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PFA Tips & Tricks: Part 2: Going to Court for Your PFA-PFS

PFA Tips & Tricks (Guide)

This guide is meant to help people going to court for either a PFA (Protection From Abuse) or a PFS (Protection From Stalking).

It is divided into 3 pages/parts:

1. [Preparing for your PFA/PFS](#)
2. Going to Court for your PFA/PFS
3. [After Court- What to Do Now?](#)

You are now on Part 2: *Going to Court for your PFA/PFS*.

► Please be sure to read ALL THREE parts of this guide to make sure you are as prepared as possible going into court.

► It is also VERY important to read part 3 after court and safety plan to make sure you remain safe, no matter the outcome of your court date.

PFA Tips & Tricks: Part 2/3: Going to Court for Your PFA/PFS

Come early to docket

- There is a whole check in process you will need to go through. You will also need to factor time to find signs for the court number, etc.

Turn off your phone or put it on silent

- You don't want your ringer going off while someone is talking.
- Do not text or answer a phone call in court. If the Judge sees you on your phone they will ask you to leave.



What to do when your case is called

- Stand, don't stay seated. Speak clearly and audibly when making your presence known.
- Come to the front of the divider when your case is up and stand at the desks in front of the judge.
 - One desk is for plaintiffs (the person who filed the case) and the other is for defendants (the person against whom the case is filed).

Show respect to the judge and the court

- Address the judge as "Your Honor" and listen closely to their instructions and explanations.
- Do not interrupt the judge. Ever.

Be aware of your body language in court

- Avoid rolling your eyes or interrupting while the other side talks.
 - Even if what they are saying is wrong or they are lying, it's their time to talk. You'll get your chance to tell the judge what you think when it's your turn.



When you are in front of the judge, avoid talking directly to your opponent

- All comments and arguments should be to the judge and not include any side conversations with your opposing party.

How docket works/ Flow of events



- Make sure you write down the date of your court appearance in your calendar. Make arrangements for childcare and transportation.
 - BE THERE, and be there on time.
- First, you will need to check in with the clerk at the courtroom door. The clerk will mark you present on their sheet and let you know which side of the room to sit on.
 - In PFA and PFS cases, defendants and plaintiffs sit on opposite sides of the room.
- When the judge comes into the room, you will be asked to “all rise”. Stand when you hear that. Then the judge will let you know when you can sit back down.
- The judge will then go through the docket list to see who is present and who is not. This makes the docket list shorter by eliminating the cases that have no one present.
 - Make sure you state that you are there when your name is called.
- In most counties, the judge will then start with represented cases. Those are cases for which the people have hired attorneys.
- When your case is called, come to the front of the divider separating the main seating area (called the “gallery”) and the trial area. Stand at your table (plaintiff or defendant) in front of the judge.
- Listen carefully to what the judge says and asks. This will direct you as to what you need to do next.
- If you want to enter something into evidence or approach a witness or the judge, you must first ask permission from the judge.
 - Say something like “Your Honor, may I approach the witness?” Then wait to hear the judge’s answer before acting.
- Once the case is dealt with for the day (whether it be continued to another date, dismissed, or resolved and a court order issued), you will need to wait for the clerk to give you your papers before you leave the courtroom.

- You need these documents for your files. They tell you what was decided that day.
- Make copies of the documents and keep them in a safe place.
- Make sure you and the opposing party leave at different times.
 - If you feel unsafe walking to your car, ask the sheriff for an escort. They will usually provide you with one.
- Make sure to keep safety planning. This is an important step that can help ensure your safety.
 - It's also a good idea, if you haven't already, to get in touch with the advocates at one of the domestic violence resource centers above. They can help heal the internal wounds many victims struggle with.
- If your case was continued to another date, make sure to write it down in your calendar and plan to be there.
 - Make arrangements for childcare and transportation. You don't want to have the case dismissed because you didn't show up.

Clerks

- The clerk's office is where you go to file things in the courthouse. They usually close at 4, so keep that in mind.
- They also have several forms available and can make copies of documents at a small charge.

Safety first

- You can be escorted to your car by police officers if you don't feel safe. Just ask!

Reminders:

- Make sure you get a copy of your order before leaving the courthouse.
- Be sure to check out part 3 of this guide after your court date for safety planning steps.

NEXT UP: SEE PART 3/3- [After Court- What to Do Now?](#)

Last updated on July 15, 2025.

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