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## **PROTECTIVE ORDER APPLICANTS**

Pursuant to the Emergency Orders of the Supreme Court of Texas, the Court of Criminal Appeals of Texas and the Board of Judges, a plan of action for all Protective Order Applicants has been temporarily implemented by the Willacy County District Attorney's to ensure the safety of our citizens and employees of Willacy County.

To adhere to these directives and in an effort to limit the exposure and spread of COVID-19:

- If you need to apply for a protective order, please call our office at (956) 689-2164. An employee of the District Attorney's office will be available to answer your call and assist in completing a protective order application.
  
- If you need immediate assistance from Law Enforcement, please dial 911 or call your local law enforcement agency.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we respond to the rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic

A graphic with a dark, textured background. On the left, the letters 'F', 'A', and 'Q' are stacked vertically in a white, serif font. To the right of these letters, the words 'Frequently Asked Questions' are written in a white, serif font, with 'Frequently' on the top line, 'Asked' on the second line, and 'Questions' on the third line.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: What if I need a protection order immediately—and don't have time for all of the paperwork?**

A: In emergency situations, LE may request for an Emergency Protection Order (EPO), which is a short-term protection order—which usually lasts for 30-60 days. This scenario generally occurs when police are called to a domestic violence situation. They'll give the survivor an EPO, allowing her to request a longer-term protection order should she choose to do so.

**Q: Does a protection order protect only me?**

A: Not if you don't want it to. You may request the order also include your children, other family members, roommates or your current significant other. Including other individuals means the same no-contact rules apply—even if the person(s) weren't directly harmed.

**Q: How long does a protection order last?**

A: Anywhere from one to two years, and in sexual assault cases, a lifetime. In the event your protection order expires, and you still feel in danger, you may renew it.

**Q: How exactly am I protected under a protection order?**

A: Depending on where you live, it can include any of the following:

- No contact – Prohibiting the abuser from having any contact with you, including calling, texting, emailing, stalking, or attacking.
- Peaceful contact – Permitting the abuser to peacefully communicate with you for specific reasons, such as childcare.
- Stay away – Ordering the abuser to stay at least a certain number of yards or feet away from you. The distance varies, according to state, but generally it's at least 100 yards or 300 feet.
- Move out – Requiring the abuser to move out of the home you share.
- Firearms – Requiring the abuser to surrender any guns and prohibiting the purchase of guns.
- Counseling – Ordering the abuser to attend counseling, such as batterer's education.

**Q: What if my abuser violates the protection order?**

A: While protection orders do deter some abusers, between half and two-thirds are violated, according to the National Institute of Justice and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention. If your abuser is a repeat offender, or it was a serious violation, felony charges will most likely be filed. Otherwise, the offender will be arrested and charged with a new domestic violence charge (a misdemeanor) or contempt of court.

**Q: If I move to protect myself, will my protection order still be valid?**

A: Yes! Federal law and the Full Faith & Credit Clause of the Constitution requires that a protection order can be upheld where it's issued, as well as in all other U.S. states.

**Q: Can I get a protection order if I'm an undocumented immigrant?**

A: Yes! Everyone in the U.S., regardless of immigration or citizenship status, has the right to obtain a protection order. Learn more about your rights in this article, [Safety for Undocumented Victims of Abuse](#).

**To find out more about protection orders, contact the Willacy County District Attorney's at 956-689-2164**