

Domestic Violence Part 1: Can I Get a Protective Order?

Protective Orders are court orders that require one person to refrain from doing certain acts against another person. It's Maryland's version of a restraining order or stay-away order. The protective order process can be a dangerous time for a victim of domestic violence. **Stay alert and find help at mdcourts.gov/dv or call a Maryland Court Help Center at 410-260-1392.**

Watch the Video



Relationships that Qualify

- You may ask for a protective order if you and the person you need protection from:
 - Are married, divorced, or currently separated;
 - Are related by marriage, blood, or adoption, which may include stepparents and stepchildren;
 - Have a child together;
 - Have had a sexual relationship with each other in the past year; or
 - If the alleged abuser raped or attempted to rape you in the past six months. Some sexual offenses also qualify.
- You may also ask the court for a protective order on behalf of children and vulnerable adults who can't make their own decisions.

Peace Orders

- Even if your relationship with the other person doesn't qualify you for a protective order you can ask for protection. You may be eligible for a peace order.
- A peace order is like a protective order. In both, the court directs someone to stay away from you.
- Visit mdcourts.gov/legalhelp/peaceorders for information and a video series on peace orders.

Abusive Behaviors

- Before the court can grant a protective order, you must prove that the other person committed an act of abuse.
- Abuse is defined under the law as:
 - Anything that causes serious bodily harm (kicking, punching, choking, shoving, etc.);



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- A threat or other action that puts you in fear of imminent serious bodily harm;
 - Assault, or unwanted and offensive physical contact;
 - Rape, attempted rape, and other sexual offenses;
 - False imprisonment – being trapped in a place from which you cannot escape;
 - Stalking – When someone persistently pursues you knowing that it makes you fear for your safety;
 - Revenge porn – When someone shares private nude or sexual images of you without your permission **and** they did it to harm, harass, intimidate, coerce or threaten you.
- When you file the court needs to hear details about the abuse. Be precise about the acts committed against you. For instance:
 - What specifically makes you want to get a protective order?
 - What part of the other person's body touched what part of your body?
 - Where exactly did an object strike you?