

HOW CAN I FILE FOR A PROTECTION FROM ABUSE ORDER (PFA)?

There are different procedures for obtaining a PFA in each county.

- In Washington County, go to the DVSSP office located on the lower level of the Washington County Courthouse at 1 South Main Street in Washington.
- In Greene County, go to the DVSSP satellite office located in the Summit Legal Aid building at 63 South Washington Street in Waynesburg.
- In Fayette County, go to the Legal Aid office located on the 2nd floor at 45 East Main Street in Uniontown. From there, the receptionist will direct you to the DVSSP Legal Advocacy office.

After reviewing the PFA petition, the judge will either grant or deny a temporary PFA and, if granted, set a final hearing within 10 business days. The Sheriff's Department will then attempt to serve the person who is being abusive with a copy of the order.

At that hearing, you may receive a final PFA that can be in effect for up to 36 months. You may be required to testify about the information you included in your petition.

HOW CAN A DVSSP LEGAL ADVOCATE HELP ME?

A DVSSP legal advocate will assist you in filling out the petition for a PFA and can give you contact information for Legal Aid or other referrals as needed. We provide free and confidential court accompaniment, support, information, and advocacy as clients progress through the legal system.

All services are free and confidential.

DVSSP

Domestic Violence Services
of Southwestern Pennsylvania



Serving Washington, Greene,
and Fayette counties.

24/7 helpline: 800-791-4000
peacefromdv.org

Legal Advocacy Offices

Washington County: 724-223-8349

Greene County: 724-852-2463

Fayette County: 724-562-7016

Administrative Office

371 Low Hill Road
Brownsville, PA 15417

724-223-5481

All services are free and confidential.

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Protection From Abuse Orders



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WHAT IS A PROTECTION FROM ABUSE ORDER (PFA)?

A PFA is a civil document issued by the court to protect you from future abuse. To file for a PFA, you must be 18 years of age. If a person is under the age of 18, a parent or guardian must file on their behalf.

WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF ABUSE UNDER THE PFA ACT?

- Causing or trying to cause physical harm, with or without a weapon.
- Putting someone in reasonable fear of imminent, serious bodily injury.
- Holding someone against one's will or interfering with a person's freedom of movement.
- Rape or sexual assault.
- Repeatedly stalking and/or harassing someone, causing that person reasonable fear of bodily injury.

Verbal abuse, threats to take the children, and property damage do not by themselves qualify for a PFA.

AGAINST WHOM CAN I FILE A PFA?

The law states that individuals experiencing abuse may file a PFA against a family or household member as defined below:

- Spouse or former spouse
- Parent of your child
- Your parents
- Your children
- Current or former sexual or intimate partners – this also includes dating relationships
- Family members related by blood or marriage

WHAT CAN I ASK FOR IN A PFA?

The judge will consider your requests and may grant or deny some or all of them. The judge may grant an order that:

- Orders the person who is abusive to stop threatening, abusing, stalking, or harassing you and/or your children.
- Evicts the person who is abusive from your joint home or excludes them from your residence.
- Orders that your address be held as confidential.
- Orders temporary custody.
- Orders temporary child support, spousal support, or reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses caused by the person who is abusive.
- Orders the person who is abusive to have no contact with you, your children, or your family members.
- Excludes the person who is abusive from making contact with you at your school, business, or place of employment.
- Orders the person who is abusive to turn over any weapons to the appropriate party.
- Orders the return of personal items, important papers, etc.

WHAT IF THE PERSON WHO ABUSED ME VIOLATES THE PFA?

In most cases, if the person who abused you violates the PFA, you should call the police immediately. While the police cannot arrest the individual for violating financial provisions, they can and should arrest the individual for violating other terms of the PFA (for example, no-contact provisions).

Be aware that the person who abused you may be released shortly after being arrested for a violation. Contact a DVSSP advocate in your county for information on steps to take if the individual was not arrested for a violation and/or if you need information on safety planning.

PREPARING FOR YOUR PFA HEARING

You may want to contact an attorney to represent you at the PFA hearing or call your local Summit Legal Aid office.

Summit Legal Aid contact numbers
Washington County: 724-225-6170
Greene County: 724-627-3127
Fayette County: 724-439-3591

You may also want to contact the Sheriff's Department to see if the person who abused you was served with the PFA.

Sheriff's Department contact numbers
Washington County: 724-228-6840
Greene County: 724-627-7207
Fayette County: 724-430-1296

DVSSP 24/7 helpline numbers
Washington County: 724-223-9190
Greene County: 724-852-2463
Fayette County: 724-439-9500
Or toll-free: 800-791-4000