

How to Apply for a Restraining Order



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If you are in danger of being hurt...

If you are in danger of being hurt by a family member or someone you are or have been dating, you can ask the family court for a *temporary restraining order* (TRO). A *temporary restraining order* is a paper from the court that tells someone to stop hurting, threatening, or stalking you.

If you are in danger right now, call 9-1-1. You can also contact a [domestic violence program](#) in Connecticut by calling the 24-hour statewide hotline at **888-774-2900**. They can help you with emergency shelter, information, and more.

What is the difference between a temporary restraining order and a protective order?

A protective order is ordered by a judge in criminal court, usually after someone has been arrested.

If someone (in your family or not) has been arrested for hurting, threatening, or stalking you, the criminal court may give you a *protective order* to keep that person away from you. But a protective order only lasts until the criminal case ends, and it may not protect other people in your family.

A temporary restraining order is ordered by a judge in family court, and it applies only to certain people, as explained below.

You can ask the family court for a *temporary restraining order* whether you have a criminal *protective order* or not. A *temporary restraining order* can last longer, and it can also protect other members of your family.

This booklet will tell you how to ask the family court for a *temporary restraining order*. There are other ways to protect yourself from family violence. To learn more, talk to a [domestic violence agency](#) or a lawyer.

Who can a temporary restraining order protect me from?

- Your spouse or former spouse.
- Your parent, child, or other relative.
- Someone you live with or used to live with.
- Someone you have a child with, even if you have never lived together or been married.
- Someone you are dating or used to date.
- A caretaker providing shelter in his or her home to a person 60+ years old.

If the person harming you is not a member of your family or household, you should contact the police.

How can a restraining order help me?

A restraining order can order that person to not hurt you, threaten to hurt you, or stalk you. This includes hitting, pushing, kicking, biting, scratching, or anything else that hurts you.

In certain situations, you can also ask the court to order that you temporarily have specific belongings or documents, such as

- a vehicle;
- a checkbook;
- documentation of health, automobile, or homeowner's insurance; or
- a document you need to prove your identity, such as an ID or passport.

You can also ask the court to order that the other person

- not shut off utilities for the home;
- not cancel or change health, auto, or homeowner's insurance;
- not sell, hide, or get rid of property that you own or lease;
- make rent or mortgage payments on the home;
- pay for utilities for the home;
- provide financial support for the children.

These specific orders, called *Orders of Maintenance*, expire 120 days from when they are issued or when a judge enters new orders to replace them.

You can apply for *Orders of Maintenance* in these situations:

- The other person is your spouse.
- The other person is the parent of your minor child or children, and you all live together.

For more information, you can get help at a Court Service Center, located in most courthouses.

How to ask for a temporary restraining order:

Step 1: Fill out the court forms.

You will need to fill out the following forms. You can get them at any courthouse or online at www.jud.ct.gov/webform.

- [Application for Relief from Abuse](#) (JD-FM-137). This form tells the judge the names, addresses, and birth dates of the people in your case. It also lets you tell the court if the person has guns.
- [Affidavit for Relief from Abuse](#) (JD-FM-138). This form tells the judge why you need a restraining order.
- [Request for Nondisclosure of Location Information](#) (JD-FM-188). This form makes sure that your contact information will be kept private.

What if I have children (under 18) together who are also in danger?

If you have **children under 18** and you will be asking the court to have them live with you, you should also fill out an [Affidavit Concerning Children](#) (JD-FM-164).

The court may give you temporary custody of the children until the restraining order expires. If you want permanent custody orders, you will need to start a separate custody case in Family Court. Ask the clerk or a lawyer how to do this.

If the court does **not** give you temporary custody in the restraining order, you can start a separate custody case. Ask a lawyer how to do this.

You can ask for help filling out forms at

- a [Court Service Center](#) (at the courthouse);
- Statewide Legal Services (800-453-3320); or
- a domestic violence agency (888-774-2900).

You must tell the truth on your forms. Keep in mind that the other person will get a copy of your forms (except for your contact information). Be sure to fill out the [Request for Nondisclosure of Location Information](#) (JD-FM-188) so your contact information is kept private.

Step 2: File the court forms with the court clerk.

File your completed forms at the family court clerk's office at the courthouse that serves the town where you live or where the other person lives.

The clerk will give your forms to a judge. The judge will decide on your restraining order by the end of the day that you submit your paperwork to the clerk. If the judge grants your restraining order, the court will set a date for a hearing. The hearing will be held within 14 days of when the judge signs the temporary restraining order (or within 7 days if the other person has a permit to carry or own a firearm or ammunition).

A *temporary restraining order* protects you until your court hearing. If you want the temporary order to last beyond the court hearing, you must go to court on the hearing date and tell the judge what you need and why you are afraid.

The judge may not grant a *temporary restraining order*, but instead order a hearing to listen to both sides. If this happens there, is no protection in place. You must go to court on the hearing date and tell the judge why you are afraid and what you need.

Step 3: Have a marshal serve the papers.

If the judge grants your temporary restraining order, the clerk will give you back the original papers and copies. You will need to ask a State Marshal to deliver (or *serve*) a copy of these papers on the other person. The marshal will serve the papers for free. There is a [list of marshals online](#) or the court clerk can give you a list.

Some courts will want you to call ahead before your hearing and mark your case "READY." This lets the court know that you are planning to come to court on your hearing day. Ask the clerk if you will need to call ahead of time to mark the case ready. (Some courts don't follow this procedure, so check with the clerk ahead of time.)

Some marshals will have you fill out a form with information about the other party, or you can write a letter with this information. The marshal will need to know what the person looks like, where they work, the places they visit regularly, and if they have weapons. It's important that you give detailed information about the other person so the marshal can find them and deliver the restraining order. If you have a photograph of the other party, bring it with you and show it to the marshal.

Important: You must have the marshal serve the papers on other person **at least 3 days before the hearing**. If you don't have the other person served and they don't have notice of the hearing, the case won't be able to proceed on the hearing date. If this happens, you can ask the court to extend the temporary restraining order for 14 days so the marshal can deliver the papers. If the judge decides to extend the temporary restraining order, the clerk will prepare papers for the marshal to try to serve the other person again.

Step 4: Get ready for your court hearing.

Collect any evidence you need, such as medical records, photos, or police reports.

If you want a witness (such as a neighbor or police officer) to speak at your hearing, but you're worried the witness may not go to the hearing, you can ask the clerk for a subpoena (pronounced sa-PEA-na). A subpoena is a court order that says the witness must go to your hearing. You will have to get a marshal to serve the subpoena. It must be served 18 hours or more before the hearing, so you should go to the clerk's office at least 2 or 3 days before your hearing if you want to get a subpoena.

If you have questions or need help, call a [domestic violence agency](#) or talk to a lawyer.

Step 5: The day of your hearing.

- If you don't speak English and you need an interpreter, contact Superior Court operations at (860) 706-5040 as soon as you know your hearing date. Usually the court does not like a family member or friend to interpret in these types of cases.
- Get to court early. It may take 20 to 30 minutes to go through security and find your courtroom.
- Each courthouse is different, so ask the clerk's office in advance if you must meet with Family Services before going to the courtroom.
- Ask the clerk's office which courtroom you should go to. Go inside the courtroom. Tell the clerk you are ready, and show copies of your *Temporary Restraining Order* and other papers for your case, including any papers the marshal gave you.
- Turn your cell phone off.
- Wear your good clothes and be polite to everyone.
- Do not take your children into the courtroom. If you don't have a babysitter, bring someone who can watch them in the hallway while you are in the courtroom.
- If you have questions or need help, call a [domestic violence agency](#) or a lawyer.

Important! The other person has the right to go to the hearing so you may see them there.

What happens at the hearing?

If the other person is there:

The court may ask you and the other person to meet with a Family Relations officer first. The officer will suggest a way to make an agreement about your case instead of having a hearing. But you don't have to accept the officer's suggestion.

If the temporary restraining order signed by the judge orders no contact between you and the other person, you should let one of the courthouse marshals know this. They will help make sure that you can meet with Family Relations separately and without any incidents.

If you and the other person make an agreement:

The officer will put the agreement in writing and give it to the judge. Then the judge will ask you and the other person these questions:

- Is this your agreement?
- Did you read it?
- Did you sign it?
- Did anyone force you to agree to this?
- Do you think the agreement is fair, under all of the circumstances?
- Do you want me to make your agreement a court order?

If the other person is NOT there or you can't come to an agreement, wait in the courtroom until the judge calls your name. You will have a hearing, and the judge will decide your case.

When the judge calls your name

- Stand up and say, "Ready."
- Go to the front of the courtroom and stand behind one of the tables.
- When you speak, stand up and call the judge "Your Honor."
- Be calm and polite. Do not interrupt the judge or anyone else.
- Tell the judge *why* you need a restraining order and *for how long*. Show the judge any evidence you brought. Also tell the judge if the other person disobeyed the temporary restraining order.
- You can ask for an order that lasts up to one year, but you must prove that you need it. (If the judge orders that it lasts for one year, you can renew it before it expires. (See, "**What if I need the order to last longer?**" below.)
- You can also ask for an order that lasts "until further order of the Court." (This means the order will last for an unlimited amount of time, until one of the parties asks for a court order to change it.)
- The other person will also have a chance to tell the judge about what happened.
- The judge will make a decision.

The Judge's Decision

If the judge decides to give you a restraining order:

- The clerk will give you a certified copy of your order. Make several copies. Keep a copy of the order with you **at all times**. It may also be helpful to keep a copy at work, at home, and at your children's school or daycare.
- If the other person does not come to the hearing, the clerk will send them a copy at the address listed on your first request for a temporary restraining order. You do not have to have the other person served by a marshal after the hearing.
- The court will fax the order to the police departments where you live and work.
- The court will also fax the order to the police departments where the other person lives.
- Read and follow all court orders about custody and visitation for your children.

If the judge decides NOT to give you a restraining order:

Try to find out why by asking the judge. If there was a mistake with how the papers were served on the other person, you may be able to fix it. If the court says you have to start over from the beginning, talk to a lawyer or a domestic violence agency.

What if the other person does not obey the restraining order?

- If you are in danger, **call 9-1-1**.
- If the other person disobeys a “no contact” or “no violence” order, you can call the police and show them your order.
- If the other person disobeys any part of your restraining order, you can ask the court to punish him/her. You must fill out a *Motion for Contempt* (JD-FM-173). If you need help with the form, ask the Court Service Center or the clerk’s office. See the legal aid booklet, [How to Ask for a Contempt Order](#).

What if I need the order to last longer?

If you need to make your order last longer, follow these steps:

1. At least one to two months before your order expires, fill out a *Motion to Extend a Restraining Order*. We have a sample *motion* that you can fill out available as [a PDF](#) or [a Word document](#). Leave the *Order* section and the dates in the *Certification* section blank for now.
2. When you are ready to mail the form, fill in the dates and the *Certification* section. The *Certification* section on the second page of the form tells the court when you mailed copies of the motion and who you sent them to. Make a copy of your *Motion* and mail it to the other person using first-class mail. Mail another copy to their lawyer, if he or she has one.
3. Take the original *Motion* and a copy to the clerk’s office at the courthouse where you got your previous restraining order. The clerk will file the original, stamp the copy, and give you the copy to keep for your records.
4. The clerk will mail you a notice that says when you must go back to court to ask the judge to extend your order.
5. Go to the court hearing on the date listed on the notice.

If the court extends your order, ask the clerk how to get a certified copy of the new order. If the defendant disobeys the order, you will need a certified copy to show the police.

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