

Student Guide for Observing Protective Order Hearings

This two-page guide is intended for students who are observing protective order hearings as part of a class assignment. It should have all of the information you need about where and when to observe these hearings. There are also information booths on the ground level of each courthouse if you need assistance once you arrive.

If you are have questions about a protective order for yourself or are concerned about your safety, please contact SafePlace at 512.267.SAFE.

<p><u>Directions</u></p>	<p>The Travis County Court House is located at 1000 Guadalupe between 10th and 11th Streets. The Blackwell - Thurman Criminal Justice Center is located behind the Travis County Court House between Guadalupe and Nueces and can be accessed from 10th or 11th. The front entrance of the Justice Center opens onto a plaza area and cannot be seen from Guadalupe.</p>		
<p><u>PARKING</u></p>	<p>Meter parking is all that is available near the courthouse. Meters cost \$1 an hour in change. If you want to buy a card to use in the meter, you can purchase one at 1111 Rio Grande St. for \$5 plus the amount you wish to add to the card. You may also take the Orange and Red Dillo bus from many locations for free. http://www.capmetro.org</p> <p><i>Please note: Parking tickets are \$15 and you can receive more than one if you continue to leave the meter expired. However, meter feeding is typically accepted.</i></p>		
<p><u>Hours</u></p>	<p><i>Protective Order docket call on Tuesdays and Fridays is at 8:30. It is a good idea to attend docket call the first time you attend a Protective Order hearing. The actual PO hearings may not begin until later, sometime between 9 and 10:30, and there is <u>no guarantee</u> that any cases will go to the hearing stage; the cases might all settle. Usually cases are assigned as follows:</i></p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>TUESDAYS 8:30 – Approx 12:00 <i>Cases in which applicant has children by the respondent or cases in which there are reports of child abuse</i></p> <p>Associate Judge Sue Sheppard Travis County Courthouse 5th Floor, Room 506</p> <p>Dockets may be rescheduled because of holidays. Contact 854-9089 to confirm.</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>FRIDAYS 8:30 – Approx 12:00 <i>Cases in which applicant has no children by the respondent</i></p> <p>Judge Michael Denton Travis County Court #4 Blackwell - Thurman Criminal Justice Center 3rd Floor</p> <p>Dockets may be rescheduled because of holidays. Contact 854-9896 to confirm.</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>TUESDAYS 8:30 – Approx 12:00 <i>Cases in which applicant has children by the respondent or cases in which there are reports of child abuse</i></p> <p>Associate Judge Sue Sheppard Travis County Courthouse 5th Floor, Room 506</p> <p>Dockets may be rescheduled because of holidays. Contact 854-9089 to confirm.</p>	<p>FRIDAYS 8:30 – Approx 12:00 <i>Cases in which applicant has no children by the respondent</i></p> <p>Judge Michael Denton Travis County Court #4 Blackwell - Thurman Criminal Justice Center 3rd Floor</p> <p>Dockets may be rescheduled because of holidays. Contact 854-9896 to confirm.</p>
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<p><u>Food/Lunch</u></p>	<p>There are snack machines on the first floor of both the main courthouse and the Criminal Justice Center. The main courthouse has a simple cafeteria on the first floor with limited hours. No food or drinks are allowed in the courtrooms. You may wish to bring bottled water with you to drink in the hallway.</p> <p>Gum or tobacco chewing is not allowed in the courtroom. If you must have cough drops or mints, unwrap several in advance.</p>		
<p><u>Attire</u></p>	<p>Please come dressed in <u>conservative</u> business casual clothing. Dressing in layers is suggested as the courtrooms' climates can fluctuate greatly during the course of the day.</p>		

<u>Courtroom Etiquette</u>	Courtrooms tend to be solemn and quiet places, reflecting the importance of the issues being decided. Any distraction would be noticeable and inappropriate. Therefore, no cell phones, no rustling papers and no talking. Also, any audible reaction to testimony (gasping, laughing or even shaking your head) is not appropriate. Finally, the bailiff will instruct you to stand up when the judge is entering or leaving the courtroom.
<u>How to leave</u>	In order to avoid disrupting the court proceedings, it is best to leave when the judge is not seated at the bench. If you must leave during a hearing, you should stand up and leave when witness is walking up to the stand or when she has completed her testimony and is leaving the stand.
<u>Security</u>	Everyone entering the Travis County Courthouse or Criminal Justice Center must go through metal detectors. Place your purse or other bag on the conveyor belt. Put any metal objects in a small tray on the table. To speed this process, do not bring scissors, metal nail files, Swiss Army knives, etc. These items are considered weapons and will be temporarily confiscated.
<u>Background on Protective Orders</u>	<p>A Protective Order (PO) may keep respondent from coming near applicant, their house and their job, keep respondent from communicating with applicant, make respondent pay child support, keep respondent from possessing a firearm while subject to the PO, order the respondent to attend Batterer's Intervention Counseling, order the respondent to a drug and/ or alcohol assessment, among other things to protect applicant from more family violence,</p> <p>It is a common misconception that all applicants are women and all respondents are male. This is NOT the case.</p> <p>An applicant may apply for a PO if applicant is a member or former member of the respondent's family (wife, husband, ex-wife, ex-husband, related by blood or marriage, parents of the same child, foster children or foster parents); or applicant is a member or former member of the same household as the respondent (this includes anyone living under the same roof, like roommates); or applicant is or has been in a dating relationship with the respondent, and the court finds that family violence or dating violence has occurred and is likely to occur in the future. This includes physical violence (hitting, kicking, pushing, shoving, slapping, holding down, etc.) OR sexual assault.</p> <p>Family / dating violence is causing or threatening bodily injury or causing offensive bodily contact to a family member, significant other, roommate, etc.</p>
<u>What to Expect</u>	<p>At 8:30 the judge will explain to the courtroom what docket call is and proceed with docket call.</p> <p>The three main things that can happen between applicants and respondents for POs in court:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Default</i>: respondent does not show up and applicant will receive the protective order. 2. <i>Agreement</i>: respondent shows up in court and both applicant and respondent agree to what the PO will say, and the PO is granted. 3. <i>Contested Hearing</i>: respondent shows up in court; however, applicant and respondent do not agree to what the PO will say. If this happens, there will be a hearing. In the hearing the Assistant County Attorney will ask the applicant questions to explain what happened and why applicant is afraid and wants protection. The respondent will also be given a chance to speak. Basically a hearing is a time when the judge can hear both sides of what happened and make a decision on giving the PO. <p><i>Note other terms include</i>: recall, reset, extension, pass, no service, request to dismiss, and review.</p> <p>When there is no "action" occurring in the courtroom, this is typically an indication that the applicants and respondents are negotiating settlements through the attorney and agreeing to terms behind the scenes. There is NO guarantee that any case will go to the hearing stage- there is just no way to foresee the progression of cases ahead of time.</p>