

## **SAFE AT HOME**

*Information from the Secretary of State's Website. For more information, please  
<http://www.sec.state.vt.us/otherprg/safeathome/safeathome.html> visit:*

### **Substitute Address Service**

Each Safe at Home participant is granted the use of a Montpelier Post Office Box address. The substitute address has no relation to the participant's actual address. All participants use the same Post Office Box as designated by the program. First-class mail and service of process is sent to the Post Office Box and then forwarded, at no cost, to the participant's actual location.

### **Protected Records Service**

Safe at Home allows participants to use the substitute address when creating records with state or local government agencies. Program participants can vote (as a Blind Ballot Absentee Voter), obtain a driver's license, get married and register births without fear that those records will put them at risk of being located by their perpetrator.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

- An applicant must be a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking;
- Who has relocated or is about to relocate to an address unknown to the perpetrator;
- And has not created any government records with their new address;
- And is a resident of Vermont or is about to become a resident of Vermont;
- And is at least 18 years old, an emancipated minor, or a parent or guardian acting on behalf of a minor or incapacitated person with the legal authority to do so;
- And is willing to designate the Secretary of State as their agent to receive legal documents and first-class mail;
- And can manage with a 2 to 5 day mail delay (since mail first comes to Safe at Home and is then forwarded).

### **How To Apply**

Interested applicants may apply for program participation at a local Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault or Stalking program office or through a statewide Victim Advocate Office. Please call Safe at Home or access our website for a listing of the statewide advocates who can assist an interested person. Victim advocates will work with victims to: integrate the Safe at Home program into their overall safety plan; assist potential program participants in the application process; forward the application to the Safe at Home office.

### **Responsibilities Of The Safe At Home Participant**

The Safe at Home staff will review the properly completed application and certify an applicant as a program participant for four years and issue a Safe at Home authorization card. The authorization card contains an authorization number unique to each program participant. When using the substitute address, the authorization number must be included in the address. Because mail from all participants comes to the same Post Office Box, the authorization code is an important identifying item and helps to expedite the mail forwarding process.

Once accepted into the program, participants should use the substitute address when creating records and accessing services with state and local government agencies. The Safe at Home authorization card should be presented to an agency when requesting use of the substitute address.

Participants are required to notify the Safe at Home office of any changes in name, address or phone number in order to remain in the program.

### **Responsibilities Of Government Agencies**

State and local government agencies must accept the Safe at Home substitute address for any public record, unless the agency has received prior approval from the Secretary of State for a waiver or statutory exception. Agency employees may request verification of program participation by asking for the participant's authorization card. A photocopy of the authorization card may be placed in the participant's agency file and shall serve as the participant's address and confirmation of Safe at Home program participation. The authorization card is not a legal form of identification.

NOTE: The program cannot protect the identity or address of a participant in a real estate transaction because land records are open to the public. It is recommended that participants look into alternate methods of purchasing property such as setting up a trust.