

Pennsylvania's Protection From Abuse (PFA) Act – Information for Completing the Petition

Applying for a PFA Order can be a confusing and even scary process. This paper is meant to provide a victim of domestic violence who is asking the court for protection with guidance about how to complete a PFA petition. The PFA Act says that you must prove to the court that you have been abused, as described in the categories below. Abuse can take many forms, including economic, emotional, and psychological, and you can write about those, too. Note: **Your abuser will receive a copy of the petition. It will also be available as a public record at the Courthouse.**

In your petition you can describe any of the following, if they happened to you:

- **“Acts that cause bodily injury or serious bodily injury and/or sexual offenses”**
Hitting, punching, slapping, pushing, strangling, choking, forcing sex or attempting to do any of these things
- **“Putting another person in reasonable fear of imminent serious bodily injury”**
Making threats to harm or kill you, your family, your children, or your pets
- **“False imprisonment”**
Restraining your movement or holding you down.
- **“Physical or sexual abuse of minor children”**
- **“A course of conduct or repeatedly committing acts toward another, that put the person in reasonable fear of bodily injury”**
Sending threatening emails, following you, showing up at your residence, workplace, or school, repeatedly calling you on the phone

In your petition write clearly and in detail **what happened** and **when** it happened. Try to keep your statements focused on **how you were physically abused or threatened** and whether **you are afraid** you will be abused or threatened again. You can use this short checklist to be sure you included important details and key facts in your petition.

- Details about the most recent physical or threatening incident
- Information about guns or other weapons that were used to hurt or threaten you
- Sexual abuse – things you did not want to do with the abuser but were made to do
If you feel embarrassed by writing details about sexual abuse, you can write a few words in the petition and give more details to the judge later
- How the abuser threatened you
- Other abuse and/or injuries you suffered from the abuser before this incident
- Relief you want in your PFA Order (no abuse, no contact, abuser evicted from residence, etc.)
- How the abuser hurt or threatened your children

If you have any photos of injuries or property damage caused by your abuser, text messages or emails, or ripped clothing that show how the abuser threatened, abused, or harassed you, don't forget to bring them to the final hearing.

***This paper provides legal information, and should not be taken as legal advice.**

If you have not already done so, you should contact your local domestic violence program. [Click here to search online](#) or call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).