



C A L I F O R N I A

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

OFFICE OF GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE TO CALIFORNIA'S NINE COURT PROTECTION ORDERS TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

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BACKGROUND: PROTECTION ORDERS TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

California has a uniquely broad array of nine court protection or restraining order processes that include provisions to prevent gun violence and armed abuse by restricting a violent, abusive, or dangerous individual's ability to keep, access, or acquire firearms and other weapons. The Department of Justice Office of Gun Violence Prevention (OGVP) developed this quick reference guide to help survivors and other stakeholders understand the full range of safety options available in our state.

All of California's protection or restraining order processes empower people who are in danger or worried about another person's safety to request protection from the courts and law enforcement by presenting evidence to a judge that another individual (called the "respondent") has engaged in violent or abusive conduct or is a significant danger to themselves or others. If the court finds sufficient evidence, the court may issue a protection order that requires the respondent to comply with a set of mandatory safety rules designed to protect those in danger and prevent further harm. These court-ordered safety rules have the force of law, and respondents may face fines, arrest, and criminal penalties if they violate them.

Importantly, under California law, all nine protection and restraining order processes include similar firearm and weapon provisions to disarm individuals found to have engaged in violent, abusive, or dangerous conduct. All of these processes generally prohibit that individual from keeping, accessing, or acquiring firearms, ammunition, and body armor, and block that individual from passing firearm and ammunition background checks, as long as the court order remains in effect.

The Gun Violence Restraining Order (GVRO) has unique features that make it a particularly limited intervention but also an important safety option for some circumstances. All of California's *other* protection and restraining order processes are designed to protect specific people who are in danger of violence or abuse: they generally include a combination of the GVRO's firearm and weapon provisions with many other additional safety provisions designed to protect those in danger, including, for example, orders requiring the respondent to stay a minimum distance away from a specific protected person, and from that person's children, residence, vehicle, and workplace, etc. The GVRO is much narrower: it is not issued to protect any specific person, and it does not provide any other safety provisions besides its firearm and weapon restrictions. As a result, the GVRO is an important option for preventing harm in cases where a respondent has demonstrated either a significant danger of self-harm only *or* a significant but more generalized risk of violence to groups of people or the public at large (such as intent to harm people of a particular race or religion or to commit a mass shooting).

For more detailed information, see OGVP's June 2024 report, "[Pathways to Safety: California's Nine Court Protection Orders to Prevent Gun Violence](#)". For relevant court forms and guidance, see the California Courts Self-Help Guide webpage at www.selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/restraining-orders.

CALIFORNIA'S NINE COURT PROTECTION AND RESTRAINING ORDER OPTIONS INCLUDE:

Orders Issued by Civil Courts:

- **Civil Harassment Restraining Orders:** For survivors of violence, threats, and other abusive and harmful conduct who need protection from any person. (Includes firearm/weapon provisions *and* many other safety measures for specific people protected by the court order).
- **Domestic Violence Restraining Orders:** For survivors of violence, threats, and other abusive and harmful conduct who need protection from a current or former intimate partner, close family member, or household member. (Includes firearm/weapon provisions *and* the broadest range of other safety measures for specific people protected by the court order).
- **Elder or Dependent Adult Abuse Restraining Orders:** For survivors of violence, threats, and other abusive and harmful conduct who are at least 65 years old, or are dependent adults with certain mental or physical limitations, and who need protection from someone who harmed or abused them. Certain other people are also eligible to petition courts for these orders to protect an abused elder or dependent adult, such as conservators, guardians, or county protective service agencies. (Includes firearm/weapon provisions *and* many other safety measures for specific people protected by the court order).
- **Gun Violence Restraining Orders:** For law enforcement, family members, intimate partners, employers, and other eligible petitioners seeking court orders to suspend a person's legal access to firearms and other weapons because they are a significant danger to themselves or others. (Includes firearm and weapon provisions only).
- **Postsecondary School Violence Restraining Orders:** For school administrative or safety officials at colleges, universities, vocational schools, and other postsecondary (after high school) educational institutions seeking protection for one or more adult students from someone who has been violent or made threats of violence connected to the school campus or facilities. Currently available to private school officials but officials at public institutions will be eligible starting in 2026. (Includes firearm/weapon provisions *and* many other safety measures for specific people protected by the court order).
- **Workplace Violence Restraining Orders:** For employers seeking protection for one or more employees from someone who has been violent or made threats of violence connected to the workplace. Starting in 2025, collective bargaining representatives may also request these orders to protect employees they represent. (Includes firearm/weapon provisions *and* many other safety measures for specific people protected by the court order).

Orders Issued by Civil Court Judges On-Call for Remote Emergency Orders:

- **Emergency Protective Orders to Protect Survivors:** For law enforcement seeking immediate and very short-term protection for survivors in emergency cases involving an immediate and present danger of domestic violence, child abuse, child abduction, elder or dependent adult abuse, or threatening conduct defined as “stalking”. (Includes firearm/weapon provisions *and* many other safety measures for specific people protected by the court order).
- **Emergency Protective Orders Issued as Gun Violence Restraining Orders.** Law enforcement may also seek “Gun Violence Emergency Protective Orders,” which are classified as both an Emergency Protective Order and a Gun Violence Restraining Order, when there is an immediate and present danger that someone will injure themselves or another person by having the legal ability to access or acquire firearms and other weapons. (Like other Gun Violence Restraining Orders, these orders include firearm/weapon provisions only).

Orders Issued by Juvenile Courts:

- **Juvenile Restraining Orders:** For people seeking protection for or from a young person who is under the jurisdiction of a juvenile court in a dependency proceeding or juvenile justice (delinquency) case. (Includes firearm/weapon provisions *and* many other safety measures for specific people protected by the court order).

Orders Issued by Criminal Courts:

Criminal Protective Orders: For courts hearing a criminal case to protect victims or witnesses to a crime during the criminal case or as a condition of probation or conviction, often in cases involving domestic violence. These orders may be issued at the request of district attorneys, crime victims and witnesses, and by the court acting on its own motion. (These orders typically include firearm/weapon provisions *and* many other safety measures for specific people protected by the court order; in some rarer cases, courts may issue Criminal Protective Orders that include firearm/weapon provisions only).

Quick Guide to CA's Protection Orders

	Issued By	Who Can Petition for the Order	Who the Order Can Protect	Safety Provisions Available in the Order	How Long the Order Lasts	% of All Protection Orders with Firearm Provisions Issued in CA in 2023 that were This Type of Order
Gun Violence Restraining Order	Civil Courts	Law enforcement and respondent's close family members, spouse/ domestic partner/dating partner, or employer. Other people can also petition if they have had substantial and regular interactions with respondent for at least one year, incl. recent roommate/household member, teacher/employees at school respondent attended, co-workers, more distant family members, and people who have a had a child with the respondent.	There is no protected party.	Firearm/ weapon provisions only.	Up to 21 days for emergency and temporary orders. Between 1-5 years for final orders.	0.9% (incl. 0.4% issued as emergency GVRO EPO-002s)
Domestic Violence Restraining Order	Civil Courts	Survivors seeking protection from a close family member (such as a parent, grandparent, child or sibling), household member, or current or former intimate partner who harmed, threatened, stalked, or abused them (incl. current/ former spouse, domestic partner, dating partner, or someone the petitioner has had a child with).	The petitioner-survivor and their family/ household members.	Firearm/ weapon provisions and broadest range of other safety provisions.	Up to 21 days for temporary orders. Up to 5 years for final orders	32.7%
Elder/ Dependent Adult Abuse Restraining Order	Civil Courts	Survivors who are aged 65+ or adults with certain physical or mental disabilities seeking protection from someone who harmed or abused them. Other petitioners can also petition for EAROs to protect those survivors, including the survivor's conservator, trustee, power of attorney, appointed guardian, or county adult protective services agency.	The survivor of elder/ dependent adult abuse (who is sometimes the petitioner), and the survivor's family/ household members/ conservator.	Firearm/ weapon provisions and many other safety provisions.	Up to 21 days for temporary orders. Up to 5 years for final orders	2.6%
Civil Harassment Restraining Order	Civil Courts	Survivors seeking protections from any other person who harmed, threatened, stalked, or abused them.	The petitioner-survivor and their family/ household members.	Firearm/ weapon provisions and many other safety provisions.	Up to 21 days for temporary orders. Up to 5 years for final orders	12.2%
Workplace Violence Restraining Order	Civil Courts	Employers (and starting in 2025, collective bargaining representatives) seeking protections for employees from someone who has been violent or made credible threats of violence connected to the workplace.	Employees of the petitioner (including volunteer, independent contractors, board of directors, public officers) who have experienced violence/ threats of violence, other employees, and employees' family/ household members.	Firearm/ weapon provisions and many other safety provisions.	Up to 21 days for temporary orders. Up to 3 years for final orders.	0.7%

	Issued By	Who Can Petition for the Order	Who the Order Can Protect	Safety Provisions Available in the Order	How Long the Order Lasts	% of All Protection Orders with Firearm Provisions Issued in CA in 2023 that were This Type of Order
Postsecondary School Violence Restraining Order	Civil Courts	School administrative or safety officials at private colleges, universities, other postsecondary schools seeking protections for students from someone who has been violent or made credible threats of violence connected to the school campus or facilities. (Officials at public institutions are also eligible starting in 2026).	Adult students at petitioner's educational institution who have experienced credible threats of violence, similarly situated students, and students' family/ household members.	Firearm/ weapon provisions and many other safety provisions.	Up to 21 days for temporary orders. Up to 3 years for final orders.	0.001%
Juvenile Restraining Order	Juvenile Courts	Survivors seeking protection from a young person under juvenile court jurisdiction who harmed or abused them. Other individuals can also seek JVRO protections for a juvenile under juvenile court jurisdiction, including the juvenile, the juvenile's parents, guardians, caregivers, social workers, probation officers, children in the same household, court-appointed special advocates, and tribal representatives.	A juvenile under the jurisdiction of a juvenile court OR anyone else who needs protection from a juvenile under juvenile court jurisdiction.	Firearm/ weapon provisions and many other safety provisions.	Up to 21 days for temporary orders. Up to 3 years for final orders.	1.2%
Emergency Protective Order to Protect Survivors (EPO-001)	Civil court judges designated to be on-call for emergency orders	Law enforcement only.	Survivors in immediate and present danger of domestic violence, elder or dependent adult abuse, child abuse or abduction, or threatening conduct defined as stalking.	Firearm/ weapon provisions and many other safety provisions.	Up to 5 court days or 7 calendar days, whichever occurs first.	16.7%
Emergency Protective Order (EPO-002/ Emergency GVRO)	Civil court judges designated to be on-call for emergency orders	Law enforcement only.	There is no protected party.	Firearm/ weapon provisions only.	Up to 21 days.	0.4%
Criminal Protective Order	Criminal Courts	Crime victims/witnesses and prosecutors in criminal proceedings. Courts hearing criminal cases may also issue CPOs on their own motion (without anyone petitioning for the order) and are required to do so in some cases.	Victims or witnesses to a crime, often in domestic violence cases, and their family members. In rarer cases, courts can issue CPOs with firearm/ weapon provisions only, where there is no protected party.	Firearm/ weapon provisions and many other safety provisions.	For duration of criminal trial, for duration of probation, or up to 10 years post-conviction.	33.0%

Safety Protections Available through Court Protection Orders	GVRO	DVRO	EARO	CHRO	WVRO	SVRO	JVRO	EPO to Protect Survivors (EPO-001)	EPO-GVRO (EPO-002)	CPO
FIREARM/WEAPON ORDERS										
Orders prohibiting respondent from keeping, accessing, or acquiring firearms, ammunition, and body armor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
PERSONAL CONDUCT ORDERS:										
Orders prohibiting abusive conduct toward protected people including violence, harassment, intimidation, molestation, threats, stalking, and assault.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Orders prohibiting or limiting contact with protected people		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
STAY-AWAY ORDERS:										
Orders to stay a minimum distance away from protected people		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Orders to stay a minimum distance away from specified locations (protected person's home, vehicle, workplace or school, children's school or childcare location)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Orders to not enter protected people's workplace					X					
Orders to not enter protected people's school campus or facilities						X				
OTHER ORDERS:										
Orders to not look for protected people		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Orders to move out from protected person's residence		X	X					X		
Mandatory counseling		X	X							
Child custody and visitation orders		X					X			
Child or spousal support orders		X								
Orders to prevent child abduction		X						X		
Orders to pay expenses caused by abuse, or bills or debts owed for property		X	X							
Orders to pay legal costs		X	X	X	X	X				
Orders to protect pets		X	X	X			X			X
Orders governing control, use, and disposition of property		X								
Orders governing protected people's health and other insurance		X								
Cell phone account transfer orders		X								
Orders requiring electronic monitoring										X
Orders requiring a law enforcement agency to provide protection for a victim or a witness or their immediate family members										X
Orders prohibiting dissuading a victim or witness from attending a hearing, testifying, or reporting information to law enforcement or other people										X