



## PEACE ORDERS

### What is a peace order?

It's a court order that requires another person to stay away and refrain from contacting you. [Find Help.](#)

### Is it the same as a protective order?

They are similar. The difference: Protective orders apply if you are in a family-like or intimate relationship or if sexual assault has occurred; peace orders apply to all other relationships. Think neighbor, stranger, co-worker. If your relationship qualifies for a protective order, you may NOT seek a peace order. [Learn more at mdcourts.gov/dv.](http://mdcourts.gov/dv)

### Can I get a peace order?

You may ask the court for a peace order if you have been subjected to abuse, harassment, stalking, trespass, or malicious destruction of property. Other grounds include misuse of telephone or electronic communication, revenge porn, and visual surveillance. Remember, if your relationship with the other person is family-like or sexual, you should get a [protective order](#) instead of a peace order.

### How do I get a peace order?

Start by completing a [Petition for Peace Order, or form DC-PO-001](#). Find the form online or ask a court clerk or commissioner for a blank form. If courts are open, file your papers with the clerk in a [District Court](#). Do not go to a circuit court. If courts are closed, find a [District Court Commissioner's office](#) and submit your papers there. The Commissioner's office is open 24 hours a day. If courts are open, you MUST file your petition there. [Learn more in a brochure.](#)

### Is there a deadline?

You must file your petition within 30 days of the act you describe on the form.

### How do I keep my address private on my court documents?

When you file documents to open a case, law enforcement must give copies of those papers – which include your contact information – to the other person. If you're concerned about your safety because disclosing your address puts you at risk of further harm, ask the court to keep your contact information private. Use the form called [Request to Withhold Address, or form CC-DC-PO-021](#). There is also a more permanent way to keep your address private on all documents called Safe-At-Home. [Learn more at mdcourts.gov/addressprivacy.](http://mdcourts.gov/addressprivacy)

## **What happens after I file my petition?**

If you filed your petition with a commissioner when court is closed, you will have an immediate interim hearing where you will explain the events and behaviors that you believe were abusive. If the commissioner finds that your relationship qualifies and the abuse occurred, they will issue an interim protective order which lasts about two days. Your papers will include a date and time for a temporary hearing in court. At this hearing, you explain what happened to a judge. If you filed your petition during court hours with a clerk of the court, this will be your first immediate hearing. If a judge determines your relationship qualifies and abuse occurred, they will issue a temporary order which lasts for seven days, unless the court extends it.

Keep in contact with the court as it schedules your final hearing. Both individuals may be at this formal hearing and offer testimony and evidence.

## **What are the safeguards in a peace order?**

Orders granted at the beginning of your case (interim or temporary orders) can order the other person to

- stop abusing, threatening, or harassing you;
- have no contact with you;
- stay away from your home, work, or school.

Orders granted at the end of your case (final peace orders) may have those safeguards listed above, plus the following additional provisions:

- counseling;
- mediation;
- fees and court costs paid for by the Respondent.

## **How long is a final peace order in effect?**

Up to six months. The court may extend it for up to six additional months.

## **I was served with a peace order. What do I do?**

You are identified on those papers as the Respondent. You are not being arrested or charged with a crime. Carefully read the order which explains how much contact, if any, you may have with the Petitioner. The order will include a hearing date. This is not a criminal case, so you are not entitled to a public defender. The judge will ask whether you want to agree (or consent) to the order. You may also challenge (or contest) the order. Peace orders have serious consequences. Consider speaking with a lawyer.

## **Can I ask the court to limit public access to my peace order case?**

Respondents may limit access to case records under certain circumstance. [Read more in a brochure.](#)

