

HOW LONG DOES A PFA ORDER LAST?

A Temporary PFA Order is effective until the Final hearing is held, usually within 10 business days. A 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 PFA hearing, the Court may assess costs against the Defendant.

HOW DO I WITHDRAW A PFA?

If the Plaintiff wants to withdraw a PFA Order he/she goes to the courtroom where that day's Emergency Family Motions Judge is sitting. A praecipe, oral motion, or petition may be needed to request the withdrawal. The Judge makes a decision granting or denying the request.

WHAT IF THE DEFENDANT VIOLATES THE PFA?

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 not made, the Plaintiff can file a complaint in the District Attorney's Office for Indirect Criminal Contempt (ICC). 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.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DEFENDANT TO QUALIFY FOR A PFA?

In addition to PFAs, you may be eligible for a Sexual Violence Protection (SVP) Order or a Protection From Intimidation (PFI) Order. You may qualify for an SVP or PFI order based on the alleged conduct of the Defendant and the ages of both parties (with regard to PFIs). If you are unsure what type of order to apply for, contact Safe Berks and they can assist you with options counseling.

RESOURCE LIST

Area Agency on Aging

Serving Berks County Residents Age 60 and over
(610) 478-6500

Berks County Bar Association

Lawyer Referral Services
(610) 375-4591

Berks County Domestic Relations

Child & Spousal Support Office
(610) 478-2900

Community Justice Project

Non-Profit Legal Aid Law Firm Providing Housing and Immigration Assistance
(610) 370-7296 or (610) 370-7459

FairView Counseling

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

Family Guidance Center

Individual, Couples & Family Counseling
Wyomissing (610) 374-4963
Hamburg (610) 374-4963
Boyertown (610) 374-4963
Kutztown (610) 374-4963

MidPenn Legal Services

Legal Services for Lower Income Families
Toll Free: (800) 326-9177 (8:30 am -3:30 pm)

PCADV

24 Hour National Hotline - English and Spanish
1-(800) 799-SAFE (7233)

Safe Berks

(Services Free of Charge and Confidential)
PFA Legal Assistance, Shelter and Counseling
24 Hour Toll-Free Hot Line - English and Spanish
(844) 789-SAFE (7233)
Phone: (610) 373-1206
Text: SAFE BERKS to 20121



**Berks
County
Court Of
Common
Pleas**

**Protection
From
Abuse**



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

PFA OFFICE HOURS

The PFA Office is staffed Monday – Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. **PFA FILING** hours are 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Try to arrive no later than 1:00 p.m. After 2:00 p.m., staff can assist you with applying for an Emergency PFA with your local Magisterial District Judge. After 6:00 p.m. on weekdays and on weekends or holidays, you can go to Reading Central Court on the 1st floor of the Courthouse to apply for an Emergency PFA.

WHO CAN OBTAIN A PFA ORDER ?

- A spouse or former spouse of the Defendant or someone who lived as spouses with Defendant.
- A parent of a common child with the Defendant.
- A current or former sexual or intimate partner of Defendant or someone who shares biological parenthood with Defendant.
- A parent of the Defendant.
- A child of the Defendant.
- A family member related by blood or marriage to the Defendant.

WHAT IS A PROTECTION FROM ABUSE ORDER (PFA)?

A PFA is a civil order of court available to victims of abuse.

HOW DOES THE PFA ACT DEFINE ABUSE?

“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).

WHAT RELIEF CAN A PFA ORDER PROVIDE?

- Restrain the Defendant from abusing, stalking, or harassing the Plaintiff, minor children, or other protected persons.
- Prohibit Defendant from having any contact with the Plaintiff, minor children, or other protected persons including at their places of employment, business, or school.
- Evict or exclude the Defendant from the residence, restore possession of the residence to the Plaintiff, or provide suitable alternative housing to Plaintiff.
- Award temporary custody or establish temporary visitation rights with regard to minor children.
- Payment of temporary support for Plaintiff or minor children.
- Reimburse Plaintiff for out-of-pocket financial losses suffered as a result of the abuse.
- Require the Defendant to temporarily relinquish firearms, weapons and ammunition to the Sheriff’s Office and prohibit Defendant from transferring, acquiring, or possessing them for the duration of the Order.
- Other appropriate relief.