**What happens after I have been served with an ex parte order of protection?**

You should carefully read all the documents you receive and follow all instructions that they give. These documents you should receive include:

* The Ex Parte Order of Protection
* The Petition for Order of Protection
* Any supporting statements and accusations

Read the Ex Parte Order to determine what the judge has ordered you to do and you to not do. The Order will give the reasons why the judge granted it. The Order will also list a future court date, usually in a week or two. At this court date, you can tell the judge your side of the story.

The ex parte order is **immediately** in effect and will last until after your hearing date. This means that you can have no contact through any manner or medium with the Petitioner. If you do have contact with her about anything, you are subject to being criminally charged. Each violation of an order of protection is considered a criminal misdemeanor. Three misdemeanors are considered a felony. Each violation can subject you to jail time, unsupervised probation, and hours of community service. When in doubt do not contact her.

Make sure to show up in court on that date. If you do not, the judge could enter a Full Order of Protection against you without hearing your side of the story.

If an Ex Parte Order was not entered, you will receive a Petition for an Order of Protection. The Petition will explain the reasons why your accuser wants an Order of Protection against you. There will also be a date for you to show up in court and possibly other instructions for you to follow.

**Can I change the terms of the Ex Parte Order of Protection?**

No. You will have to comply with the terms of the ex parte order of protection until the hearing. Often times, even if your accuser tells the court he/she wants to dismiss the order, the court will not actually dismiss the ex parte order until the hearing date. You will still need to comply with the terms of the order until the hearing date.

**How can an Order of Protection effect my custody or my visits with my children?**

Sometimes, children are also included in an Order of Protection. If you do not have an existing custody order or a pending custody case, the Order can award custody and/or visitation rights by:

* Giving your accuser sole custody of your child
* Limiting visits with your child to certain times, days, and locations, and requiring another person to supervise the visits
* Requiring you to make temporary child support payments

**Can an Order of Protection keep me from entering my home or using my property?**

Yes. An Order of Protection can keep you from entering your accuser’s home, even if you live there. If the judge decides it is best for your accuser’s safety, the judge may order you to stay away from your home for as long as the Order of Protection lasts.

If you share property with your accuser, like a car, the judge may order you to not sell, damage, or hide it. The judge can also keep you from using the property if the judge feels that sharing it would be difficult or risk abuse.

**What happens at the Order of Protection hearing?**

At the hearing for an Order of Protection, both you and your accuser can tell your side of the story to a judge. Your accuser will go first, testifying about the abuse to show that an Order of Protection is needed. After your accuser is done, you will have the chance to present your side of the story.

After hearing both sides, the judge will decide whether or not to enter an Order of Protection against you. The judge may do this right away, or may make a decision after a break. The break could take only a few hours, or it could take up to a few weeks. While you wait for a decision by the judge, your accuser may ask the judge to extend the existing Ex Parte Order of Protection.

**What happens if I do not show up for the Order of Protection hearing?**

If you do not show up in court on the date listed in your notice or Ex Parte Order, a judge will decide the case based on the accuser’s side of the story.

If the Order of Protection is granted, you will have to follow it, even though you weren’t at the hearing and didn’t get to tell your side of the story.

**Can my accuser change the Order of Protection after it begins?**

Yes. Your accuser can use a Petition to Modify or Dismiss an Order of Protection to ask a judge to:

* Change or remove any specific term of the Order of Protection
* Renew or extend the Order of Protection after it expires. If there is a good reason, a judge can extend an Order for another two years and can continue to do this until the abuse ends or the situation changes.
* Dismiss the Order of Protection, if your accuser feels that the Order is no longer necessary