

What is a “domestic violence restraining order”?

It is a court order that can help protect people who have been abused or threatened with abuse.

Can I get a domestic violence restraining order?

You can ask for one if:

- A person has abused you or threatened to abuse you *and*
- You have one of the following relationships with that person: married, divorced, separated, registered domestic partnership, have a child together, dating or used to date, live together or used to live together*;
- Or you are related within the second degree of affinity or consanguinity. This means: mother or mother-in-law, father or father-in-law, child or stepchild or legally adopted child, grandparent or grandparent-in-law, grandchild or grandchild-in-law, sister or sister-in-law, brother or brother-in-law, stepparent, daughter-in-law or son-in-law. The in-law must be through a current marriage. (See Family Code § 6211).

* You have to regularly reside in the household.

What is abuse?

Abuse means to intentionally or recklessly cause or attempt to cause bodily injury to you; or sexually assault you; or to place you or another person in reasonable fear of imminent serious bodily injury; or to molest, attack, hit, stalk, threaten, batter, harass, telephone, or contact you; or to disturb your peace; or destroy your personal property. Abuse can be spoken, written, or physical. (See Family Code §§ 6203, 6320).

How soon can I get the order?

The judge will decide within one business day whether or not to make any temporary orders. Sometimes the judge decides sooner. Ask the clerk if you should wait or come back later to get copies of the *Notice of Court Hearing* (Form DV-109) and *Temporary Restraining Order* (Form DV-110).

What if I don't have the relationship necessary to qualify for a domestic violence restraining order?

There are other kinds of orders you can ask for:

- Civil harassment order (can be used for neighbors, roommates, cousins, uncles, and aunts)
- Dependent adult or elder abuse restraining order
- Workplace violence order

Ask the court clerk for the forms you need for these special kinds of orders, or visit www.courts.ca.gov. You may also want to talk to a lawyer.

How will the restraining order help me?

The court can order the restrained person to:

- Not contact or go near you, your children, other relatives, or others who live with you
- Not have any guns or ammunition
- Move out of your house
- Obey child custody and visitation orders
- Pay child support
- Pay spousal support
- Obey orders about property

How do I ask for a domestic violence restraining order?

The forms are available at any California courthouse or county law library or at: www.courts.ca.gov/forms.

You may get assistance in completing and filing your request from the court's self-help center or a legal aid association.

After completing the forms, give them to the clerk of the court. The clerk will write a hearing date on the *Notice of Court Hearing* (Form DV-109). If your request for temporary orders is granted, the clerk will also give you a copy of the *Temporary Restraining Order* (DV-110) signed by a judicial officer.

See Form DV-505-INFO, *How Do I Ask for a Temporary Restraining Order?* to know which forms you need and for steps to follow after you complete the forms.

How long does the order last?

If the judge makes a temporary order, it will last until the hearing date. At that time, the judge will decide to continue or cancel the order. The restraining order can last up to 5 years. Child custody, visitation, child support, and spousal support orders can last longer than 5 years and they do not end when the restraining order ends.

How much does it cost?

Nothing.

How will the person to be restrained know about the order?

Someone who is at least 18—**not you** or anyone else to be protected by the order—must “serve” (give) the person to be restrained a copy of the order in person. The sheriff or marshal will do it for free, but you have to ask. For help with service, ask the court clerk for form DV-200-INFO, *What Is “Proof of Personal Service”?* or visit www.courts.ca.gov.

What if the restrained person doesn't obey the order?

Call the police. The restrained person can be arrested and charged with a crime.

Do I have to go to court?

Yes. Go to court on the date the clerk gives you. If you do not, your order will end.

Do I need a lawyer?

Having a lawyer is always a good idea, especially if you have children, but it is not required. You are not entitled to a free court-appointed lawyer. Ask the court clerk about free and low cost legal services and domestic violence help centers in your county. You can also go to the Family Law Facilitator for help with child support.

Do I need to bring a witness to the court hearing?

No. But it helps to have proof of the abuse. You can bring:

- A written statement from a witness, made under oath
- Witnesses
- Photos
- Medical or police reports
- Damaged property
- Threatening letters, e-mails, or telephone messages

The judge may or may not let a witness speak at the hearing.

So if possible, you should bring their written statement under oath to the hearing. (*You can use Form MC-030, Declaration, for this purpose.*)

Will I see the restrained person at the court hearing?

If the restrained person comes to the hearing, yes. But that person does not have the right to speak to you. If you are afraid, tell the court officer. Read *Get Ready for the Court Hearing* (Form DV-520-INFO).

Can I bring someone with me to court?

Yes. You can bring someone to sit with you during the court hearing. But that person cannot speak for you in court. Only you or your lawyer (if you have one) can speak for you.

What if I don't speak English?

When you file your papers, ask the clerk if a court interpreter is available. If the interpreter is not available for your court date, bring someone to interpret for you. Do not ask a child, or anyone to be protected by the order, to interpret for you.

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, talk to an immigration lawyer.

What if I am deaf or hard of hearing?

Assistive listening systems, computer-assisted real-time captioning, or sign language interpreter services are available if you ask at least five days before the proceeding. Contact the clerk's office or go to www.courts.ca.gov/forms for *Request for Accommodations by Persons With Disabilities and Response* (Form MC-410). (Civil Code, § 54.8.)

Need more information?

Ask the court clerk about free or low-cost legal help. For a referral to a local domestic violence or legal assistance program, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline:

1-800-799-7233

TDD: 1-800-787-3224

It's free and private.

They can help you in more than 100 languages.

Can the restrained person and I agree to cancel the order?

No. After the order is issued, only the judge can change or cancel it.

Can I use the 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.

Can the order stop the other parent from taking our children away?

If you get a temporary restraining order that includes an order for custody, the parent with custody may not remove the child from California before notice to the other parent and a court hearing on the request to establish or modify custody. Read the order and Form DV-140, *Child Custody and Visitation Order*, if issued, for any other limits. There are some exceptions. Ask a lawyer.

What if I want to leave the county or state?

The restraining order is valid anywhere in the United States. If you move out of California, contact the local police so they will know about your orders.