

What To Expect In Court

You have a right to be safe in the courthouse and in the courtroom. Your abuser may try to threaten you or scare you in the courthouse. Your abuser may also try to stop the case by telling you he is sorry about the abuse and promising not to hurt you anymore. Even if you think that you may get back together, having an order of protection may prevent more violence in the future. If your abuser promises to stop the abuse, you could have the judge hear the promise by your abuser agreeing to the order of protection.

You have a right to an interpreter if you feel you will not be able to fully understand the proceedings in English. It is the court's responsibilities to locate an appropriate interpreter. A friend or member of either you or your abuser's family would not be appropriate to interpret. It is never appropriate to use children for language interpretation. Contact a domestic violence advocate if the court does not provide you this service.

You do not have to speak with or sit near your abuser or your abuser's family or friends in court. ***If your abuser tries to intimidate you or you feel pressured in any way, go immediately to a guard, clerk or anyone else who works in the courthouse and ask for help.*** Family Court is open to the public, so your abuser may bring family and friends into the courtroom when you speak with the judge. You can petition the court to close the courtroom to outside parties, but your request may be denied unless there are special circumstances that might disrupt the court proceedings.

If your abuser does not come to the hearing, your case will be adjourned and you will be given a new court date. You can ask the judge to issue a warrant for the arrest of your abuser. If you have a temporary order of protection, you may also need to ask for it to be extended until the next court date.