

DOMESTIC ABUSE SELF-HELP PROJECT

VERY IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR RESPONDENTS

- **Talk to an attorney to get the legal advice you need.** Domestic violence is a crime. There may be a criminal case against you at this time or in the future. Anything you say to the court—in your answer or at the hearing—can be used against you in a criminal case. **The Domestic Abuse Self-Help Project cannot give you legal advice to tell you whether or not you should go to the hearing or make a written response.**

- **You have the right under the 5th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution not to give any information which could be used you in a criminal case.** If you don't use this right, you may not be able to use it later.

- **In response to the restraining order, you can do these things:**
 - Do nothing. The judge may make orders against you.
 - Go to the hearing and tell the Judge you want to use your 5th amendment right.
 - Go to the hearing and talk to the Judge.
 - Answer in writing and go to the hearing. You cannot make a written answer by itself.

- Whether you respond or not, **you must follow the restraining order.** Violation of a restraining order is a crime! If you do not follow the restraining order—you may be arrested, be ordered to pay a fine or go to jail.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO MAKE A WRITTEN ANSWER

We can give you step-by-step information on how to prepare an answer.

A written answer can have one or two parts:

- **Answer Form:** This form has check boxes to show the court whether you agree or disagree with the orders and whether you want any different orders.

- **Written Statement:** If you want the judge to see a written statement of your side, you may write out what you would like the judge to know.