

# PHILADELPHIA EMERGENCY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SITE DURING COVID-19

- Stalking

## IS IT POSSIBLE TO GET A PROTECTION FROM ABUSE ORDER WHEN FAMILY COURT IS CLOSED?

Yes, you can ask for an emergency protection from abuse order when Family Court is closed at the Emergency Domestic Violence Site located at the **Criminal Justice Center, Room B-03 at 1301 Filbert St**, Philadelphia, PA (215-683-7280).

An emergency order is available if you believe that you or your children are in immediate and present danger of being harmed by a relative or intimate partner before Family Court is open (M-F, 8-5).

## WHAT CAN BE INCLUDED IN AN EMERGENCY ORDER?

The master can ONLY 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.

**AN EMERGENCY ORDER CANNOT INCLUDE CUSTODY OR SUPPORT OF CHILDREN OR REMOVAL OF WEAPONS.**

## WHO CAN ASK FOR AN EMERGENCY PROTECTION FROM ABUSE ORDER?

An emergency protection from abuse order can only be given to persons abused by a:

- Current or former spouse
- Parent
- Child
- Current or former sexual or intimate partner, such as a boyfriend/girlfriend or father/mother of your children
- Others related by blood or marriage

You cannot get a protection from abuse order against anyone else who might be threatening you (ex: neighbor, co-worker, stranger).

## WHAT IS ABUSE?

State law defines abuse as:

- Attempting or causing physical injury
- Placing another in reasonable fear of imminent serious bodily injury
- Sexual assault
- False Imprisonment

## WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR GETTING AN EMERGENCY ORDER?

You will be interviewed and helped in preparing a petition. A master will read your petition and ask you to explain what happened to you and why you need immediate protection. If the master approves your petition, they will issue an emergency order, **which lasts until 5 p.m. the next day that Family Court is open**. The Court will mail the new Temporary Order to you if an order was issued.

## WHAT DOES IT COST?

You do not have to pay to file a PFA petition.

## HOW LONG DOES THE EMERGENCY ORDER LAST?

Your emergency order will last until 5 p.m. on the next day that Family Court is open, at which time the Family Court may issue a temporary order. If you received an emergency PFA, you can expect to receive the Temporary Order in the mail at the address you provided to the Court when you filed. You can also call 215-686-3512 to find out more information.

In some cases, the judge who reviews your order might change it, so the temporary order could be different from the emergency order. For example, if you were granted “protection only” at the emergency site, the reviewing judge may have increased your protection and granted your request to evict the defendant from the household. That is why it is important to know what the temporary order says and to get a copy from Family Court.

See the brochure **Protection from Abuse in Philadelphia County** for further information on the process in Family Court.

### **\* SAFETY TIPS \***

**IF YOU ARE IN DANGER, CALL 911**  
*If the order is violated and show the officers the order.*  
**KEEP A COPY OF THE TEMPORARY PROTECTION ORDER WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES, IN YOUR CAR, HOME, AND WORKPLACE**

**This brochure is meant to give you general information and not legal advice.**

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## WHAT HAPPENS IF THE MASTER GRANTS THE EMERGENCY ORDER?

The master who issues your order will give you 1) a copy of the order for yourself, 2) a copy for service on the defendant (to tell this person about the order and upcoming hearing), 3) instructions on obtaining police assistance to serve the defendant, and 4) a Verification of Service form.

Any responsible adult, who is not a party or related to a party may serve the papers, but you should consider having the Philadelphia Police do it. Take all the papers the court gave you to the Philadelphia Police District Headquarters where the Defendant can be found (residence, work, etc.) and ask an officer to serve the PFA order. The person who serves the papers on the Defendant must complete, sign and return the original Verification of Service to you. You must have this original Verification of Service available to show the court on your hearing date. **You need to participate in the hearing even if the defendant has not been served with the papers.**

You may get a new hearing date to give you time to serve the defendant. You may ask the court to keep any temporary order in place until the next hearing date.

## WHAT IF I AM DENIED AN EMERGENCY ORDER?

If you are denied an emergency order, you may still be able to get a regular PFA order when Family Court reopens. Being turned down for an emergency order means the master determined that you were not in **immediate danger** and could wait to file the usual way. Even if this happens, it may be that you have experienced a pattern of domestic violence that can be addressed through Family Court's normal process.

You can file a pre-prepared petition by email: TempPFA@courts.phila.gov You will need an e-mail address from which to send an 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>

OR Call the Domestic Violence Unit at 215-686-6311, ext. 19217 Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:00 p.m. The staff will provide all necessary information regarding the steps needed to complete the process. 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.

There is no fee.

Sponsored by the Family Law Section of the Philadelphia Bar Association

The Unit will help you prepare and file your petition if you do not have a lawyer. Language interpretation services are available at the filing unit and at the hearing. To ask for an interpreter at your hearing, fill out the Interpreter Request Form at the filing unit.

## IS THERE A DEADLINE FOR GOING TO FAMILY COURT IF I WAS DENIED AN EMERGENCY ORDER?

No, but if you believe you are in danger, it is a good idea to go as soon as possible. It will be harder to convince a judge you need protection the longer you wait, because the judge looks at the facts from the most recent abusive incident to make a decision.

**Remember:** If you get an emergency order, your next hearing will be held via video conference, not at the Criminal Justice Center where you got your emergency order. You may contact one of the resources listed below for legal help.

## IS HELP AVAILABLE?

**PHILADELPHIA DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE  
1-866-SAFE 014 (1-866-723-3014)**

**Legal representation may be available from:**

- **WOMEN AGAINST ABUSE LEGAL CENTER:** 215-686-7082
- **PHILADELPHIA LEGAL ASSISTANCE:** 215-981-3800
- **SENIORLAW CENTER:** 215-988-1244
- **LEGAL SERVICE DEPARTMENT OF THE MAZZONI CENTER:** 215-563-0657
- **LEGAL CLINIC FOR THE DISABLED:** 215-587-3350
- **PHILADELPHIA BAR ASSOCIATION LAWYER REFERRAL AND INFORMATION SERVICE:** 215-238-6333

**Other Important Numbers:**

- **WOMEN IN TRANSITION:** 215-751-1111
- **LUTHERAN SETTLEMENT HOUSE:** 215-426-8610
- **CONGRESO DE LATINOS UNIDOS** 215-763-8870
- **KOREAN WOMEN'S CENTER:** 215-869-5703
- **WOMEN'S LAW PROJECT**  
Telephone Counseling: 215-928-9801 or  
<https://www.womenslawproject.org/need-help/>