

HOW LONG DOES A PFA ORDER LAST?

A temporary PFA Order is effective for 7-10 days until the court hearing on the Final Order is held. The Final PFA Order can be in effect for up to 18 months.

HOW MUCH DOES A PFA ORDER COST?

There is no cost to you (plaintiff) to initially file a PFA. The parties responsible for paying all related costs of filing and serving the PFA will be determined at the final hearing.

HOW DO I WITHDRAW THE PFA?

If the plaintiff wishes to withdraw the PFA Order, contact the Judge who signed the PFA Order to schedule a time for your request to be heard. Most often this will be on the Judge’s PFA family motions day.

WHAT IF THE DEFENDANT VIOLATES THE PFA?

The plaintiff should 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. When an arrest is made, a complaint for Indirect Criminal Contempt (ICC) shall be completed and signed by either a police officer or the plaintiff. When the complaint is filed by a police officer, neither the plaintiff’s presence nor signature is required. 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 Advocates Against Violence

Batterer Education, Youth Conflict Resolution, Counseling for Individuals and Group
Phone: (610) 736-3693

Berks County Bar Association

Lawyer Referral Services
(610) 375-4591

Berks County Office of Aging

Serving Berks County Residents Age 60 and over
(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 Assistance, Shelter and Counseling (services free of charge)

Berks County Domestic Relations

Child Support Office
Phone: (610) 478-2900

Fair View Counseling

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

Family Guidance Center

Individual, Couples & Family Counseling
Reading (610) 374-4963
Wyomissing (610) 374-4963
Hamburg (610) 374-4963
Boyertown (610) 367-6769

MidPenn Legal Services

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

R.A.I.S.E.

Common Grounds Family Services
Batterer Education, Supervised Visitation, Parenting Classes
Phone: (610) 898-0404



**Berks County
Court Of
Common Pleas**

**Protection
From
Abuse
Office**



**633 Court Street
1st Floor Services Center
Reading, PA 19601
Phone: (610) 478-6418
(610) 478-3455**

**Protection from Abuse Facilitators
Mynele Bermudez
Ana I. Vega-Toro**

PFA OFFICE HOURS

The PFA Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The **PFA FILING** hours are 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. After PFA filing hours, the plaintiff may obtain an Emergency PFA from the PFA office via video conferencing with the local District Justice or from Reading Central Court on the 1st floor of the Courthouse after 7:00 p.m. and on weekends.

WHAT IS A PROTECTION FROM ABUSE ORDER (PFA) ?

A PFA is a civil order of the 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 ?

- A spouse or former spouse of the offender.
- A parent of a common child of the offender.
- A current or former sexual or intimate partner with the offender.
- A child of the victim.
- A child of the offender.
- A family member related by blood/marriage to the offender.
- A sibling (person who shares biological parenthood) of the offender.
- A current or former cohabitant (person who lives with) like a spouse.

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 visitation 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 and/or visitation 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).

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