

WHAT IS A PFA?

A Protection From Abuse (“PFA”) order is a court order that is signed by a judge and tells the abuser to stop the abuse or face serious legal consequences. It offers civil legal protection from domestic violence to both female and male victims.

HOW A PFA PROTECTS

A PFA CAN:

- Order the abuser not to abuse, harass, or stalk you, your relatives or your minor children;
- Order the abuser to be removed from the home where you both live and grant you possession of the home;
- Award temporary custody or temporary visitation rights of your minor children;
- Order the abuser to pay financial support to you or your children;
- Prohibit the abuser from having any contact with you or minor children;
- Order the abuser to turn over any firearms, other weapons, and ammunition to the sheriff or police; and
- Order the abuser to pay you for reasonable losses resulting from the abuse.

WHETHER A JUDGE ORDERS ANY OR ALL OF THE ABOVE DEPENDS ON THE FACTS OF YOUR CASE.

THE PFA PROCESS

EMERGENCY PFA

If you need immediate protection when the courts are closed (such as on a weekend, late night or holiday), and the judge feels you are in immediate danger, s/he can grant you an emergency order. An emergency order will only last until the next business day.

TEMPORARY PFA

When you ask the court for a PFA, a judge may grant you a temporary PFA if s/he finds that you or your minor children are in danger of further domestic abuse and need immediate protection. This is an "ex parte" order which means that the judge will make this decision based only on the information you provide, without the abuser being in court. This temporary order will last until your full court hearing for the final PFA where the abuser has an opportunity to testify and present evidence.

FINAL PFA

After a hearing in which both sides have an opportunity to tell their side of the story through testimony, evidence, and witnesses, a judge can grant a final PFA. A final PFA may last up to 3 years and can be extended under certain circumstances.



IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?

If you are in an abusive relationship, think about...

- Having important phone numbers nearby for you and your children. Numbers to have are the police, hotlines, friends and the local shelter.
- Friends or neighbors you could tell about the abuse. Ask them to call the police if they hear angry or violent noises. If you have children, teach them how to dial 911.
- Making up a code word that you can use when you need help.
- How to get out of your home safely and practice ways to get out.
- Safer places in your home where there are exits and no weapons. If you feel abuse is going to happen, try to get your abuser to one of these safer places.
- Any weapons in the house and ways that you could get them out of the house.

Even if you do not plan to leave, think of where you could go in the event you ever get to a point where you feel you must leave.

LEAVING AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?

If you consider leaving your abuser, think about...

- Several places you can go to if you leave your home.
- People who might help you if you left.
- People who will keep a bag for you.
- People who might lend you money.
- Making plans for your pet.
- Keeping change for phone calls or getting a cell phone.
- Opening a bank account or getting a credit card in your name.
- How you might leave. Try doing things that get you out of the house - taking out the trash or walking the family pet.
- Putting together a bag of things you use everyday. Hide it where it is easy for you to get.
- Practice how you would leave and how you could take your children with you safely.

There are times when taking your children with you may put all of your lives in danger. You need to protect yourself to be able to protect your children.



SAFETY PLANNING

Your safety is the most important thing. Below are tips to help keep you safe:

- During an argument, or if you feel tension building, avoid areas in your home where weapons might be available – the kitchen, bathroom, bedroom or workshops.
- If there are weapons in your household such as firearms – lock them up!
- Know where there is a safe exit from your home – a window, elevator or stairwell.
- Discuss the situation with a trusted neighbor if you can. Ask them to call 911 if they hear a disturbance. Find a code word to use with them if you need the police.
- Always keep a packed bag ready.
- Know where you would go to be safe if you have to leave, even if you don't really think you need to.

ITEMS TO TAKE

ITEMS TO TAKE, IF POSSIBLE:

- Money
- Keys to car, house, work
- Medicine
- Birth certificates
- Social security cards
- School and medical records
- Bankbooks, credit cards
- Driver's license
- Car registration
- Green cards, work permits
- Divorce papers and/or custody orders

ADVOCACY SERVICES

Women's Services Legal Advocates provide assistance and support to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault as they go through the criminal or civil legal system.

Our Legal Advocates are not attorneys and cannot give you legal advice. Advocates can discuss the legal process and provide information that will help survivors make informed decisions about whether to engage in the court process.

Legal Advocates are available for accompaniment to legal proceedings. You can also arrange to meet or speak with an advocate outside of court regarding how you are feeling, the legal process and possible outcomes. An advocate can inform you of your legal rights and, if necessary, advocate on your behalf with police, prosecutors, and others in the criminal justice system. It is our priority to support you in whatever decisions you make about engaging with the legal system and to assist you in identifying your rights and options as a survivor.



FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

RESOURCES

www.crawfordcountypa.net
www.ndvh.org
www.PALawHELP.org
www.nwls.org
www.womenslaw.org
www.pcadv.org
www.helpguide.org
www.thesafespace.org
www.aardvarc.org



MISSION STATEMENT
Providing hope and resources for those affected by violence and advocating to end it.

CORE VALUES

Empathy ~ Empowerment
Collaboration ~ Respect
Integrity ~ Hope

WOMEN'S SERVICES IS A
PARTNER AGENCY OF THE
WESTERN CRAWFORD
COUNTY UNITED WAY



WOMEN'S SERVICES

204 SPRING STREET
MEADVILLE, PA 16335
BUSINESS OFFICE: 814.724.4637



LEGAL ADVOCACY

24-hour hotline: 814.333.9766
Toll free hotline: 888.881.0189
Textline: Text "wschat" to 839863
www.womensservicesinc.org
information@womensservicesinc.org

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & SEXUAL ASSAULT