

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

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The Supreme Judicial Court and Trial Courts have issued multiple orders and announcements regarding court operations while COVID-19 poses a serious threat to public health. All Court Orders are listed on the [Pandemic Management Orders page](#). Please visit that page to review the specifics of the orders and the most up-to-date information.

Phased Re-Opening Plan for the Courts

The Judicial Branch has released the [State of Maine Judicial Branch COVID-19 Phased Management Plan \(updated November 3, 2020\)](#). The plan creates a five-phased process for reopening Maine Courts and is based on the most recent scientific data available from the Maine Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention and stakeholder input. The plan was updated on July 2 to increase the maximum capacity of courtrooms and common areas to 50 people so long as social distancing can be practiced. Phase 5, beginning on November 9, permits all case types and jury trials to occur. However, given the resurgence of the virus and the need for increased safety measures, non-family civil matters are not expected to be heard until sometime in 2021. Criminal jury trials will be scheduled as resources permit. [Read the Plan](#).

For guidance on court proceedings while the current public health pandemic remains in effect, please review the following FAQs. These FAQs **will be updated** as the situation evolves and new questions arise.

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Courthouse Operations

1. Who should go to the courthouse?

Courthouses are open to the public during regular hours. See Question 3 below.

Persons identified as being infected by COVID-19, having had contact with those infected by COVID-19, or having visited areas identified as problematic due to the prevalence of COVID-19 should not come to Maine's courthouses. Also, many court events are now being handled remotely by telephone or Zoom. Please make sure your hearing or event is being held in person before going to the courthouse. Whether your court event is scheduled to be held remotely or in-person will be indicated on your scheduling notice from the court.

2. Am I required to wear a mask at the courthouse?

Yes, you will be required to wear a mask or cloth face covering that covers your nose and mouth at all times while you are in any courthouse.

3. Where can I find courthouse hours of operation?

Most courthouses are open from 8:00am to 4:00pm. Please contact your local courthouse or call 207-753-2999 to confirm hours of operation.

4. What safety precautions are being taken at the courthouses to keep the public safe?

During this public health emergency, the Judicial Branch is focused on keeping employees and those members of the public who come to the court healthy and safe. Safety measures have been implemented to reduce the number of people in our facilities.

- Heightened cleaning practices have been implemented at all facilities.
- Video and audio hearings and other court events are taking place.
- Maximum occupancy guidelines are being enforced, limiting the number of people in a courtroom at any one time to 50 (not including court personnel).
- Social distancing measures are in place, requiring all members of the public to stay at least 6 feet apart at all times while in the courthouse.
- [Visitor screening protocols and restrictions](#) have been put in place at all courthouses to reduce exposure to COVID-19.
- Face masks or a cloth face covering must be worn by court staff and members of the public.
- Additional protocols have been developed to protect employees and the public in the event of COVID-19 exposure at a courthouse.

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Filing by Email

1. Can I file documents with the court by email?

It depends. The court is allowing parties to file some, but not all, documents by email during the pandemic.

You can file documents by email as explained below:

- **Bangor District Court, Penobscot Superior Court, and the Business and Consumer Docket:**
 - Filers who are **NOT** required-electronic-filers under RECS 33(B):
 - **Who is not a required-electronic-filer?** Parties who are not lawyers or do **not have lawyers** and who file fewer than 6 non-emergency cases in one year are *generally* not required-electronic-filers under RECS 33(B).
 - **What documents can you file by email?** All documents, **except:**
 - Documents that have a filing fee (even if the filing fee is waived);
 - Documents in post-conviction criminal cases; and
 - Requests for preliminary protection orders in child protection cases on a weekend, legal holiday, or after 3 p.m. on a business day.
 - Required electronic filers under Rule 33(B) of the Rules of Electronic Court Systems:
 - Documents must be filed through Maine eCourts online portal **except** documents may be filed by e-mail if they:

- Are filed in one of the following types of cases: criminal (except for documents in post-conviction matters), civil violations, juvenile, and protection from abuse and protection from harassment cases; **AND**
 - Do not require a filing fee (even when the court has waived a filing fee for a document, the document cannot be filed by email).
- **All other courts:**
 - You can file by email all documents, **except:**
 - Documents that have a filing fee (even if the filing fee is waived);
 - Documents in post-conviction criminal cases; and
 - Requests for preliminary protection orders in child protection cases on weekends, legal holidays, or after 3 p.m. on a business day. These “after-hours” filings require the caseworker to come to court for the request to be reviewed by a judge or to make arrangements for “after hours” review by a judge.

2. How do I know if the document I want to file has a filing fee?

You can visit the court website for a list of court fees.

You also can call your local court to ask the clerk. Here is the list of court numbers.

3. How do I file documents by email?

STEP 1: Find and complete your court form

Visit your local court or the court website to get and complete the form(s) you want to file with the court. If there is no form for what you want to file, you can write a letter to the court (or a motion) explaining what you want the court to do.

STEP 2: Sign your document

All documents filed with the court must have an electronic signature.

These are your options to electronically sign your document:

- You can electronically sign by typing your name after “/s/” (For example, “/s/ John Smith”); or
- You can insert a captured image of your signature into the document.

Some court documents must be notarized. If your document must be notarized, you can still file it by email. Follow the following instructions depending on what type of case you have:

- **Protection from Abuse or Harassment Cases:** Read the section on Protection from Abuse and Harassment Orders below for more information.
- **Child Protection or juvenile cases:** all documents that require an oath must be notarized by a notary in person or remotely following the special pandemic procedure that notaries should know.
- **All other cases:** You do not need to have the document notarized if you complete and attach the Notice of Electronic Filing and Response Deadline Form with the sworn declaration (please read Step 4 for more information regarding this notice).

STEP 3: Attach documents to your email

Attach the document you want to file with the court. The document must be in Word, PDF, or another common document format.

STEP 4: Complete these required email forms

Complete and attach the following form to your email:

Type of case/ document	Required form for email filing
Child protection and juvenile cases	None
Civil cases and family matters	Notice of Email Filing and Response Deadline, (CV-FM-254)
Criminal cases	Notice of Email Filing and Response Deadline, (CR-256)
Protection from Abuse (new case or Motion to Extend) Protection from Harassment without a fee (new case or Motion to Extend)	Information Regarding Protection Order Filings by Email and Filing Certification (PA-027) Cover Sheet for Email Filing in Protection from Abuse or Protection from Harassment Case (PA-030)
All other filings in protection from abuse and harassment cases	Cover Sheet for Email Filing in Protection from Abuse or Protection from Harassment Case (PA-030)

STEP 5: Subject line of your email

In the subject line of the email, write the docket number of your case (for example, PORDC-FM-2020-123. The docket number can usually be found at the top of any notices you have received from the court).

If it is a new case or you do not have a docket number (for example, PORDC-FM-2020-123), please write the names of the parties in the subject line (for example, John Smith v. Mary Smith).

STEP 6: Service

Any time you file a document with the court, the party on the other side of your case must get a copy. This is called "service."

Here is how you should serve the other side when you are filing a document by email:

Documents filed in cases EXCEPT protection from abuse and harassment cases

If the opposing party has a lawyer	Copy the lawyer on the email to the court. You can get the email address of the lawyer on the lawyer's entry of appearance. You can also call your local court if you cannot find it.
If the opposing party does NOT have a lawyer	(1) If the opposing party has agreed to receive documents by email documents by completing and sending you the form, Notice of Electronic Service (CV-ES), you should copy the opposing party on the email to the court. (2) If the opposing party has NOT agreed to receive

	<p>documents by email, you must mail a copy of the document to the opposing party.</p> <p>(3) If the opposing party has a confidential address, you must ask the court to forward a copy of the document to the opposing party. You should ask this in your email to the court.</p>
<p>**PLEASE NOTE: If you mail the document to the other party, the other party will have more time to respond. Please read the Notice of Email Filing and Response Deadline (CR-256 or CV-FM-254) for instructions.</p>	

Documents filed in protection from abuse and harassment cases

You have a lawyer, and Opposing party has a lawyer	Your lawyer should copy the other lawyer on the email to the court
You have a lawyer, but Opposing party does <u>not</u> have a lawyer	Your lawyer should mail a copy of the filed document to the opposing party.
You do not have a lawyer, but Opposing party does have a lawyer	You should copy the opposing party's lawyer on the email to the court.
You do not have a lawyer, and Opposing party does <u>not</u> have a lawyer	You should NOT copy the opposing party on the email, and instead you should ask the court to send a copy of the filed document to the opposing party. You should ask this in your email to the court.

STEP 7: Find the email address of the court

The courts have different email addresses depending on the document you are filing and where you are filing it.

Click [here](#) [link to appendix to PMO] to get the email address where you should send your document.

STEP 8: Send the email

Sending the email to the court is enough to file your document.

Do NOT send a paper original to the court after filing your document by email.

4. When will the court consider my emailed document to be officially "filed," and when will the court look at what I filed?

The filing date will be the business day (12 a.m. to 11:59 p.m.) the document is emailed to the court. If a document is submitted on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday the filing date will be the next business day.

Except as stated below, it may take up to two business days for the court to docket your emailed document. But, even when there is a delay in docketing, the filing date will be the business day you emailed the document to the court.

- Complaints for protection from abuse or harassment and motions to extend protection orders will be docketed and reviewed the **same day** they are submitted by email provided they are filed before 3:00 p.m. on a business day. If they are submitted by email on a weekend, legal holiday, or after 3:00 p.m. on a business day, they will be docketed and reviewed the next business day.

5. If I am filing a complaint for protection from abuse, complaint for protection from harassment, or a motion to extend a protection order, what happens after I file by email? How will I get protection?

Please read the section on protection orders [link to section further down] for more information.

Case Proceedings

1. What case types have been cancelled or postponed?

The [COVID-19 Phased Management Plan](#) provides that, effective immediately, and continuing through November 6, 2020, unless otherwise ordered by a court, the following case types and proceedings **WILL NOT** be scheduled or heard:

- Disclosures
- Foreclosures
- Small Claims
- Land Use Violations 80(K)

The Addendum to the Phased Management Plan specifies that the above actions will not be scheduled or heard before 2021 and foreclosures, in particular, will not be scheduled or heard before February 28, 2021.

2. Are Medical Malpractice panel proceedings being conducted?

Medical Malpractice Screening Panels conducted pursuant to 24 M.R.S. 2851, et seq., may continue subject to conditions and procedures required by panel chairs with the limitations that the panel proceedings will not be conducted in courthouses or on Judicial Branch properties until further order and all deadlines associated with medical malpractice panel proceedings are controlled by [PMO-SJC-2](#).

3. What case types are being scheduled and heard by the court?

The courts **MAY** schedule and conduct in-person hearings in all case types, subject to the availability of judicial resources and the need to address priority cases. Many case types are presumed to will be held remotely while some are presumed to being held in-person. For details, please see [PMO-SJC-7](#).

4. What if I have an emergency and need a judge to hear my case and issue an order?

If you have an emergency in any case, you may file a motion clearly listing urgent and compelling reasons for the case to be heard. This motion must be served on the opposing party or parties. Any party objecting to the motion, must file a written opposition within three days after the motion is filed. See Court Order [PMO-SJC-1](#) for more details.

5. What do I do if my case has been postponed or cancelled?

Cases that have been postponed or cancelled under Court Order [PMO-SJC-1](#) will be rescheduled at a later date. You will be notified in writing by the court when the case has been rescheduled.

6. Is the Supreme Judicial Court hearing oral arguments?

Yes. All oral arguments scheduled before the Supreme Judicial Court, sitting as the Law Court, are being conducted either by video conferencing or addressed by the Court without oral arguments. See Court Order [PMO-SJC-1](#).

7. What will happen with non-courtroom related activities, such as mediations, depositions, and other discovery (and deadlines associated therewith)?

After June 1, 2020, all discovery and other deadlines are governed by the Maine Rules of Court. Mediations and depositions are occurring remotely throughout the State. Foreclosure mediation is not currently occurring.

8. Will the Court consider extending Statutes of Limitations and other statutorily-imposed deadlines (such as Notices of Claim under the Liquor Liability Act and Maine Tort Claims Act)?

No. Court Order [PMO-SJC-2\(C\)](#) does not extend any statutory requirements or deadlines, including statutes of limitations and statutory deadlines for appeals of governmental actions and decisions.

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Evictions (FEDs)

1. Are the courts hearing eviction (FED) cases?

Yes. The district courts started hearing evictions (FEDs) on August 3, 2020. The current FED process begins with a telephonic status conference followed in some cases by mediation. In cases that do not settle in mediation, a final hearing is scheduled and held, presumptively in-person. See PMO-SJC-3 and PMO-SJC-7.

2. Are tenants excused from paying rent during this period?

No, all rent remains due and payable unless the landlord and tenant have agreed otherwise.

3. Do some tenants have extra protection due to the CARES Act?

Yes. In eviction actions started after March 18, 2020 tenants who live in certain federally-backed or federally-funded housing may have protection from eviction actions through December 31, 2020. The Center for Disease Control has also issued an Order that may prohibit the eviction of "covered persons" through December 31, 2020.

4. What if my eviction case was heard before March 18, 2020?

If a plaintiff prevailed in an eviction hearing that took place before to March 18, a writ of possession may be issued. For more details, please see [Executive Order #5](#). A writ of possession is required for a FED judgment to be enforced.

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Depositions

1. Does PMO-SJC-2(F), promulgated on June 5, 2020, really require that all depositions be done remotely?

Yes. The first paragraph of PMO-SJC-2(F) states:

All depositions shall be conducted via remote means, i.e., in a manner that allows for the deponent, all other persons entitled to attend (including the parties, counsel for the parties, counsel for the deponent), and all other necessary persons (e.g., a court reporter) to participate in the deposition without attending in person, unless all persons referenced in this paragraph agree to conduct the deposition in person.

(Emphasis added.) As the Order clearly decrees, attorneys will not be permitted to conduct in-person depositions unless all persons involved in the deposition—counsel, witness, parties, and reporter—agree that the deposition need not be conducted remotely. The word "allows" refers to *the functionality of the video platform* to provide all persons to participate remotely.

2. Does a lawyer who wishes to notice depositions to be conducted in person have to file a notice for a remote deposition and file an objection to his own notice to present the issue to the court?

No. As noted above, a lawyer may not, during the pendency of the Pandemic Management Order, without the agreement of all parties (witnesses, counsel and reporter), conduct a deposition other than by remote means. No deviation from this rule is permissible without prior leave of court upon motion addressed to the presiding judicial officer.

3. Can a lawyer be in the same room with her client during a deposition?

Nothing in the PMO prevents a lawyer being present in the same room as the lawyer's client during a deposition.

4. How is the oath administered to a witness if a deposition is taken remotely, using audio and/or video technology?

Under section A(2) of Court Order [PMO-SJC-2](#), the person before whom the deposition is taken is authorized, under temporary rules, to administer oaths and take testimony remotely, so long as that person can both see and hear the deponent via audio-video communication equipment or technology for purposes of positively identifying the deponent.

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Video and Audio Remote Proceedings

1. Do the courts have plans to conduct hearings remotely, either telephonically or via video, if social distancing continues?

Under [PMO-SJC-7](#) almost all trial court proceedings will be conducted remotely, through video or telephonic formats. Currently video proceedings are taking place in most courthouses. The Judicial Branch is working to increase the capacity for video proceedings. See the [Remote Court Proceedings](#) web page for more information.

However, it is presumed that the following hearings and proceedings will be held in person:

- Criminal jury trials
- Criminal arraignments or first appearances and motions for matters involving defendants in custody
- Title 22 protective custody hearings concerning jeopardy and termination of parental rights
- Protection from abuse hearings
- Protection from harassment hearings when the harassment alleged involves sexual assault or stalking
- Motions for contempt in family cases
- Juvenile adjudication and dispositional hearings
- Eviction (FED) final hearings

2. What is general protocol for video conferences with a court? What does the court expect generally? If it's a hearing, do I stand when I address the court? Can I appear in sweats?

Courtroom decorum shall apply in all remote court conferences and hearings whether in-person, by video, or telephonically. See the [Remote Court Proceedings](#) web page for more information.

3. How is the oath administered to a witness if a deposition is taken remotely, using audio and/or video technology?

Under Court Order [PMO-SJC-2](#), the person before whom the deposition is taken is authorized, under temporary rules, to administer oaths and take testimony remotely, so long as that person can both see and hear the deponent via audio-video communication equipment or technology for purposes of positively identifying the deponent.

4. Is the court planning to expand telephone and video hearings?

Yes. Under [PMO-SJC-7](#), almost all trial court proceedings will be conducted remotely, through video or telephonic formats. The court is continuing to explore the feasibility of a number of modified court procedures. Any changes to existing procedures will be announced on the Judicial Branch's website. [See the Pandemic Management Orders page.](#)

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Child Protection Matters

1. How will child protection matters be handled?

Generally, all child protection hearings will be held by video or telephone, except for hearings concerning jeopardy and termination of parental rights. If a party asserts that special circumstances warrant conducting a proceeding in a different format, the party may file a motion for an alternative format court proceeding. Please read [PMO-SJC-7](#) for more information on the requirements and procedures for this motion.

2. How can Requests for Preliminary Protection Orders (PPOs) be filed?

Requests for PPOs cannot be filed by email on a weekend, legal holiday, or after 3:00 p.m. on a weekday because at those times there is no way for the court to ensure that a judge is available to review the PPO request. Requests for PPOs filed between 3:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. on a business day must be filed in person at the courthouse. Requests for

PPOs must be reviewed by a judge and any person seeking such review on a weekend, legal holiday, or after 4:00 p.m. on a business day must instead follow the standard after-hours procedures for seeking judicial approval.

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Family Matters

1. How will family matters, including issues involving child support and visitation, be handled?

Under the [COVID-19 Phased Management Plan](#), family matters will be scheduled as follows:

The courts **MAY** schedule and conduct in-person hearings in all family matters, subject to the availability of judicial resources and the need to address priority cases. Even though the court may schedule in-person hearings, most family cases will be conducted remotely by video or telephone because this is the presumed format.

2. Do I have to follow my court order regarding parent-child contact during the COVID-19 outbreak?

The [Pandemic Management Orders](#) in effect have not suspended court orders regarding parent-child contact. This means that the spread of COVID-19, in and of itself, is not a reason to deny parenting time. Parents should try to set aside personal differences, try to agree on what is best for all involved including following [CDC guidelines](#) on protecting family from COVID-19 illness, and try to maintain a positive relationship with the child. If following the parent-child contact order presents a considerable risk for someone, parents may want to seek legal advice. For \$25, the Maine Lawyer Referral Service will connect you with an attorney in your area to do a 30-minute consultation. For more information, please visit: <https://mainebar.community.lawyer/>.

3. What if I cannot reach an agreement with the other parent regarding our parent-child contact during the COVID-19 outbreak and need the court to enforce or modify my court order of parental rights and responsibilities?

Under the [COVID-19 Phased Management Plan](#), the courts are currently scheduling and hearing all contested family proceedings. Hearings in family proceedings will be by video or telephone, unless (1) it is a hearing on a motion for contempt, or (2) the court makes an exception. If you think the court should hold your hearing in person, you must file a written request (a motion) that explains the special circumstances in your case that justify an in-person hearing. You must also include in your request your email address and the email address of the other party if you know it. The request must be filed and served on the other party at least 14 days before the hearing date. Please review [PMO-SJC-Z](#) to learn more. In ruling on your motion, the court will have to explain why your case cannot be handled remotely.

4. What if the public place for our parenting time exchange is closed?

Parties should review their parental rights and responsibilities order or consult with their attorney concerning exchanges. During the exchange of the child(ren), all parties should follow the CDC guidelines for limiting the spread of the virus, which may mean, if possible, choosing an alternate location for the exchanges that has fewer people and less touching of public items (e.g., moving exchanges from a restaurant to a grocery store parking lot).

5. Will I still have supervised parenting time during the COVID-19 outbreak?

Supervised parenting time services provided by an agency have likely suspended in-person services during the state of emergency. Some agencies may provide video or teleconference visitations. If you have a court order for supervised parenting time by an agency, you should contact that agency to confirm the level of services currently provided.

If your parenting time is supervised by a family member or friend who is still able to supervise, it can continue if safely possible. If your supervisor is unable to supervise, try to reach an agreement with the other parent for a different person to supervise.

If the parenting plan states that parenting time will occur in a public place, parenting time should continue at locations that are permitted under Governor Mills' order and in accordance with health and safety guidelines, such as a large park.

If you believe that following these orders and guidelines is not possible, you may want to seek legal advice. For \$25, the Maine Lawyer Referral Service will connect you with an attorney in your area to do a 30-minute consultation. For more information, please visit: <https://mainebar.community.lawyer/>.

6. What free or low-cost technology options exist for virtual parent-child contact?

If you would like to consider virtual parent-child contact, here are some options:

1. Zoom - Video Calling
2. Facetime - Video Calling
3. Whatsapp - Video Calling, Text Messaging
4. Skype - Video Calling, Text Messaging
5. Google Hangouts - Text Messaging, Video Calling
6. Duo - Video Calling
7. Facebook Messenger - Video Calling, Text Messaging
8. Google Voice - Cloud Based Phone Number
9. Marco Polo
10. GoToMeeting
11. Google Meets

7. How will interviews with children and families by guardians ad litem be handled?

Any contact or interviews required or permitted in court proceeding or process related to Titles 18-C, 19-A, 22, or any other similar statute, can be by video, telephone, or in person.

8. Can mediations in family matters cases be conducted remotely?

The courts are offering mediation in family matters. Mediations will occur by video using Zoom or via telephone conference call. Parties will learn more about these options when they speak with the judge or magistrate about mediation. Parties who are scheduled for virtual mediation will receive a scheduling notice from the court with the date of the mediation and instructions for participation.

9. Can I get certified copies of my court order during this time?

Yes, a party may obtain copies of a court order by calling the clerk's office. The clerk's office can take payment over the phone and send the copies by mail. A directory of the phone numbers for clerk offices can be found [here](#).

10. What other resources are available?

If you are a victim of violence, abuse, or harassment and believe you are in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.

If you are worried for yourself or for someone else, please consider contacting the following resources:

1. Statewide Domestic Abuse Helpline: 1-866-834-HELP (free and confidential). Hearing impaired line: 1-800-437-1220.
2. Statewide Sexual Assault Helpline: 1-800-871-7741 (free and confidential)

Each of these resources will connect you with an advocate in your community.

1. Maine Lawyer Referral Service (\$25 for a 30-minute consultation): <https://mainebar.community.lawyer/>
2. Volunteer Lawyers Project: to ask a family law question, go to <https://maine.freelegalanswers.org>

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Protection from Abuse and Harassment Orders

The courts continue to hear requests for temporary and final protection from abuse or protection from harassment orders.

1. What are my options for filing documents in a protection from abuse/harassment case?

Starting on December 15, 2020, you can file **any document** in a protection from abuse/harassment case:

- By email, **EXCEPT** documents that require a filing fee. Generally, the only documents that will require a filing fee are some Protection from Harassment complaints and some Protection from Harassment Motions to Extend, Motions to Modify, or Motions for Contempt;
- In person at your local courthouse; or
- By mail.

Keep reading for more information on how to file by email, in person, or by mail.

2. Where do I get court forms for a protection from abuse or harassment case?

- Download and complete the protection from abuse packet.
- Download and complete the protection from harassment packet.
- Download and complete the packet for a motion to extend protection from abuse order.
- For all other court forms in protection from abuse or harassment cases, click [here](#).

3. How do I ask for a protection order or an extension of my protection order IN PERSON?

[Visit the court website here](#) to see when your local courthouse is open before going to the court. You can also call the court clerk's office for the district court serving the town where you live to make sure that the courthouse is open before you go to the court and, if you are seeking a temporary order, find out when your request can be heard by a judge.

4. What do I do if I want to file a request for a protection order or a motion to extend a protection order in person at the courthouse, but my local court is closed?

All courts are currently open from 8am to 4pm on weekdays, except holidays. However, sometimes a court will need to unexpectedly close. If your local court is unexpectedly closed and you need to file a request for a protection order or a request for a motion to extend your protection order, you may go to another open district court to file your case. The open court will accept your filing, a judge in that court will review your complaint or motion to extend, and issue a temporary order or extend your protection order, if appropriate. You will then be scheduled for a final hearing at your local court.

5. What if I go to the courthouse to file a request for a protection order or a motion to extend in person at the courthouse, but I cannot enter the courthouse due to health risks?

If you go to the courthouse but cannot enter, the marshals will provide the paper packet to you at the door and will accept it upon completion. Instead of signing your documents in front of the clerk for notarization, you will need to provide a safe phone number and the court will call you from the courtroom and take your oath on the record. If you do not a safe phone number to provide, please let the marshal know so the court can assist you. You may also want to contact an advocate for assistance (the number for the statewide Domestic Abuse Helpline is 1-866-834-HELP; the number for the statewide Sexual Assault Helpline is 1-800-871-7741).

6. How do I ask for a protection order or an extension of my protection order BY MAIL?

You can mail your completed protection from abuse, protection from harassment, or motion to extend packet to the court. Please note that your signature will have to be notarized before you mail your complaint or motion to extend. This means that if you want to mail your filing to the court, you will need to sign some of the forms in the packet in front of a notary before mailing the packet to the court.

<p>WARNING: Although you can mail your filing to the court, you will need to provide a safe phone number on your complaint or motion to extend so that the court can call you in case the court has</p>
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questions. If you do not answer your phone, your request for a temporary protection order may be denied without you having a chance to speak to a judge.

7. How do I ask for a protection from abuse or harassment order or an extension of my protection order BY EMAIL?

WARNING: A complaint for protection from harassment and a motion to extend a protection from harassment order can sometimes have a filing fee. **If it has a filing fee, you CANNOT file this document by email.** You must file it in person or by mail as explained above.

WARNING: Filing a complaint or motion to extend by email does NOT mean you are automatically protected. After you have filed, a judge must review your filing and, if appropriate, decide whether to grant a temporary order or temporarily extend your existing protection order.

Download the packet for the case (see question 2 for the links to each packet).

Carefully read the instructions and warnings on form [PA-02Z](#):

- The form explains how to email your filing to the correct court.
- The form also tells you the email address to use for submitting your protection from abuse complaint or motion to extend.
- You will **NOT** have to notarize the forms before emailing them to the court, **BUT** you must check off the box on the form that says: "the party electronically signs the complaint or motion and checks the box on the form that says: "I swear under penalty of perjury that the above statements are true and correct. I understand that these statements are made for use as evidence in court and that I am subject to prosecution for perjury punishable by up to 5 years in prison and a fine of up to \$5,000.00 if I give false information to the court."
- You do **NOT** need a printer or scanner to file these forms by email. The forms can all be completed online without printing and do not need to be signed.
- You **MUST** have access to a safe phone number and a safe email that you can check regularly. This is because the clerk will contact you by email to (1) tell you if the court granted you a temporary order for protection, or (2) **if needed**, to schedule a time for you to call the court so the judge can ask for additional information. If the court schedules you for a call with the judge and you do not call at that time, your case will not be dismissed but your request for a temporary order may be denied. Please note that the defendant will not be on that call.
- If you file your complaint or motion before 3 p.m. on a day when the court is open, you will receive an email from the clerk that same day.

For instructions on how to complete your filing by email, please carefully read the section on Filing by Email.
[hyperlink to section above]

8. What do I do if I do not have access to a computer and need the court forms to ask for a protection order?

If you do not have access to a computer, the forms are available at each district court. Call the district court clerk's office for the town where you live to make sure that the courthouse is open before you go to the court and, if you are seeking a temporary order, find out when your request can be heard by a judge.

9. Can I get help completing the forms to ask for a protection order?

If you need help completing the court forms, call the domestic violence or sexual assault agency in your region. For a complete list of each agency by region, please call the statewide domestic abuse helpline or the statewide sexual assault helpline to be connected to a local advocate (see phone numbers provided at question 10).

10. Do I have to go to the courthouse for my protection order hearing, or can the court hold the hearing by video or telephone?

All hearings in protection from abuse and protection from harassment cases are scheduled in person at the courthouse, unless the court allows you to participate by video or telephone. If you think the court should hold your hearing or allow you to participate by video or phone, you must file a written request (a motion) that explains the special reasons in your case that justify a hearing by video or phone. When deciding whether to allow you to participate by telephone or video, the court will consider many factors, including the health and safety of the court staff, parties, and witnesses; the ability of parties to participate remotely; and the effect its decision will have on the availability to other parties of limited Judicial Branch resources, including courtroom space, technology assistance, and clerical assistance. Please read [PMO-SJC-7](#) for more information on the requirements for this request.

WARNING: If the court has issued a temporary order of protection, the defendant cannot have contact with the plaintiff to negotiate an agreement. If parties need assistance in attempting to reach an agreement, the parties should hire attorneys or the plaintiff should contact a domestic violence or sexual assault advocate (see statewide helpline phone numbers provided at question 10).

11. How do I learn more about the process for protection from abuse and harassment cases?

To learn more, please review the court's "[Guide to Protection from Abuse and Harassment Cases](#)." You can access this guide on the court's website [here](#), or request a copy from the clerk at the courthouse.

12. What other resources are available?

- If you are a victim of violence, abuse, or harassment and believe you are in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.
- If you are worried for yourself or for someone else, please consider contacting the following resources that are free and confidential and that will connect you to an advocate.
 - Statewide Domestic Abuse Helpline: 1-866-834-HELP (free and confidential). Hearing impaired line: 1-800-437-1220.
 - Statewide Sexual Assault Helpline: 1-800-871-7741 (free and confidential).
 - [Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence](#)
 - [Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#)

An advocate is a trained person who can:

- Give information about protection orders and help you understand what happens in court
 - Help with court paperwork and find legal help
 - Give you support and information
 - Help with other services like housing, counseling, support groups, and mental health help
 - Help with safety planning • Provide information on how to file if you are under 18
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- To learn more, please review the court's "[Guide to Protection from Abuse and Harassment Cases](#)." You can access this guide on the court's website [here](#), or request a paper copy from the clerk at the courthouse. The guide contains information for both plaintiffs and defendants.
 - [Maine Lawyer Referral Service](#) (\$25 for a 30-minute consultation with an attorney).
 - [Maine Adult Protective Services](#) arranges for services to protect incapacitated and dependent adults (age 18 and over) in danger of abuse, neglect or exploitation. The adult abuse hotline number: 1-800-624-8404 or Maine Relay 711.
 - [Maine Child and Family Services](#) in the Department of Health and Human Services protects children from abuse and neglect. The 24-hour hotline to report suspected abuse or neglect is 1-800-452- 1999 or Maine Relay 711.

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Jury Trials

1. I received a notice for jury duty. Do I need to report?

No. Under Court Order [PMO-SJC-1](#), all jury trials, civil and criminal, including grand jury proceedings, are postponed until after November 6, 2020. Grand jury resumed on July 6, 2020.

If you are a litigant and your jury trial was scheduled between March 16 and November 6, 2020, your trial will be rescheduled, and you will receive notice of the new trial date in the future when jury trials resume.

Jury Trials may be set in only Augusta and Bangor for the month of September, and only in Bangor for the month of October. If you receive a juror summons for either month you should follow the directions included in the packet of information received from the Court.

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Payment of Court Fines and Fees

1. What does it mean that financial warrants have been vacated? Does it mean that I don't have to pay my fine?

By Order of the Trial Chiefs [PMO-TC-1](#) any outstanding warrants for unpaid fines, unpaid restitution, unpaid court-appointed counsel fees, failure to appear for unpaid fine hearings, and any other failure to appear and pay other fees are vacated. **Please understand, however, that these amounts remain due and payable.** New warrants may issue at a later date if the amounts remain unpaid.

2. Has an extension been granted for the payment of court fines?

Yes. The due dates for payment of all fines, restitution, court fees, and reimbursement of court-appointed counsel fees were extended to July 2, 2020, or to the ordered due date, whichever is later. See Court Order [PMO-TC-1](#).

3. Have deadlines been extended for traffic infractions?

Yes. All deadlines established pursuant to M.R. Civ. P. 80F (traffic infractions), and set to expire on or before June 30, 2020, were extended to July 1, 2020. See Court Order [PMO-TC-1](#).

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