

Civil Protective Orders and Short- and Long-Term Health and Safety

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Civil protective orders (CPOs) are the primary survivor-driven legal mechanism to achieve safety and control over abusive situations. Arrests and criminal charge decisions are made by criminal-legal professionals and other civil law mechanisms (e.g., tort law) are inaccessible to most survivors. Indeed, almost 7900 CPO cases were filed in Alaska in 2024, showing they are widely used.

Petitioners seek CPOs for more than just safety reasons. Among one sample of petitioners, the top goals of attaining a CPO were to move forward with their lives, to feel more at peace, and for the respondents to realize how badly they had treated the petitioner or their families.ⁱ

CPOs keep petitioners safe and improve their overall wellbeing. Receiving a CPO is related to:

- Reductions in repeat incidents of physical and psychological abuse (although findings are mixed with some studies finding no effect on repeat victimization).ⁱⁱ
- Higher levels of well-being.^{iii, iv}
- Lower perceptions of fear^v and increased perceptions of feeling safer.^{vi, vii}

Relatedly, CPOs can be cost savers for society. CPOs have been estimated to save state government tens of millions of dollars in a 1-year period, primarily in health-related costs.^{viii}

Long-term CPOs are an important tool for survivors of persistent, long-term abusers. Many (50-75%) abuse survivors experience stalking by their ex-partners post-separation.^{ix} One study found that post-separation violence continues beyond one year for more than one-third of post-separation violence survivors.^x

Requiring CPO petitioners to extend their long-term CPOs every 12 months creates more than a routine paperwork hassle for survivors. These requirements create opportunities for lapses in protection if survivors do not file the paperwork in time and can affect future help-seeking behaviors:

- One study found that 25% of women did not return to court for a permanent protective order after being granted a temporary order.^{xi}
- Research has demonstrated that unsatisfactory or unpleasant experiences with formal help-seeking decreases survivors' likelihood of seeking help in the future.^{xii}

ⁱ Cattaneo, L.B., Grossmann, J., & Chapman, A.R. (2016). The Goals of IPV Survivors Receiving Orders of Protection: An Application of the Empowerment Process Model. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 31*(17), 2889-2911.

ⁱⁱ Cordier, R., Chung, D., Wilkes-Gillan, S., & Speyer, R. (2021). The Effectiveness of Protection Orders in Reducing Recidivism in Domestic Violence: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse, 22*(4), 804-828.

ⁱⁱⁱ Keilitz S., Hannaford P., Efke H. (1997). *Civil protection orders: The benefits and limitations for victims of domestic violence*. Rockville, MD: National Institute of Justice.

^{iv} Wright, C. V., & Johnson, D. M. (2012). Encouraging legal help seeking for victims of intimate partner violence: The therapeutic effects of the civil protection order. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 25*(6), 675-681.

^v Logan T. K., & Walker R. (2010). Civil protective order effectiveness: Justice or just a piece of paper? *Violence and Victims, 25*, 332-348.

^{vi} Logan T. K., Walker R., Shannon L., Cole J. (2008). Factors associated with separation and ongoing violence among women with civil protective orders. *Journal of Family Violence, 23*, 377-385.

^{vii} Cordier et al. (ii)

^{viii} Logan, T. K., Walker, R., & Hoyt, W. (2011). The Economic Costs of Partner Violence and the Cost-Benefit of Civil Protective Orders. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 27*(6), 1137-1154.

^{ix} Senkans, S., McEwan, T. E., & Ogloff, J. R. P. (2021). Assessing the Link Between Intimate Partner Violence and Postrelationship Stalking: A Gender-Inclusive Study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 36*(1-2), NP772-NP802.

^x Humphreys, C., & Thiara, R. K. (2003). Neither justice nor protection: Women's experiences of post-separation violence. *The Journal of Social Welfare & Family Law, 25*(3), 195-214

^{xi} Mazzotta, C. M., Crean, H. F., Pigeon, W. R., & Cerulli, C. (2021). Insomnia, posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms, and danger: Their impact on victims' return to court for orders of protection. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 36*(5-6), NP2443-NP2463.

^{xii} Calton, J., & Cattaneo, L. B. (2014). The effects of procedural and distributive justice on intimate partner violence victims' mental health and likelihood of future help-seeking. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 84*(4), 329-340.