quickly as possible (no more than 72 hours afterwards) by your family doctor or the hospital.

Contact an advice centre or the police

- > Don't hesitate to seek help!
- > Advice centres will help you free of charge.
- > You can contact an advice centre without having to inform the police.
- > Advice centres are not allowed to inform the police without your consent.
- > Persons whose residence status is unclear also have a right to advice.

If you want to inform the police about a crime (by making a criminal complaint or reporting an offence), you can do so by telephone or by going in person to any police station in Switzerland. We will ask you about the incident and write down what you say. If the case involves sexual violence, if possible we will arrange for you to speak to a person of the same gender as you. If there are any language difficulties, we will arrange for an interpreter to be present.

Prosecution

If you report an incident to the police, we will begin an investigation. We will look for and secure any physical evidence, and interview you and potential witnesses/suspects. In the case of serious incidents, we will also do this if someone other than the victim reports the crime. If someone is found guilty of the crime, the federal prosecutor or the court decides on the penalty.



Here is where you can get help and advice

Emergencies (toll-free telephone numbers, 24 hours a day)

Police	112 or 117
Ambulance / medical services	144
Police contact number for women (answering machine; a woman police officer will call back)	031 332 77 77
Die Dargebotene Hand – anonymous help and counselling for adults	143
Pro Juventute – anonymous help and counselling for children and adolescents	147

Victim support

Opferhilfe Bern – victim support advice centre, Bern	031 370 30 70
Opferhilfe Biel – victim support advice centre, Biel	032 322 56 33
Lantana – victim support for sexual offences against women and girls, Bern	031 313 14 00
Vista – victim support for sexual and domestic violence, Thun	033 225 05 60
Fachstelle Häusliche Gewalt Stadt Bern – domestic violence centre, City of Bern	031 321 63 02
Frauenhaus Bern – women’s refuge, Bern	031 332 55 33
Frauenhaus Region Biel – women’s refuge, Biel region	032 322 03 44
Frauenhaus Thun-Berner Oberland – women’s refuge, Thun & Bernese Oberland	033 221 47 47
Fachstelle Stalking-Beratung Bern – stalking advice centre, Bern	033 221 47 47
Zwangsheirat.ch – forcedmarriage.ch	021 540 00 00

General advice

frabina – advice centre for men and women in binational relationships	031 381 27 01
ISA – information and advice centre for issues relating to foreign nationals	031 310 12 72

Information films on living in harmony may be found
in this and other languages on our website: www.police.be.ch



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