DV-500-INFO Can a Domestic Violence Restraining Order Help Me?

What is a “domestic violence restraining order”?

It is a court order that can help protect people who have been abused by someone they've had an intimate relationship with, are closely related to, or have lived with as more than just roommates.

How can a restraining order help me?

A judge can order the restrained person to:

- Not contact you, your children or relatives, or people you live with;
- Stay away from you, your children or relatives, or people you live with, your home, your job, etc.;
- Not have any firearms (guns, including "ghost guns"), firearm parts, or ammunition;
- Move out of a home that you live in;
- Obey child custody and visitation orders;
- Pay child support;
- Pay spousal support;
- Pay debt for property; and
- Give you control of property (examples: cell phone, car, home).

Does this request cost money to file?

No, filing this request with the court is free.

How long can a restraining order last?

If the judge makes a temporary order, it will last until your hearing date (court date). Your hearing is usually three weeks after you turn in your court papers. At your hearing, the judge will decide whether to grant you a long-term restraining order that can last up to five years.

How soon can I get the order?

If you decide to ask for a restraining order, you will need to complete court papers. Once you turn in your court papers, a judge will decide the same day or next business day on whether to grant you a temporary restraining order.

How old must I be to ask for one?

To ask for a restraining order on your own, you must be 12 years old or older. In some cases, the judge may ask that an adult (someone 18 years old or older), like a trusted relative, help you in your case.

What if I don’t have a green card?

You can get a restraining order even if you are not a U.S. citizen. If you are worried about deportation, you may want to talk with an immigration lawyer.

Can a restraining order protect my children?

Yes, you can ask the judge to protect your children. If you are asking for a restraining order against someone you have children with, you can also ask the judge to make child custody and visitation orders. And if you think that the other parent might abduct (kidnap) your children, you can ask for orders to prevent kidnapping.

Can I use a restraining order to get divorced or terminate a registered domestic partnership?

No. These forms will not end your marriage or registered domestic partnership. You must file other forms to end your marriage or registered domestic partnership.

Am I eligible?

To qualify for a domestic violence restraining order, you must have a (1) required relationship and (2) show that the person you want a restraining order against has been abusive.

Required relationship

- Your spouse, ex-spouse, registered domestic partner, or ex-registered domestic partner;
- Someone you have a child with;
- Your parent, child, sibling, or grandparent (includes in-laws and step relationships);
- Someone you live with or used to live with (more than just roommates);

Abuse

Abuse can be spoken, written, or physical. It can be physical, sexual, or emotional. It includes threats to harm you or your family, stalking, harassment, destroying personal property, repeated contact, and disturbing the peace.

What does disturbing the peace mean?

It means to destroy someone's mental or emotional calm. Disturbing the peace includes coercive control**.** Coercive control means a number of acts that unreasonably limit the free will and individual rights of any person**.** Examples include:

- Isolating someone from their friends, relatives, or other support;
- Keeping them from food or basic needs;
- Controlling or keeping track of them, including their movements, contacts, actions, money, or access to services;
- Threats to immigration status;
- Making them do something that they don't want to do; and
- Controlling or interfering with someone's contraception (birth control, condoms); pregnancy or ability to become a parent; or access to health information.

What if I don't qualify for a domestic violence restraining order?

There are other kinds of restraining orders you can ask for. Here are some examples:

- Civil harassment order (can be used for neighbors, roommates, cousins, uncles, and aunts).
- Dependent adult or elder abuse restraining order (if you are at least 65 or a dependent adult).
- Gun violence restraining order (to prevent someone from hurting themselves or others with a firearm).

Note that all restraining orders include a firearms and ammunition restriction. A gun violence restraining order gives limited protection because it only restrains the person from having firearms and ammunition. To learn more about other kinds of restraining orders, go to: *https://selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/restraining-orders.*

How do I ask for a domestic violence restraining order?

See form DV-505-INFO, *How to Ask for a Domestic Violence Restraining Order*. The forms are available online at *www.courts.ca.gov/forms*. If you want a paper copy, go to any California courthouse. You can also check with your county's law library.

Will I have a court hearing (court date)?

Yes. The court will give you a day and time to attend court. If you want to attend court remotely (by phone or videoconference), go to the court's website to find out how to attend remotely. To learn more about what to expect at your hearing, read form DV-520-INFO, *Get Ready for Your Restraining Order Court Hearing*, or go to: *https://selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/DV-restraining-order/prepare-court-date*.

Do I need a lawyer to make this request?

No, but this type of request can be hard to get through on your own. Free help may be available at your local court's self-help center. (See below.)

Where can I find a self-help center?

Find your local court's self-help center at *www.selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/find*. Self-help center staff will not act as your lawyer but may be able to give you information to help you decide what to do in your case, and help you with the forms.

What if I need an interpreter?

If you decide to ask for a restraining order, you will need to talk to a judge. If you need an interpreter, use form INT-300 to request an interpreter or ask the court clerk how you can request one.

I have a disability. How can I get help?

You may use form MC-410 to request assistance. Contact the disability or ADA coordinator at your local court for more information.

Request for Accommodations

Assistive listening systems, computer-assisted real-time captioning, or sign language interpreter services are available if you ask at least five days before the hearing. Contact the clerk's office or go to *www.courts.ca.gov/forms.htm* for *Disability Accommodation Request* (form MC-410). (Civil Code section 54.8.)

Confidential Address Program

If you are a victim of domestic violence or live with a victim of domestic violence, there is a special program called Safe At Home that you can apply for. It is a free program that would help you keep your address private. To learn more about the program, go to: *https://www.sos.ca.gov/registries/safe-home/*. Note that it may take several weeks to be approved.

For more information on other steps of the process

- Form DV-505-INFO, *How to Ask for a Domestic Violence Restraining Order*
- Form DV-200-INFO, *What Is "Proof of Personal Service"?*
- Form DV-520-INFO, *Get Ready For Your Restraining Order Court Hearing*
- Form DV-530-INFO, *How to Enforce Your Restraining Order*

Information about the court process is also available online

https://selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/DV-restraining-order/process.

Where can I find other help?

The National Domestic Violence Hotline provides free and private safety tips. Help is available every day, 24 hours a day, and in over 100 languages. Visit online at *www.thehotline.org* or call 1-800-799-7233; 1-800-787-3224 (TTY).