



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What is the *Maryland Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program*?

Maryland Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) is a program that allows a victim of domestic violence to use a substitute address in place of an actual address when interacting with State or local agencies.

2. Who may apply to participate in the Program?

Any of the following people may apply to the Program:

- A victim of domestic violence;
- A parent or guardian of a minor child who is living with the parent or guardian, if they fear for the safety of the minor child; or
- The guardian of a disabled person, if the guardian fears for the safety of that person.

Plus,

- The applicant must have recently moved or has plans to move to a location within 30 days from the date of the application to an address unknown to their abuser, and
- The applicant must be a past, present, or future resident of Maryland.

3. Who is a victim of domestic violence for purposes of this Program?

A victim of domestic violence is an individual who has received deliberate, severe, and demonstrable physical injury, or is in fear of imminent deliberate, severe, and demonstrable physical injury, from a current or former individual with whom the victim has lived.

4. How does a victim apply to the ACP?

- To participate in the program, the individual must complete the application form provided by the ACP and provide evidence of domestic violence.
- The ACP strongly encourages individuals to apply through a domestic violence assistance group to learn about additional support, assistance, and safety options because this program is *only part* of a victim's overall safety plan.
- To find a group to assist with the application process, call the Maryland Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program at 1-800-633-9657 ext. 3875 or [click here](#) for a list of agencies by county.
- If an individual wishes to apply directly to the ACP, they may also call 1-800-633-9657 ext. 3875.

5. How does a potential participant show evidence of domestic violence?

One of the following must be provided:

- Certified law enforcement, court, or other federal or State agency records or files (such as a police report or protective order);
- Documentation from a domestic violence program; or
- Documentation from a religious, medical or other professional from whom the applicant or victim has asked for assistance or treatment.

6. How long does it take for an application to be approved?

Within 5 working days of receipt of a completed and signed application, the Secretary of State will approve or deny the applicant as a participant and issue the participant an authorization card.

7. After an application is approved, what happens?

- The applicant will receive an authorization card and a substitute address from the Address Confidentiality Program.
- The person may then use the substitute address to receive first-class mail and legal papers. The Address Confidentiality Program will forward all first-class mail and legal papers promptly. Other mail, such as magazines, books, boxes of checks, and advertisements will not be forwarded. Because their mail will now come first to the substitute address and then to their designated, confidential mailing address, participants may experience a delay in receiving their mail. However, the ACP will do its best to forward the mail promptly.
- The participant can use the substitute address as their return mailing address.
- The person may also use the substitute address for most State and local agency records. However, there are exceptions which are explained under Question 7.

8. What are the exceptions for State and local agencies?

- Voter Registration. This is necessary so the person will receive the correct election ballot. However, after completing the State Board of Elections' Confidentiality Request Form to suppress actual address information, a local election board is not allowed to disclose a participant's actual address unless ordered to do so by a court for law enforcement purposes. Safe at Home participants are encouraged to vote by absentee ballot or during Early Voting. Do not to use the Motor Voter System.
- *If ordered by a court*, the Office of the Secretary of State must disclose a participant's actual address and telephone number on the request of a law enforcement agency for law enforcement purposes only.
- Motor Vehicle license applications will be handled through the Executive Customer Ombudsman at the Motor Vehicle Administration in Glen Burnie. Details on this process can be provided by calling the *Maryland Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program* office at 1-800-633-9657 ext. 3875.

9. Will the Secretary of State's Office ever disclose a participant's substitute address?

If the participant is subject to a court or administrative order, is involved in a court action or administrative action, or is a witness or a party in a civil or criminal proceeding, the Office of the Secretary of State will only disclose the substitute address.

10. May a person use the substitute address for mail and other correspondence that is *not* from a State or local governmental agency?

Yes, if the entity (an insurance company, credit card companies, etc.) agrees, but only first-class mail, registered mail, certified mail, and legal papers will be forwarded by the Secretary of State to the individual's actual address or another mailing address. Magazines, packages and advertisements will be returned to the sender or discarded.

11. May a participant have mail sent to any address?

Yes, a participant may choose a residential street address, a school address, a work address, a post office box, or another mailing address. The Secretary of State will forward the participant's mail to an address that they chose.

12. If a victim is approved for participation in the program, does the Secretary of State guarantee that an unauthorized person will never be able to obtain the participant's actual address from the Secretary of State or a State or local agency?

Unfortunately, the Secretary of State's office cannot guarantee that an unauthorized person will be unable to obtain a participant's address. The purpose of the program is to reduce the likelihood that a participant's actual address will be obtained by an unauthorized person. Participants must continue to use great care in all business and personal matters to keep their location secret. For safety tips to help prevent domestic violence, the following websites may be helpful:

www.dhr.maryland.gov/victim/

www.mnadv.org

13. If approved for participation, how long is a participant enrolled in the program?

Four years, unless the person voluntarily withdraws from the program or the Secretary of State cancels the person's participation.

14. When would the Secretary of State cancel a person's participation?

The Secretary of State may cancel a person's participation if:

- The participant doesn't properly notify the Secretary of State of a change in their telephone number, address, or legal name;
- The person knowingly submits false information on the application to participate; or
- Mail forwarded to the person by the Secretary of State is repeatedly returned as undeliverable.

15. If a participant has a legal name change, what should the individual do?

The participant must notify the Secretary of State within 30 days and provide the Secretary of State with sufficient documentation of the name change, such as a certified copy of a court order. The participant's identification card must be returned so that a new card with the new name can be prepared and sent.

16. If the participant changes their residential (or, if different, mailing) address or their phone number from those listed on the participant's application, what should the participant do?

The participant must notify the Secretary of State, if possible, at least 7 days before the change. A copy of the participant's ACP card or other identifying information must accompany the notification.

17. Need more information?

Call the *Maryland Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program* office at 1-800-633-9657 ext. 3875