

Getting Protection From Abuse Orders in Philadelphia During the Pandemic

Your safety is a top priority. If you have an emergency, please call 9-1-1.

Because of the pandemic and emergency declarations throughout Pennsylvania, the state courts have been closed except for emergencies.

Getting a Protection from Abuse Order is an emergency.

You can still get PROTECTION FROM ABUSE (PFA) ORDERS and Protection from Sexual Violence and Intimidation (PSVI) Orders even though Pennsylvania courts are currently closed.

See <https://www.courts.phila.gov/pdf/regs/2020/16-of-2020-AGB-ORDER.pdf> and below instructions.

You can also get help from local agencies during this difficult time.

PA law requires that every county provide a way to get an emergency protection order when the courts are closed.

EMERGENCY PROTECTION FROM ABUSE ORDERS

You can file for an Emergency Protection From Abuse Order at the Stout Criminal Justice Center at 1301 Filbert Street during the following times:

- Monday through Thursday starting from 5:00 PM until 8:00 AM the following day,
- Weekends starting Friday at 5:00 PM. until the following Monday at 8:00 A.M., and
- Holidays

An emergency order can order the defendant to:

- Stop abusing, stalking, threatening, and harassing you,
- Not to have any contact with you and your children, including at work or school, and
- Leave your Philadelphia County residence if you jointly or solely own or lease it, have children together, or are married to the defendant.

Emergency orders remain in effect until Family Court reopens and the court starts the process for a temporary order. The Court may grant different relief in the Temporary Order than was granted in the Emergency Order. The Court will mail the Temporary Order to you.

TEMPORARY PROTECTION FROM ABUSE ORDERS

You can file for a Temporary Protection From Abuse order on weekdays from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM by:

- Filing a pre-prepared petition by email: TempPFA@courts.phila.gov

You will need an e-mail address from which to send email to the court.

You can find a form and instructions here

<https://www.courts.phila.gov/pdf/forms/domestic-relations/Petition-for-Protection-From-Abuse-w-instructions.pdf>

Note: if you file by email and send the petition after 11 am it will be reviewed the next business day

OR

- Calling the Domestic Violence Unit at 215-686-6311, ext. 19217 Monday through Friday for assistance in the preparation of a Petition for Protection From Abuse. The staff will provide all necessary information regarding the steps needed to complete the process. *To ensure completion of your petition and participation in a hearing via technology, you should contact the Domestic Violence Unit between 8:00 AM and 12:00 PM (noon).*
You will need an e-mail address to receive a prepared petition from the court and to sign it through doc-u-sign and return it to the court.

If you need additional assistance preparing or filing your petition, contact the legal resources listed below.

The court will conduct a video/audio hearing electronically to decide whether to give you a Temporary Protection From Abuse Order.

You may use video + audio conferencing through web-cameras connected to or built into laptops, tablets, desktop computers, or Smartphones equipped with cameras.

In case you do not have access to videoconferencing, the court will, due to the emergency circumstances, conduct telephone hearings.

Hearings will be held from 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM.

If a Temporary Order is granted, you can pick it up from 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday in the lobby of Family Court, 1501 Arch Street or you may have the Temporary Order mailed to you.

Be sure to review and follow the instructions issued by the court for completing the process for a Temporary Protection From Abuse order described at this link

<https://www.courts.phila.gov/pdf/regs/2020/16-of-2020-AGB-ORDER.pdf>

In addition to what can be ordered in an emergency PFA, a temporary protection from abuse order can include a **temporary child custody order**, and can order the defendant to:

- not to have any contact with you and your children, including at work or school
- turn weapons over to the police or sheriff or other person authorized by law to accept them
- pay child support

Temporary Orders will remain in effect until the Family Court conducts a full hearing and a Judge determines whether to issue a final protection order.

Serving the Papers and Enforcing the Order

- If you have filed through the Family Court filing unit, the Court will automatically have the Sheriff's Department serve the Temporary Protection from Abuse Order, Petition, and other documents for you.
- If you have filed at the Stout Criminal Justice Center you will need to have the Petition and Emergency Order served. Call your local police precinct to request assistance in serving the papers. You need to contact the district where the defendant can be served, usually where the defendant lives or works. You can find police districts here. <https://www.phillypolice.com/districts/>
- You can report a crime of domestic violence or a violation of a protection from abuse order by calling 911.
- If you were sexually assaulted and want to report it to the police, contact 911. The Special Victims Unit is operating as usual.

Philadelphia Family Court's supervised visitation center is closed until further notice.

If you have questions about a custody order and safety, call one of the below agencies for advice.

PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE OR INTIMIDATION ORDERS (PSVI)

If you are an adult or minor who has been sexually assaulted by a stranger or person with whom you have no family relationship, you may file for a sexual violence or intimidation protection order. The procedures outlined above for Protection From Abuse Orders can be used for this purpose.

The form for filing for a Protection from Sexual Violence Order is here https://www.pfad.pa.gov/Documents/BlankForms/SVPO_Petition.pdf

The form for filing for a Protection from Intimidation Order is here https://www.pfad.pa.gov/Documents/BlankForms/PFI_Petition.pdf

PHILADELPHIA RESOURCES FOR HELP IN STAYING SAFE DURING THIS TIME

PHILADELPHIA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE at **1-866-SAFE 014 (1-866-723-3014)** anytime crisis intervention, safety planning, resources and referrals. All calls are free, confidential and anonymous. <https://www.womenagainstabuse.org/index.php/get-help/PDVH>

WOAR – Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence 24 HOUR HOTLINE AT 215-985-3333 and online at www.woar.org

The following resources are available for phone consultation during regular business hours, but none of them is physically open at this time.

WOMEN AGAINST ABUSE LEGAL CENTER:

215-686-7082 <https://www.womenagainstabuse.org/services/legal-center>

PHILADELPHIA LEGAL ASSISTANCE: 215-981-3800 <https://www.philalegal.org/>

Telephone intake Monday-Thursday 9:30 – noon, call 215-981-3838

TEMPLE LEGAL AID OFFICE: (215) 204-1800

<https://www.law.temple.edu/resources/community-service/temple-legal-aid/>

SENIOR LAW CENTER: 215-988-1242 <http://seniorlawcenter.org/>

LEGAL SERVICE DEPARTMENT OF THE MAZZONI CENTER: 215-563-0657

<https://www.mazzonicenter.org/legal-services>

LEGAL CLINIC FOR THE DISABLED: 215-587-3350 <https://lcdphila.org/>

PHILADELPHIA BAR ASSOCIATION LAWYER REFERRAL AND INFORMATION SERVICE:

215-238-6333 <https://iris.philadelphiabar.org/>

WOMEN’S LAW PROJECT Telephone Counseling Service.

Call 215-928-9801 (Philadelphia), follow the prompts, and leave a message or

Visit our website at <https://www.womenslawproject.org/need-help/> and submit an intake form.

Other Parts of Pennsylvania

Find your local domestic violence program through the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence here. <https://www.pcadv.org/find-help/find-your-local-domestic-violence-program/>

OR

the National Network to End Domestic Violence here <https://nnedv.org/>

OR

call your local police department to find out what to do.