



# How to get ready for your Order of Protection Hearing

## Before you get to Court

### Be careful what clothes you wear to court.

- Wear clothes that look like a business person.
- Wear clothes that show respect for the court. This means:
  - No shorts.
  - No tank tops or low cut tops.
  - No crop tops that show your belly.
  - No T-shirts with words or pictures.
  - Don't wear a lot of jewelry.

### Make sure your witnesses are coming.

- Tell them the time and place.
- Go over what they will say in court.

Not sure your witness will come? Go to the Court where your hearing will be. Ask the Court Clerk to send them a subpoena (say "suh-pee-nuh"). This is a paper that orders them to show up. Police officers **must** get a subpoena or they can't come.

### Get your proof ready.

- Make copies of papers and pictures that prove you were abused.
- Are you using recordings as part of your proof? If it is a tape, set it to the exact spot where your proof begins.



### Read and re-read your petition.

The judge will expect you to testify only about what you wrote in your petition. Make sure you know exactly what you wrote.

## In Court

### Before the case is called:

- Be on time
- Is your abuser trying to bother or contact you in any way? Let the court officer know.
- Have questions or need support? Ask the court officer to show you who the Court Advocate is. The Court Advocate can answer questions and stay with you during the hearing.

## When you testify

You are asking the court to protect you. The judge needs to know what your abuser has done and why you are afraid.



- Tell the court where and when the abuse happened. Show the judge the proof you brought.
- Stick to what you wrote in your petition.
- Keep it short. Speak loudly and like you are sure of yourself.
- **Don't** look at your abuser. If your abuser asks you questions, look at the judge when you answer.
- Does your abuser have a lawyer? Don't look at the lawyer's face. Look at his ear or at the judge when you answer his questions. Then you won't be so nervous.
- What if your abuser or his lawyer asks about something that isn't part of your petition? Tell the judge, "I don't think I need to answer that question. It has nothing to do with the abuse I wrote about in my petition."
- After you testify, tell the judge you want the court to hear your witnesses.

## When your abuser testifies:

- Sit quietly and with your hands folded.
- Don't make faces.
- Don't shake or nod your head.
- Don't raise or move your hands in any way.
- Think carefully before you ask your abuser any questions. Don't give your abuser a chance to say you did something to cause the abuse.
- Stay calm and confident. Don't be scared. You haven't done anything wrong. You are asking for protection from someone who hurt you.

## After the hearing

Wait in the Courtroom until the Court officer has given you your signed Order of Protection. **Think the abuser will attack you on the way to your car?** Tell the court officer. They can have someone walk you to your car.

**Legal Aid Society**  
of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlands  
**1-800-243-1448**

It's a free call.

On the internet at **www.las.org**