



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: *Impacts of COVID-19*



The impacts of COVID-19 have begun to expand beyond the boundaries of medical and infectious disease concerns. A growing shadow now presents itself through a rise in domestic violence. Vulnerable spouses and family members locked in the same household with an abuser are encountering increasing instances of serious physical and emotional mistreatment.

Acquiring protective orders against an abuser has taken on new and complicated dimensions due to COVID-19-related challenges in accessing the family law courts. Each jurisdiction has its own unique family law processing methodology.

The Contra Costa County Family Law clerks allow limited physical public access for filing family law and domestic violence pleadings while the Alameda County Family Law building is completely closed to the public. In both counties, the courts are using a drop box method to receive and process pleadings. Mail-in pleadings in those counties are an option but can lead to longer court processing times.

If pleadings are not in proper order and declarations asking for immediate protective orders are incomplete, they will be rejected.

Court clerks cannot provide legal advice, nor can they change or correct an individual's paperwork. Delays can mean denial of the court granting important protective orders.

Court appearances are being held remotely, requiring litigants to access video programs and to have a sophisticated understanding of how to present a case using this new platform. Unraveling and adapting to these procedural changes is complex and can be exceedingly difficult for a self-represented individual.

In light of the many demands placed on victims of domestic violence desperately seeking assistance, the guidance of an experienced family law attorney can make all the difference in securing legal protection. *This information was up-to-date as of our print date. Please contact Arlene for the most recent updates in this ever-changing environment.*



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