



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Each state has different requirements for getting a civil domestic violence protection order. Because it makes protection orders difficult for teens to obtain, the District of Columbia's grade for protecting teen victims of domestic and dating violence is a C.

Do I Qualify for a Protection Order in Washington, DC?

Type of Relationship

In order to qualify for a protection order, the abuser must be someone:

- You are in a romantic relationship with (it does not have to be a sexual relationship)¹
- You are sharing a residence with²
- You have a child with³
- You are married to or used to be married to⁴
- You are related to by blood or legal custody⁵

Type of Abuse⁶

A judge may issue you a protection order when your abuser has:

- Physically abused you
- Attempted to abuse you
- Threatened to injure you
- Attempted or threatened to physically abuse you
- Stalked you

Age

If you are 18 years or older, you can obtain a protection order yourself without an adult's permission.⁷ For minors under 18, the law does not say who can file for you.¹ It will be up to the individual courts and judges whether you can get a protection order without your parent's permission. Check with a local domestic violence organization to see how your local courts handle minors who want protection orders.

How Do I Get a Protection Order?

If you qualify to apply for a protection order, you can go to court to file for the order. A judge will decide whether there is enough threat of immediate danger to grant a temporary protection order. The judge will also schedule a time in the next 14 days for a full hearing. The temporary order lasts until your hearing.⁸ After the hearing, the judge may grant you a permanent order which lasts up to 1 year and is renewable.⁹

What Can I Ask for in a Protection Order?

You may ask the court for the following in a protection order:

- The abuser must stop abusive behaviors¹⁰
- Order the abuser to attend counseling¹¹
- The abuser must stay away from you and your home¹²
- Child and spousal support¹³
- Temporary child custody and visitation¹⁴
- Require the abuser to pay you back for costs caused by the abuse, including court costs and attorney fees¹⁵
- Abuser must surrender any firearm(s)¹⁶

How Much Will It Cost?

It is free.

¹ In December 2008, the District of Columbia passed legislation that clarifies how minor victims of domestic violence may petition for protection orders. However, because the law is not expected to take effect until March 2009, it was not taken into consideration for this report.

You have the right to a safe and healthy relationship...
free from violence and free from fear.

¹ D.C. Code Ann. § 16-1001(5)(B) (2007).

² *Id.* § 16-1001(5)(A).

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.* § 16-1001(5).

⁷ *Id.* §§ 46-101, 16-1004(d).

⁸ *Id.* § 16-1004(d).

⁹ *Id.* § 16-1005(d).

¹⁰ *Id.* §§ 16-1005(c)(1), (3).

¹¹ *Id.* § 16-1005(c)(2).

¹² *Id.* §§ 16-1005(c)(3)-(4).

¹³ Specified in court forms when filing for a protection order.

¹⁴ *Id.* §§ 16-1005(c)(6)-(7).

¹⁵ *Id.* § 16-1005(c)(8).

¹⁶ Specified in court forms when filing for a protection order.

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