

Getting Help for Abuse - Protection from Abuse Orders

A **Protection from Abuse Order (PFA)** is a court order that protects you and your children from an abuser. It is a civil order that you file on your own behalf against an intimate partner, family or household member who is hurting you. Getting a **PFA** is just one part of a larger safety plan. An advocate at a local domestic violence program can help you decide what should be in your plan.

Some examples of relationships that qualify as family and household members for the purposes of a **PFA** are:

- Spouses and ex-spouses
- Persons who have lived as spouses
- Parents and children
- Persons related by blood or marriage, including siblings
- Current or former sexual or intimate partners, which may include dating relationships
- Same gender couples

The **PFA Order** process usually starts by filing a paper called a "petition" at the courthouse. The petition is how you tell the court why you feel you need protection. The petition describes the abuse you have suffered. It also describes the protection you want from the court. The courthouse has people who can help you fill out the petition.

A judge will consider your requests. The judge may grant or deny all or some of them.

You can ask the judge to order:

- the abuser to stop threatening or abusing, you and your children
- the abuser to stop harassing or stalking you and your children

- eviction of the abuser from your home or residence
- your new address be kept confidential
- temporary custody of your children
- temporary child or spousal support
- reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses that were caused by acts of the abuser
- the abuser not to have contact with you, your children, or family members
- that the abuser not contact you at work or school
- the abuser to turn over weapons
- other things like requesting the return of your pet, car keys, or important papers

Every county has a different process for a victim to get a **PFA**. Please call your local domestic violence program for information about your county. They can talk to you about your rights and your county process. They can help you plan for your safety.

You can find your local domestic violence program phone number in the telephone book. Look in the blue pages under abuse. You can also go to <http://www.pcadv.org/Find-Help/Domestic-Violence-Services-By-County.asp>.

If you are worried about your safety and you need to talk, call us.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-7233 (SAFE)

1-800-787-3224 (TTY for the Deaf)

www.ndvh.org

National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline

1-866-331-9474

1-866-331-8453 (TTY for the Deaf)

www.loveisrespect.org