

What is a Protection From Intimidation (PFI) Order?

A Protection From Intimidation Order (PFI) is an Order entered by the Court which tells the adult offender to have no contact with his/her minor victim or face serious legal consequences. It offers a civil remedy to both female and male victims. There are three (3) types of Protection From Intimidation Orders:

- 1) **Emergency** Protection From Intimidation Orders are issued by a Magisterial District Judge when the Court is closed during non-business hours, or unavailable. An emergency Protection From Intimidation Order expires at the end of the next business day for the Court.
- 2) **Temporary** Protection From Intimidation Orders are issued by the Court of Common Pleas until a final hearing can be held, which is scheduled within 10 business days.
- 3) **Final** Protection From Intimidation Orders are entered as a result of an appearance before the Court (at the Courthouse) where both parties have the chance to be heard by the Judge.

Who can file?

There must be **NO** defined legal relationship between the minor plaintiff and the adult offender to file for a PFI Petition. You are eligible for relief if you do not have a family or household relationship with the adult offender.

The minor plaintiff (under the age of 18) **MUST** have a parent, guardian or another adult household member file on their behalf.

What is Intimidation?

Intimidation is legally defined as conduct by an adult offender against a minor plaintiff that constitutes one of the following crimes:

- 1) **Harassment** (A person commits the crime of harassment when, with intent to harass, annoy or alarm another, the person: communicates to or about such other person any lewd, lascivious, threatening or obscene words, language, drawings or caricatures; communicates repeatedly in an anonymous manner; communicates repeatedly at extremely inconvenient hours; or communicates repeatedly in a manner other than specified in description above); or
- 2) **Stalking** (A person commits the crime of stalking when the person either: (a) engages in a course of conduct or repeatedly commits acts toward another person, including following the person without proper authority, under circumstances which demonstrate either an intent to place such other person in reasonable fear of bodily injury or to cause substantial emotional dis-

stress to such other person; or (b) engages in a course of conduct or repeatedly communicates to another person under circumstances which demonstrate or communicate either an intent to place such other person in reasonable fear of bodily injury or to cause substantial emotional distress to such other person).

Where do you file for a PFI?

- 1) The county where the minor plaintiff resides, either temporarily or permanently, or is employed; or
- 2) the county where the adult defendant may be served; or
- 3) the county where the incident of intimidation occurred.

When it is not a PFI?

You are not entitled to file a PFI petition if:

- 1) you are an adult, filing on behalf of yourself;
- 2) the defendant is a minor;
- 3) there is no continuing risk of harm from the offender.

The PFI filing process:

A person desiring to file a Temporary Protection From Intimidation Petition should appear in the Domestic Relations Office, located on Level L of the Butler County Government Center, between 8:30 and 10:30 AM Monday through Friday. You should plan to be at the Government Center the entire morning. Cases are handled in the order in which the parties appear in the Domestic Relations Office. You may be one of several filing on any given day. If you are filing on behalf of a child and they are over the age of nine (9), you are required to bring the child with you.

A representative from VOICe (the Victim Outreach Intervention Center) will be available at the Domestic Relations Section to speak with you concerning the incident and provide you with information and options.

All temporary PFI petitions will be presented to a Judge at approximately 11:30 a.m. that same morning. If the Judge grants the Temporary Protection From Intimidation Order, it will be in effect for up to ten (10) business days, and a final hearing date will be set. A deputy sheriff will be directed to notify the offender, and serve him/her with the same paperwork you will receive.

While you are not required to have legal representation when seeking a Temporary Protection From Intimidation Order, you are encouraged to have legal representation for the final hearing. If you cannot afford an attorney, you will be given information as to how to obtain free legal counsel through Neighborhood Legal Services or VOICe.

Are there any costs for filing a PFI?

The filing party will not be charged any fees for filing a PFI Petition. The Prothonotary's filing fees and the costs incurred by the Sheriff for serving papers on the defendant in this matter may be billed to the defendant. The costs will be assessed by the Court at the time of the final hearing.

NOTE:

The plaintiff may file a PFI petition regardless of whether they seek criminal prosecution of the offender.

Through a PFI action, the Court does not have the power to punish the offender, unless the abuser violates the Protection From Intimidation Order.



**Butler County Domestic
Relations**

PO Box 1208
Butler, PA 16003-1208

**Butler County Domestic
Relations**

www.co.butler.pa.us/DRS

Protection From Intimidation



PO Box 1208

Butler, PA 16003-1208

Tel: 724-284-5181

Fax: 724-284-5422