

HOW LONG DOES A PFA ORDER LAST?

A temporary PFA Order is effective for 7-10 business days until the court hearing on the Final Order is held. The Final PFA Order can be in effect for up to 3 years.

HOW MUCH DOES A PFA ORDER COST?

There is no cost to you (Plaintiff) to file a PFA. At the final hearing, the Judge will decide whether the costs should be paid by the other party (Defendant), and if so, how much and by when.

HOW DO I WITHDRAW THE PFA?

If the plaintiff wishes to withdraw the PFA Petition and a temporary order was granted, you may discontinue the PFA proceeding by filing a petition with the court before the final order hearing or you may make an oral motion to withdraw the petition at the final order hearing.

WHAT IF THE DEFENDANT VIOLATES THE PFA?

The plaintiff can call the police immediately (dial 911). The police have the authority to arrest the defendant if they have reason to believe that the defendant violated the PFA Order. If an arrest is made, a complaint for Indirect Criminal Contempt (ICC) is completed and signed by either a police officer or the plaintiff. If an arrest is not made, the plaintiff may file a complaint in the District Attorney's Office for Indirect Criminal Contempt. A court hearing on the ICC will be scheduled. The plaintiff is notified of the date and time for the ICC hearing and is usually present to testify regarding the violation of the PFA. If the defendant is found in contempt of the PFA Order, he/she can be fined up to \$1,000 and/or sentenced to jail for up to 6 months and may receive probation.

RESOURCE LIST

Berks County Bar Association

Immigration Assistance and
Lawyer Referral Services
Phone: (610) 375-4591

Berks County Office of Aging

Elder Abuse and Other Assistance for Berks County
Residents Age 60 and over
Phone: (610) 478-6500

Berks Women In Crisis

Hot Lines (24-hour coverage/free & confidential)

English Hotline: (610) 372-9540

Spanish Hotline: (610) 372-7463

Phone: (610) 373-1206

PFA Legal and Immigration Assistance, Shelter and
Counseling (services free of charge)

Berks County Domestic Relations

Child Support Office
Phone: (610) 478-2900

Community Justice Project

Immigration Assistance
Phone: (610) 370-7296
Fax: (610) 370-7556

DPW – County Assistance Office

Phone: (610) 736-4211
Home Heating Assistance: (610) 736-4228

Fair View Counseling

Children-Teens-Individuals-Families
Phone: (610) 396-9091

Family Guidance Center

Individual, Couples & Family Counseling
Boyertown, Hamburg and Wyomissing Offices
Phone: (610) 374-4963

MidPenn Legal Services

Legal Services For Low Income Families
Phone: (610) 376-8656

National Link Coalition

Animal Abuse
Phone: (856) 627-5118

Reading Housing Authority

Phone: (610) 372-3933
Phone (TDD): 610-796-1386

SAVIN

Statewide Automated Victim Notification System Phone:
(800) 322-4472

Victim/Witness Unit – Berks County DA's Office

Phone: (610) 478-6000



**Berks County
Court Of
Common Pleas**

**Protection
From
Abuse
Office**



**633 Court Street
1st Floor Services Center
Reading, PA 19601
Phone: (610) 478-6208
EXT. 5701, 5702**

PFA OFFICE HOURS

The PFA Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday except Holidays. PFA's are processed until 2:30 PM on a first-come, first-served basis. Between 2:30 PM and 5:00 PM, the PFA Office may be able to help the Plaintiff apply for an Emergency PFA Order via video conferencing with the local Magisterial District Justice or directly from a local Magisterial District Justice. After 6:00 p.m. on weekdays or 24 hours on weekends an Emergency PFA can be requested in Reading Central Court located on the 1st floor of the Courthouse.

WHAT IS A PROTECTION FROM ABUSE ORDER (PFA) ?

A PFA is a civil order of court available to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. It prohibits the offender from abusing, stalking, harassing, threatening or attempting to use physical force that would reasonably cause bodily injury to the victim.

WHO CAN OBTAIN A PFA ORDER ?

- Spouses and ex-spouses
- Persons who are or have lived as spouses
- Parents and children
- Persons related by consanguinity (blood) or affinity (marriage)
- Current or former sexual or intimate partners
- Persons who are parents of a child together

WHAT RELIEF CAN A PFA ORDER PROVIDE?

- Restrain the defendant from abusing, threatening, harassing, or stalking the plaintiff and/or minor child(ren).
- Prohibit defendant from contacting the plaintiff, and any other protected person under the Order, at any location noted by the plaintiff.
- Evict/exclude the defendant from the plaintiff's residence or the residence of any other person protected under the Order.
- Award plaintiff temporary custody of minor child(ren) and provide defendant with partial custody and/or supervised custody if appropriate.
- Order defendant to pay temporary support for plaintiff and/or the minor child(ren), including medical support and payment of rent/mortgage.
- Reimburse plaintiff for out-of-pocket financial losses as a result of the abuse.
- Prohibit defendant from having any contact with plaintiff's relatives and children listed in the PFA Order, except as the court finds necessary with respect to partial custody with the minor child(ren).
- Require the defendant to temporarily turn over weapons to the Berks County Sheriff's Office and prohibit defendant from transferring, acquiring or possessing any such weapons for the duration of the PFA Order.

HOW DOES THE LAW DEFINE ABUSE?

The Pennsylvania State Code defines "abuse" as follows: The occurrence of one or more of the following acts:

- (i) The infliction of injury, unreasonable confinement, intimidation or punishment with resulting physical harm, pain or mental anguish.
- (ii) The willful deprivation by a caretaker of goods or services, which are necessary to maintain physical or mental health.
- (iii) Sexual harassment, rape or abuse as it is defined in the Protection From Abuse Act (35 P. S. § 10181—10190).

"Abuse" – the occurrence of one or more of the following acts between family or household members, sexual or intimate partners or persons who share biological parenthood.

(1) Attempting to cause or intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causing bodily injury, serious bodily injury, rape, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, sexual assault, statutory sexual assault, aggravated indecent assault, indecent assault or incest with or without a deadly weapon.

(2) Placing another in reasonable fear of imminent serious bodily injury.

(3) The infliction of false imprisonment pursuant to 18 Pa C.S. § 2903 (relating to false imprisonment).

(4) Physically or sexually abusing minor children, including such terms as defined in Chapter 63 (relating to Child Protective Services).

(5) Knowingly engaging in a course of conduct or repeatedly committing acts toward another person, including following the person, without proper authority, under circumstances, which place the person in reasonable fear of bodily injury. The definition of this paragraph applies only to proceedings commenced under this title and is inapplicable to any criminal prosecutions commenced under Title 18 (relating to crimes and offenses).