

**Act 66 of 2005, Effective May 9, 2006**  
**Protection From Abuse Act Amendments**

**Pennsylvania Offers New Protections for Victims**

Strong and sweeping changes to Pennsylvania's Protection From Abuse (PFA) Act took place on May 9, 2006 – 180 days from enactment of Act 66 of 2005, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence's omnibus PFA amendments.

Act 66 contained unprecedented protections for Pennsylvanians who are the victims of violence perpetrated by intimate partners, family or household members. It strengthened the effectiveness and enforcement of protection orders and enhanced the safety of domestic violence victims and their children.

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence is acutely aware that lax or inconsistent enforcement can be deadly to those who count on the promise of justice that the PFA law affords. But laws are not self-implementing, and so, for much of 2005, the Coalition laid the groundwork for a smooth and successful statewide implementation of Act 66.

**Highlights of Act 66 Changes** – Act 66 amended the Protection From Abuse Act to do the following:

- Expand the duration of PFA orders from 18 to 36 months
- Give the Court discretion to order a PFA defendant to relinquish all firearms, not to exceed the duration of a PFA order
- Offer accountability measures for defendants who fail to abide by the PFA order
- Provide defendants with the option of relinquishing firearms to a third party of his/her choosing for safekeeping and provide accountability measures for those parties safekeeping firearms
- Standardize the process for the return of firearms at the conclusion of a PFA order
- Give judges the discretion to order supervised probation of not more than six months to a defendant who violated the terms and conditions of a PFA order
- Remove victim fees associated with PFA proceedings
- Define provisions associated with authority and jurisdiction, giving law enforcement officers greater authority to follow through with the arrest of domestic violence offenders.
- Direct the court to consider any risk posed by the defendant to the children, as well as risk to the plaintiff, when awarding temporary custody or temporary visitation rights with regard to minor children.