



## **Citizens' Guide to Court Procedure** **Protection from Abuse Orders**

**Disclaimer: Court staff is not permitted to provide legal advice. To receive legal advice, you should contact a licensed attorney. The phone number for the Philadelphia Bar Association Legal Referral and Information Service is 215-238-6333. Nothing in this publication is meant to be construed as legal advice.**

1. The Criminal Division of the Municipal Court handles emergency protection from abuse matters.
2. Emergency relief from domestic violence may be obtained at the Criminal Justice Center, 1301 Filbert Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107 between the hours of 5:00pm to 8:00am, Monday to Friday, and all day Saturday, Sunday and holidays.
3. In order to be eligible for a petition for emergency relief, the person obtaining the relief must have a blood, marital, or intimate sexual relationship with the person against whom they wish to file. Once a relationship is established, it is necessary to determine whether the petitioner is in an emergency situation, i.e., is in immediate and present danger of physical abuse. Substantial threats, such as threats with a visible weapon, are also included in this definition. The unit is staffed by law-trained masters who conduct ex parte hearings (hearings without the other party present), and review petitions to determine if a petition should be granted in accordance with the Protection from Abuse Act.
4. If an emergency petition is issued, the matter is scheduled for a hearing for a final order before a judge in the Family Division, Domestic Relations section.
5. Non-emergency protection from abuse orders or petitions are filed with Domestic Relations, Family Division, at 1501 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102. The hours of operation are Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 5:00pm.
6. After filing the petition, the matter is scheduled before a judge for a hearing.
7. A violation of a protection from abuse order, whether from an emergency order or a final order, is a crime and violators are subject to arrest. Violations of protection from abuse orders are heard by Family Division, Domestic Relations section judges. If you knowingly and intentionally violate a protection from abuse order, you may be sent to jail.

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