

Public Benefits Programs & Domestic & Sexual Violence Victims' Economic Security

Fairly typical DV family

Sophia (21) and her 2 children (Abraham, 5 and Ava, 2) have been living with Mo (30) for 3 years. Mo and Sophia are parents of Ava. Al, 36, is the father of Abraham.

Sophia dropped out of high school after her sophomore year and has worked at McDonalds off and on since she was 16. Before that, she took care of neighbor children and cleaned houses for 6 years.

Al was violent toward Sophia and Abraham. He has said that if she pursues child support, he will kill her family who live in several other states. Because he has hit, slapped, sexually assaulted Sophia and done things like physically assaulted her mother with a knife and shot holes in her brother's car, she believes that the family would be in danger if she pursued child support. Because they were afraid of retaliation, no one filed police reports. After Al and Sophia broke up, Al moved to another state where he works as an assistant cook at a small restaurant and earns about \$15,000/yr.

Mo has a high school diploma and was working as a bus driver for the past 2 years (\$24,000/yr), but was fired for showing up at work high on pain killers that he started taking 3 months ago when he hurt his shoulder playing with the children. Now, he is addicted. He began seeking treatment at a local rehab program the day after he was fired. Mo has also been abusive to Sophia since they moved in together, e.g., name calling, slapping, sexual assault, punching her in the face, kicking her in the stomach when he thought she was pregnant. No police reports have been filed. Mo says that Sophia can't leave him because he will get his job back and can support the family, while she has no skills and needs him to help take care of the children. If she leaves him he will tell Al where she and Abraham are, she will be homeless, and child welfare will take the children. Sophia believes Mo.

Sophia drinks several beers a day as self-medication to handle the abuse. As a result of the abuse, she has lost some hearing in her left ear and is suffering from several gynecological problems.

Let's discuss the Colorado and Texas systems that Sophia will encounter as she seeks help to achieve economic security.