

LEGAL FAQs
In response to COVID-19
Last updated March 24, 2020

If you fear for your life, please call 911. If you are in a crisis and need assistance please call the DC Victim Hotline to speak with an advocate at 1-844-4HELPDC (1-844-443-5732).

Question

- **My civil protection order ends or expires soon. Can I get an extension or more time?**

Answer: Any existing CPO is good through May 15, 2020 or the next assigned court date. If the courts are still closed on May 1st, you can call the Courthouse or DC Victim Hotline at 1-844-4HELPDC (1-844-443-5732) for assistance.

Question

- **My CPO trial is scheduled in two weeks. Do I still need to go?**

Answer: The courts will not hold any hearings until they open back up. All CPO cases with a trial or hearing before May 15th will be rescheduled.

Question:

- **I need a temporary protection order. How do I get one?**

Answer: During Court hours, 8:30am—5:00pm, you can file a temporary protection order petition through DC Superior Court's portal at <https://www.probono.net/dccourts>. Once you fill out the form and submit it electronically, you should then contact the Clerk's office by phone at (202) 879-0157 or by email at domesticviolencemanagement@dcsc.gov to complete the filing process.

A Domestic Violence Unit Clerk and a DV Unit Judge will review the request for imminent risk. They will contact DC SAFE to complete the process with the survivor as described in the ETPO court directive.

If you need a temporary protection order **after hours, on weekends or holidays**, call 911 or the DC Victim hotline at 1-844-4HELPDC (1-844-443-5732) to speak with an advocate.

Question:

- **My abuser was arrested for domestic violence and is still in jail. What happens now?**

Answer: To request information about a person who was arrested you can call the Department's Records Office at (202) 523-7060. If you are a victim, you can register to receive automated updates on your phone or email about a person who was convicted of a crime by calling VINE (Victim Information & Notification Everyday) at 1 (877) 329-7894.

Question:

- **I am supposed to do custody exchanges at the Supervised Visitation Center (SVC). What do I do now if the SVC is closed?**

Answer: For now, the Supervised Visitation Center is not supervising any parent child visitation or conducting any visitation exchanges. To confirm whether the visitation center is still closed you can call them at (202) 879-4253. Please note that the child care center at DC Superior Court is also closed until further notice.

Question:

- **I have a CPO against me and my abuser is telling me to bring the kids to them. Can I ignore the CPO and go near my abuser?**

Answer: A Temporary Civil Protection Order or any other court issued Custody Order should say what you can and can't do. You should make decisions based on the order, not what the other person is telling you. If the order says you cannot go near them, do not take the kids to them. If you have questions, you can call the DV Clerk's Office at (202) 879-0157 or speak to an attorney at one of the call-in clinics.

Question:

- **Where do I go if I want to file for custody?**

Answer: Please note that the court is limiting the matters it will hear before May 15th, 2020. Before that time, the court will only hear emergency matters in Family Court. All trials and non-emergency motions in Domestic Relations, and scheduled before May 15, 2020 are continued and the court will set a new date and notify the parties. You can call the courthouse at (202) 879-1010 for more information. Due to limited staff, wait times may be longer than usual.

Question:

- **Where do I make emergency filings and what are the filing fees?**

Answer: Emergency filings should be made at the Central Intake Center. However, due to limited capacity and changing information, you should call the Courthouse at (202) 879-1010 for up to date information. All fees are due at time of filing. You will have to pay a \$80.00 filing fee before the Clerk gives you the copy of the complaint and summons to serve on each defendant. All filing fees must be paid by cash, money order, cashier's check, or credit card (Mastercard or VISA only).

Question:

- **What if I cannot afford the fees to file documents?**

Answer: If paying the filing fees will cause a hardship to you or your family, you can request a fee waiver to ask the Court to allow you to file without paying fees.

To request a fee waiver, you must submit an “In Forma Pauperis” form (also called an “IFP”) to the Court. If you receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or other public benefits and can provide documentation showing this, you may receive a fee waiver without having to provide additional information. Otherwise, you may have to provide information about your income, assets, and expenses.

Your IFP waiver request will have to be approved by the Judge in Chambers (temporarily located in the Moultrie Courthouse, Room JM 540).

Disclaimer: On March 11, 2020, Mayor Muriel Bowser issued a state of emergency and a public health emergency to respond to COVID-19. These FAQs are not exhaustive and are meant to provide general guidance during this state of emergency. The contents of this material are for general informational purposes only and are not intended to constitute as legal advice, may not be current and are subject to change without notice.

For the latest court-related updates please check www.dccourts.gov/coronavirus. For the latest information on the District Government’s response to COVID-19 (Coronavirus), please visit www.coronavirus.dc.gov.

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