

Frequently Asked Questions about PFA's

(while operating under the Court's emergency order for essential functions)

1. Question: Where and what time can I file a PFA?

Answer: Protection from Abuse matters are being handled at the Pittsburgh Municipal Court Building, 600 First Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15219.

Temporary PFA's will be handled from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 P.M., Monday through Friday.

Emergency PFA's (night/weekend) will be handled from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m., Monday through Friday and 24 hours on Saturdays and Sundays. Expect to spend several hours completing the process.

2. Question: How do I apply for a Temporary PFA at Municipal Court?

Answer: You should arrive at Municipal Court as early as possible and expect to remain at Court for some time (1-2 hours), depending on the number of people filing. Mondays are especially busy. You need to complete PFA Petition (by phone with a volunteer attorney) and appear at a video hearing before a Judge. You can file for a Temporary PFA without the payment of any fees.

3. Question: Who can Obtain a PFA Order?

Answer: A victim of abuse may file for a PFA order against an intimate partner or a family member. This includes:

- Spouses or ex-spouses,
- Current or former sexual or intimate partners (including dating relationships),
- Family members related by blood or marriage (including parents, children, Siblings).

4. Question: What type of abuse is covered by the PFA Act?

Answer: The PFA Act defines abuse as the occurrence of one or more of the following acts between family members or intimate partners:

- Causing to attempting to cause bodily injury
- Sexual assaults
- False imprisonment
- Conduct which would place a person in reasonable fear of imminent serious bodily injury (stalking, threats of physical harm).

5. Question: What can a PFA order do?

Answer: A Plaintiff can request the following types of relief in a PFA Petition:

- Prohibit abuse, threats, harassment or stalking
- Eviction or exclusion of the abuser from the victim's residence
- Prohibit contact, including from work or school
- The entry of a temporary custody order
- The relinquishment of weapons.

The judge will review the Petition and may grant all or some of these requests in the PFA order. In order to grant a Temporary PFA Order, the Judge must find that an emergency exists regarding the **physical safety** of the Plaintiff or Plaintiff's children.

6. Question: How long does a Temporary PFA remain in effect?

Answer: If a Judge issues a Temporary PFA Order, a Final PFA Hearing will be scheduled within ten (10) business days. The Temporary PFA Order will remain in effect until the Final PFA hearing date. In order to extend the Temporary PFA Order, you must return to Court for the Final PFA Hearing. At the Final PFA Hearing, a Final PFA Order may be issued for up to a maximum time period of three (3) years.

7. Question: If I have a PFA order against me and the hearing has been postponed, what can I do?

Answer: You can call 412-350-4441 and discuss your situation with the court conciliator.

8. Question: What if a Protection from Abuse Order has been violated?

Answer: You should call the police department and request that they file an Indirect Criminal Contempt (ICC) charge. (Please see FAQ regarding ICC Violations)

9. Question: When will the ICC be heard?

Answer: It will be scheduled for the Wednesday following the Defendant's arrest but will likely be postponed. You should call 412-350-4441 to determine the status of the hearing.

10. Question: What if an PFA defendant has been incarcerated on an ICC.

Answer: The status of any Defendants remaining in incarceration will be considered at the original date scheduled for the ICC hearing.