There Is Hope
After years of enduring mental, emotional and severe physical abuse by her partner, Michelle finally decided to leave and, with the help of police officers, entered into Women’s Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh’s (WC&S) Emergency Shelter with her three young children.

“It took me six years to leave because of the stigma of moving into a shelter.”

In Michelle’s mind, she envisioned having to sleep on a cot in a big room full of people and no privacy. But, what she found was quite the opposite.

She and her children were given a room with beds and necessities such as clothing, toiletries, food, towels and blankets.

“Once I came here, it was the best decision I ever made.”

It wasn’t until that first night that Michelle realized just how bad the abuse really was and how much it had affected her mentally.

“We were sleeping in the room closest to the kitchen. Somebody closed the kitchen door which made a loud noise and I jumped as if he was coming into my room. That opened my eyes.”
During their stay, Michelle’s three children spent time in WC&S’ Children’s Program which Michelle says helped her children to adjust and allowed them to express themselves through activities such as art.

“It’s a great program. Children’s Advocates show a lot of patience and love towards the children. They have genuine compassion.”

Michelle filed a Protection from Abuse (PFA) order and attended several court hearings with her WC&S Legal Advocate by her side.

“It was nice to have someone with me the entire time.”

Also while residing in shelter, Michelle worked with WC&S’ Mental Health Coordinator for emotional support and a number of additional WC&S Advocates on matters such as ongoing safety planning and housing.

“My sense of security came back. I got me back.”

For women experiencing similar abuse, Michelle’s advice is simple.

“Just come with the clothes on your back and bring your kids. They’ll make it work. It will be okay. You don’t need anything. I would advise anyone else going through a similar situation to do what I did.”

In the past year...

- WC&S provided 3,539 adult victims of IPV with 6,751 hours of Legal Advocacy
- WC&S housed 276 adults and 228 children for a total of 14,710 nights in Emergency Shelter
- WC&S provided 321 resident and non-resident children with 14,492 hours of direct service and structured activities through the Children’s Program
- WC&S provided 323 adult victims of domestic violence with 3,063 hours of non-resident counseling and emotional support
“It was a long journey to get to Women’s Center but an experience that changed my life. The bottom line is that hitting is not love and I didn’t deserve that.”