

# **Kansas Legal Services**

A non-profit law firm and community education organization helping low and moderate income people in Kansas



[www.kansaslegalservices.org](http://www.kansaslegalservices.org)

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## **PFA Tips & Tricks: Part 1: Preparing for Your PFA or 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 1: *Preparing for your PFA/PFS.*

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? 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.

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## **PFA Tips & Tricks: Part 1/3: Preparing for Your PFA/PFS**

**Appropriate clothing for court**



- General:
  - Dressing professionally and conservatively is a sign of respect for the judge and the court.
  - Don't go overboard though, you should still be comfortable.
  - Avoid any clothing that is revealing or that has any explicit language or images on it.
  - Cover any visible tattoos, if possible.
  - Sunglasses and hats must be removed before entering the courtroom.
- Guys:
  - Men should wear a suit or dress slacks and a dress shirt.
- Gals:
  - Women should wear a conservative dress, business suit, or dress pants and a dress shirt.
  - Flip flops, excessively high heels, and sneakers shouldn't be worn to a trial. Wear only necessary jewelry such as a wedding ring or watch.
  - Don't wear heavy bracelets, earrings, or necklaces.
- Bottom line: Try to look clean and neat. Put your best foot forward. Use common sense.?

## **Kids and toddlers**

- Children under the age of 18 will not be allowed in the courtroom. Keep that in mind when preparing for court.
  - This means that your 13-year-old child won't be able to testify as your witness, or your 6-year-old can't come along and sit with you in court.
  - Be sure to make arrangements for child care beforehand.

## Bring a notebook with you to court

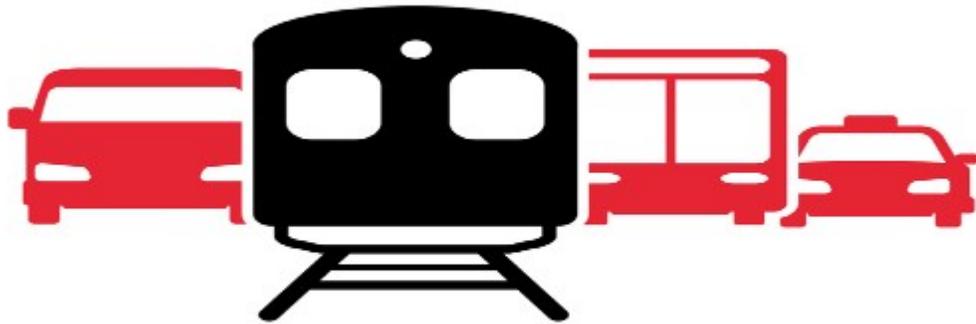
- You're going to want to take notes and it's always a good idea to have a pen and paper ready.

## Resources



- **Child care:** Make sure you have arrangements made for childcare for the day you have court. Do not bring your child or toddler with you to court, as you will not be able to bring them into the courtroom.??
  - If you do bring your child to court, make sure there is someone with you to sit with the child outside the courtroom while court is in session.
  - If you have someone you trust that can watch your child or children that day, perfect!
  - If not, you can find local day care facilities online or through your local yellow pages. One online resource for locating day care facilities near you:  
<http://www.daycareresource.com/kansas.html>

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- **Transportation:** Make sure you plan out how you will get to court. Having reliable transportation is very important.
  - If you have your own car, make sure you put gas in your tank the day before.
  - Don't have a car? Bus systems are great! Check out your local bus routes to map out and plan how you will make your way to court. Below are links to a few Kansas bus route websites (Wichita, Topeka, Lawrence, and Kansas City).
    - <http://www.wichitatransit.org/Pages/default.aspx>
    - <https://topekametro.org/>
    - <http://lawrencetransit.org/routes>
    - <http://www.kcata.org/>
  - Don't like the bus? Make arrangements with friends or sign up for Uber (the ride sharing service- there is a fee involved).

## Value of having a support system there with you

- PFA and PFS proceedings can be hard. They force you to deal with an unpleasant circumstance in your life. You may be forced to see your abuser for the first time since the abuse, or, if the case goes to trial, be questioned by your abuser on the stand. Although we are all strong individually, it never hurts to have support.
- Bring a family member or trusted friend with you to court, if you can. This way you have someone in your corner reminding you just how capable and strong you are.
  - REMEMBER: All the court rules and tips apply to family and friends too. Just because they are not a party to the case doesn't mean they can mumble from their seat as the other side talks, or stay seated when asked to "all rise".
- There are also great advocates at the YWCAs and at shelters like the Willow Domestic Violence Shelter.
  - They are trained to deal with situations like these and are there for you when you need them most.
  - They're very friendly and would love to be there for you.

## Contact Info For Resources

- **To find help near you:**

- The Kansas Crisis Hotline: 1-888-363-2287
  - The Kansas Crisis Hotline is a toll-free, 24-hour statewide hotline linking victims of domestic violence and sexual assault to local services.
- Use this link to find a resource or shelter near you: <http://kcsdv.org/find-help/in-kansas/dv-sa-services.html>

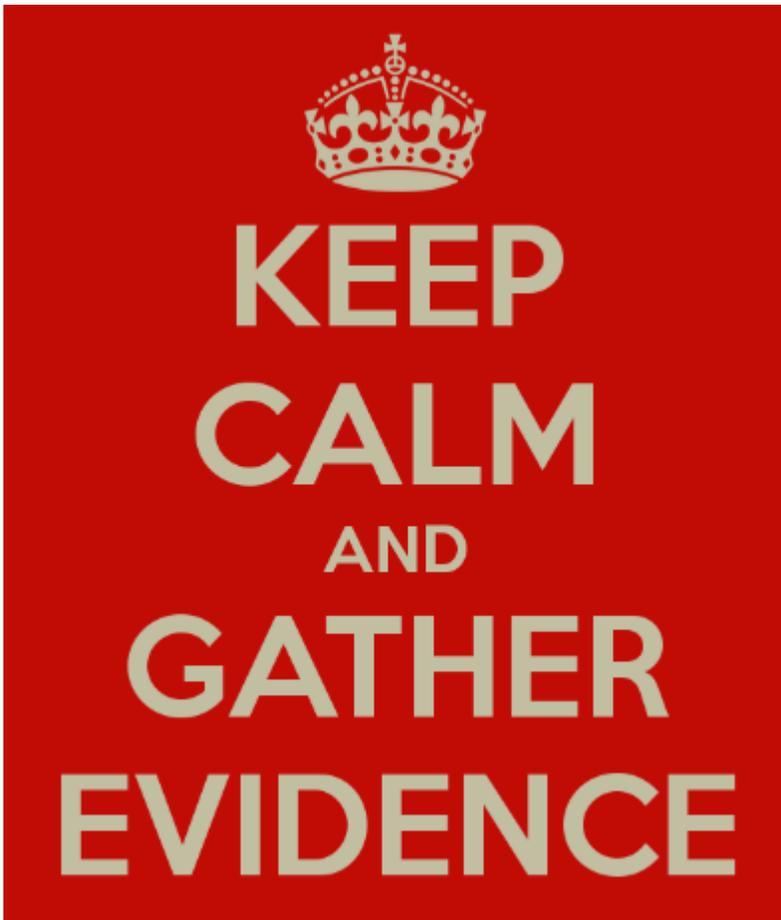


## Witnesses



- Bring with you anyone who has witnessed the abuse or stalking and who is willing to speak on your behalf.
- A letter from your witnesses is not enough. If you want someone to testify or to be a witness, you need them to be there in court.
  - To make someone come to court, you use a subpoena form.
- Subpoena- You can use this form as a model:  
<http://courts.jocogov.org/forms/SUBPOENA.PDF>.
  - You should change the caption at the top to include your county.

## Evidence



- Write down dates of events and keep track of everything that is relevant.
- Print out and make copies of anything you plan on using in your case.
- Take picture of injuries or damage.
- If you want to enter anything into evidence, you'll need to make **3 copies**- one for you, one for the court, and one for your opponent.
- Just showing the judge the screen of your phone isn't enough.
  - The court would have to enter the phone itself into evidence for it to be used if the information you want that's on the phone isn't printed off first.

## 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.

## Parking and meters

- Make sure you have change for meters and pay for enough time so that you don't need to run out of court to feed the meter. Plan ahead.

## Parenting and property issues:

- Be aware that if you have property at the other person's house, or vice-versa, or if you have kids together, property exchanges and parenting time will be brought up.
- Bring case numbers with you: If you've previously been in a divorce with the other party, bring that case number. If you're involved in case having to do with your joint child or children with the other party, bring that case number too. Judges like to know if there are divorce, paternity, custody, or parenting time orders on file so they can consolidate the cases if need be.
- Have a plan: Have an idea of how you'll handle it and what you want to have happen ideally.
- Know what's possible: Be aware of what the court can and can't do. For example, it is rare that a court in a PFA hearing take away completely someone's parenting rights or rights to visitation.

## How to apply for a PFA/PFS and how to apply for KLS services

- Initial filing: These forms are provided by Kansas courts for use in filing for a Protection from Abuse order in Kansas. This link will take you to a variety of forms used in this type of court action. After reviewing the other forms, you must complete the Petition for Protection Order. If there are children involved, you must complete the UCCJEA Affidavit. These forms should be taken to the Clerk of the District Court, located in the County Courthouse. Blank forms are available from the Clerk of the District Court. If you choose to print and complete these forms, please do so in ink and as neatly as possible.
  - The forms are available at <http://www.kansaslegalservices.org/node/183/kansas-protection-abuse-pfa-forms>
  - If you contact the YWCA, they can help you fill out the necessary forms for filing your PFA or PFS.
- Kansas Legal Services: Once you have filed your initial forms, you can contact KLS to inquire about having one of our attorneys with you at court.
  - To apply for KLS' services, call us toll-free at 1-800-723-6953 and fill out the application over the phone with one of our representatives, or Apply Online (at <http://www.kansaslegalservices.org/node/809/online-application>)



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***NEXT UP: SEE PART 2/3- Going to Court for Your PFA/PFS***

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