

Protection from Abuse (PFA) Procedures in Allegheny County, PA during the COVID-19 Crisis

A Judicial Emergency was declared on March 16, 2020 for the Allegheny County courts (Fifth Judicial District of Pennsylvania) due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. This Judicial Emergency has been extended through several different Court Orders and remains in effect through May 8, 2020, and it is explained in several Administrative Court Orders from President Judge Kim Berkeley Clark. The orders are posted on the court website at:

<https://www.alleghencourts.us/Home/Default.aspx>

There is detailed information about emergency procedures for all Divisions in the Allegheny County courts at this website

The Judicial Emergency Court Orders have changed the Protection from Abuse (PFA) procedures in Allegheny County as follows:

- 1. The time and location for filing Temporary and Emergency PFA cases have been changed.**
 - The Family Court Facility at 440 Ross Street in downtown Pittsburgh is now closed to the public. Anyone who wants to file a PFA Petition and obtain a Temporary PFA Order from Family Court must go to the Pittsburgh Municipal Court building at 660 First Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15219 between the hours of 8AM and 2PM on any weekday.
 - Emergency PFA Petitions can only be filed before a Magisterial District Judge (MDJ) at Pittsburgh Municipal Court (and not at any other MDJ office) on weekdays from 2PM to 8AM and on weekends 24 hours/day.
- 2. Some Temporary PFA Orders have been extended and their original Final PFA Hearing dates have been postponed.**
 - Temporary PFA Orders that were scheduled for a Final PFA hearing to take place between March 23, 2020 and May 8, 2020 are extended. These PFA orders will remain in full force and effect until May 23, 2020 (15 days after the end of the Judicial Emergency). New Final Hearing dates will be scheduled if the PFA plaintiffs want to proceed with the PFA case. PFA plaintiffs and/or their attorneys should call Family Court's PFA Unit at 412-350-4441 to schedule their new Final PFA Hearings.
- 3. Changed procedures for filing PFA Order violations.**
 - Complaints for Indirect Criminal Contempt (ICC) for Violations of PFA Orders will not be accepted by private petitions filed by PFA plaintiffs. Only ICC complaints filed by the police will be accepted.

During the Judicial Emergency, an effort is underway to reduce the number of inmates at the Allegheny County Jail due to the spread of COVID-19. **It is very important for victims whose perpetrators have been incarcerated to sign up for Jail Release Notification through the Center for Victims at 1-866-644-2882 and through the statewide PA SAVIN at 1-866-972-7284.**

Domestic violence victims, who have questions or would like assistance with any of the changes described above, should **CALL THE WOMEN'S CENTER & SHELTER OF GREATER PITTSBURGH'S (WC&S'S) 24/7 HOTLINE AT 412-687-8005 OR 1-877-338-TALK.** During this COVID-19 crisis, safety planning is more important than ever and is available through the WC&S hotline. WC&S services are confidential and free of charge and remain available throughout the COVID-