

Restraining Orders and COVID-19

COVID-19 has caused court closures that no one could have anticipated. Courts were initially available only for emergency matters but are reopening for other cases. Call your courthouse for information or look up your state in the [National Center for State Courts](#) website.

Court closures and restraining orders

- ◆ While the courts are closed or operating on a limited basis, states may postpone court hearings for final restraining orders and automatically extend temporary orders.
- ◆ If your temporary order is expiring but the court date for your final order has been postponed, please be sure to check with your court clerk to confirm:
 - that your temporary restraining order has been extended and ask for a copy of the order with the new expiration date; and
 - when the next court date is.

Court hearings

- ◆ It's important to make sure you don't miss your hearing. If you're not sure if your hearing has been postponed, you might want to consider going to court on the original date until you hear otherwise. If you don't go to your hearing, there might be serious consequences:
 - If a petitioner misses a court date, the judge could dismiss the case.
 - If a respondent misses a court date, the judge could grant the other party whatever s/he asked for in the petition.
- ◆ Before the court hearing, find out if it's going to be held in person or virtually.
- ◆ If it's a virtual hearing:
 - Make sure you have the necessary equipment to participate, such as a smartphone, tablet, or computer with a camera. If you don't have any device with a camera, you can try to borrow one from [a local domestic violence organization](#) or ask the court for other alternatives.
 - If you face technical issues with your equipment, please speak up and tell the judge. It's important to be able to fully participate in the hearing.
- ◆ [Presenting evidence](#) in a virtual hearing may be more complicated. It's possible that the judge may require all documents to be scanned and emailed or mailed ahead of time. This is something you're going to want to ask the court clerk about.
- ◆ If being on camera could expose a confidential location to the abuser, plan to participate from a different location. For example, if you are hiding at your mom's house but the abuser hears your mom's voice in the background, this will reveal where you are. Plan for your safety with a [domestic violence advocate](#) before the hearing.