How to File Domestic Violence Restraining Order (DVRO) Forms in California

1. What is Filing?

Filing:

Filing means officially submitting your legal documents to the court so that your case can be processed. In California, a document is considered "filed" when the court clerk endorses (stamps) it with the date and time it was received. This establishes the legal start date of your request or response.

California Rules of Court, Rule 2.259(a)(1) and Code of Civil Procedure § 1010.6(b)(3)

E-Filing

Electronic filing (e-filing) is the process of submitting court documents online rather than in person. E-filing is available in many—but not all—California counties. When you e-file, your documents are transmitted to the court through an approved e-filing service provider (EFSP) and receive a digital court "file stamp."

Code of Civil Procedure § 1010.6, California Rules of Court, Rules 2.250–2.261

> *Important Note on E-Filing: Domestic Violence Restraining Order (DVRO) filings are often exempt from mandatory e-filing in California. Many counties do not require or allow DVRO forms to be submitted electronically due to confidentiality concerns and the need for prompt judicial review.*
>
> *Always check your local court's website or contact the family law clerk's office to confirm whether e-filing is allowed or recommended for your DVRO case.*
>
> *Legal Reference: Cal. Rules of Court, Rule 2.253(b)(2) — Courts may exclude certain case types, including DV matters, from mandatory e-filing.*

2. Preparing Your Court Documents for Filing

Step 1. Review each of your forms, one more time.

1. **Make sure everything is correct**. Even if you are using UDIL software to complete your court documents, you must read and reread each court form and attachment generated with your answers to the interviews to ensure that they reflect everything you want to tell the court.

   If there are certain sections of your court forms and documents that you do not understand, or if you would like to ask specific questions about your case, contact your local Family Law Facilitator or visit your local court self-help center.

2. **Make corrections, if necessary.** You can edit your forms digitally, or directly on the form itself. Note, any text on your forms must be typewritten or hand printed in blue or black ink.

Step 2. Print, date, and sign your forms

If everything is correct, print your forms. Ensure you print one-sided (i.e. do not print on the front and back of each sheet of paper). Sign each form where your signature is required. Use blue or black ink only.

- If a form asks for your signature "under penalty of perjury," this means that when you sign the form, you are affirming that what is on the form is true and correct to the best of your knowledge.
- If a form has attachments, write where requested the number of pages attached in the space provided.

What if I don't have a printer/copier?

If you do not have access to a personal printer or copy machine, here are a few options you may use to print your court documents:

- **Local Courthouse:** Visit your local courthouse and check if they have a law library or self-help center. Many courthouses provide public access to computers and printers, allowing you to print your court forms securely. Additionally, these facilities often have staff available who can assist you in preparing and making copies of your forms for filing.
- **Public Libraries:** Public libraries often offer computer workstations and printing services. Check with your local library to see if they provide access to

computers and printers for public use. Ensure that you follow their privacy guidelines and take necessary precautions to protect your sensitive information.

- **Community Centers:** Some community centers or nonprofit organizations may offer computer and printing facilities for public use. Reach out to these centers in your area to inquire about their available resources and any associated costs.
- **Print Shops and Copy Centers:** Commercial print shops and copy centers are an option for printing court forms. Some examples of commercial print shops around California are FedEx Office, the UPS Store, Office Depot/OfficeMax, Staples, and local printing companies. However, exercise caution when using these services, as they are not specifically designed for handling sensitive legal documents. Before using a print shop or copy center, ensure that they can maintain the confidentiality and privacy of your information.
- **Friends, Family, or Trusted Contacts:** If you have friends, family members, or trusted contacts who have access to a printer, you can ask for their assistance in printing your court forms. Make sure to only share your documents with individuals you trust and consider taking precautions to protect your privacy.

Step 3: Check Court Filing Requirements

Any individual who files court forms and other documents with the court is required to comply with the rules governing filing.

- Before filing, the Court recommends that you review the California Rules of Court, specifically Rules 2.100-2.119 and visit the California Court website's Basics of Court forms page. Pay special attention to the section titled "Tips for Filling Out Judicial Council Forms" to ensure that your completed forms adhere to the latest court standards for filing.

  Note: Per Rule 2.100(c), papers that are submitted or filed electronically must meet the requirements in Rule 2.256(b).

Applicable Law: California Rules of Court, Rules 2.100-2.119.

California Judicial Council forms and their attachments must abide by the following requirements:

- Prepared on white or unbleached paper – 8 1/2 by 11 inches

- Prepared and printed (if filing in-person) on one-sided paper – only one side of each page may be used
- Text written in 12 pt font (Courier, Times New Roman, Arial or equivalent (Handwritten papers are OK – but write legibly)
- All forms must be typewritten or printed in blue or black ink. (See California Rules of Court, Rules 2.100-2.119)
- Line spacing – One and one-half or double-spaced
- Margins – at least 1 inch from the left edge and ½ inch from right edge
- Page Numbers – pages must be numbered consecutively on the bottom
- Binding – Original and copies must be firmly bound (e.g. stapled) AND the Original must be 2-hole punched at the top.

Step 4. Make copies of your forms

Make at least 2 copies of your completed and signed court forms. To be clear, you'll need 3 sets in total:

- The original court documents with your signatures (in blue or black ink)
- At Least 2 copies of the original court documents. The court will keep the original forms and return the 2, file-stamped copies to you

Step 5. Check for Local Court Filing Requirements

Some counties in California have local rules or additional forms that must be submitted when filing DVRO paperwork. Filing procedures can also vary by courthouse—some accept forms in person, while others may offer electronic filing. To avoid delays or rejection due to incomplete paperwork, it's a good idea to review your local court's filing requirements in advance. These may include cover sheets or other forms specific to that court.

- Click here or go to https://www.courts.ca.gov/3027.htm to review your county's local rules and forms, organized by county on the California Courts website.

  Tip: If your court asks you to choose a case type or division, DVROs are generally filed under the "family law" division.

- Click here to view a list of general filing requirements we've compiled for many California counties. Because procedures may change, it's still important to confirm with the court where you'll be filing.

You can also contact your courthouse clerk's office directly to ask about any local forms or specific filing instructions for DVRO cases in your county.

3. Filing Your Completed Court Documents – Filing Your Forms in the Courthouse

Step 1. Locating the Clerk's Office:

Once you arrive at the courthouse, the Clerk's Office is usually located on the ground floor. However, courthouses vary in design, so if it's not immediately evident, look for signs or directories that might guide you.

- The Clerk's Office is where most legal documents are filed and processed.
- Some courts may have multiple clerk offices that are dedicated to a particular area of law, e.g., Family Law, Probate, General Civil.

Ask for Help if Needed:

If you're having trouble locating the Clerk's Office, don't hesitate to ask for help.

Court security officers, often located at the entrance of the courthouse, can guide you. They are there to help ensure everything runs smoothly, and that includes helping visitors navigate the courthouse.

Step 2. At the Clerk's Office:

Once you've located the Clerk's Office, the process of filing may vary. Some offices use a ticketing system where you take a number and wait to be called to a window. Others may have you wait in line. Be prepared for either system, or another.

Interacting with the Clerk:

When it's your turn, approach the counter and let the clerk know that you're there to file papers for a Domestic Violence Restraining Order proceeding.

Be polite and patient - they handle a lot of cases and are there to help you. Have your papers ready to hand over, and make sure you have all the necessary copies as stated in your instructions.

Step 3. Conformed/Endorsed (Stamped) Copies:

After the clerk reviews your forms, they will keep the original and return copies to you. They will "conform" or "endorse" these copies, by either physically stamping a copy, or by providing you a computerized court endorsement on the copy, showing your documents have been filed. Make sure you have these copies before leaving the office. If your court cannot provide these copies to you on the same day that you file, ask the clerk when these copies will be available for pickup.

📌 If your local Courthouse requires that you file your court documents electronically, visit their website for specific instructions.

What if the court is closed when I want to file?

The court is only typically open on weekdays between 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM (though your local Courthouse's hours may vary).

Note for those seeking restraining orders: If the court is closed and you need a restraining order immediately, take your court forms/documents to your local police station. They can help you apply for a restraining order right away.

Note on Filing Fees:

Family Code section 6222 states, "There is no filing fee for an application, a responsive pleading, or an order to show cause that seeks to obtain, modify, or enforce a protective order or other order authorized by this division when the request for the other order is necessary to obtain or give effect to a protective order. There is no fee for a subpoena filed in connection with that application, responsive pleading, or order to show cause. There is no fee for any filings related to a petition filed pursuant to Part 4 (commencing with 6300) of this division."

In other words, you are not required to pay a filing fee to file your initial court documents in a Domestic Violence Restraining Order proceeding.

If this is your first time filing documents in this case, you may be required to pay a "first appearance fee." This fee is generally required of all parties making their initial filing in a legal matter.

Fee Waivers: If the cost of a fee is a financial burden, you can apply for a fee waiver. To request a waiver, complete and submit:

- Form FW-001: Request to Waive Court Fees
- Form FW-003: Order on Court Fee Waiver

What if I do not speak English well?

If you do not speak English well, you can ask the court clerk for an interpreter. The clerk may ask you to complete a request form if you want to have an interpreter at the hearing. If the court cannot give you an interpreter, bring an adult to interpret for you. Do not ask a witness in your case or a child involved in your case to interpret for you.