



Pro Se Applicant Guide for the 280th Protective Order Court**

ARRIVING TO THE 280TH PROTECTIVE ORDER COURT

- The 280th Protective Order court is located on the 1st floor of the Juvenile Justice Center located at 1200 Congress St., Houston, TX 77002.
- There are no children allowed in the courtroom, please make sure to have adequate childcare or bring a trusted friend or family member with you that will sit with your child outside during the hearing.
- Arrive 30 – 45 minutes before your scheduled hearing time to get through security.
- Doors to the 280th courtroom open 5-10mins before 9am.
- You'll check in with the bailiff before entering the courtroom. If you are late, be sure to check in with the bailiff upon arrival to let the Court know you're present.
- **Silence your cell phone.**
- **NO AUDIO OR VISUAL RECORDING OR PHOTOS ALLOWED IN THE COURT ROOM.**
- No hats on allowed in the courtroom.
- Only bottled water allowed, no other drinks (i.e.: soda, coffee).
- No chewing gum—at all. There is tissue and a trashcan available for proper disposal.
- The applicant (that's you) goes to the right side of the court room to sit (there will be signs).
- **If you need an interpreter, speak to the court coordinator or court clerk. The bailiff can point you to the court coordinator or court clerk.**
- If you identify as male, please make sure your shirt is tucked into your pants.

COURT PROCEDURES:

1. Docket call begins at 9am sharp – so be seated in your designated area.
2. When the Judge calls your case (e.g., *Jones v. Jones*), **STAND**, and say that you're here (e.g., "*here, your honor*")
 - a. **Do not leave, or talk during docket call.**
 - b. **Stand when addressing the court (speaking to the Judge).**
3. After docket call, the Judge will then begin calling the parties in each case to present their case.
4. If your name was not called during docket call, let a bailiff know.
5. Make sure your evidence is in order before you are called to present your case (*preferably before coming to court*).
 - a. Evidence includes but is not limited to photos, videos, medical records, chat records, past protective orders, and/or anything else you think will help your case.
 - i. If you have hardcopy evidence, make sure to bring at least **four (4) copies** to court. You will have to supply the respondent/respondent's attorney, the court reporter, and the Judge a copy of the evidence.
 - ii. If there will be audio/video evidence, ***you'll need to have your own device*** (laptop, phone, tablet, etc.) to present the evidence. Please back them up to a thumb drive (USB) and provide it to the court reporter.
 - iii. ***If you have any questions about how to label evidence; you can contact Edhi Sepulveda, court reporter for the 280th, at ehdi_sepulveda@justex.net She speaks Spanish as well!***



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- b. Evidence can also include witnesses. Make sure they are present in person or via Zoom.
 - i. If your witness is present in person, the Judge or opposing counsel will invoke “the rule.” Which means all witnesses in your case will have to step out of the courtroom during your testimony and will only be called back in when it’s their turn to testify.
6. Ask the bailiff for a “pink sheet”, which is a “Record Request” form. This form allows you to provide the court reporter with your contact information so that you can have access to your court records.
7. Please refrain from having conversations with others in the courtroom. If you need to speak to the court advocate, you can ask her to step out to speak with you.

HEARING PROCEDURES:

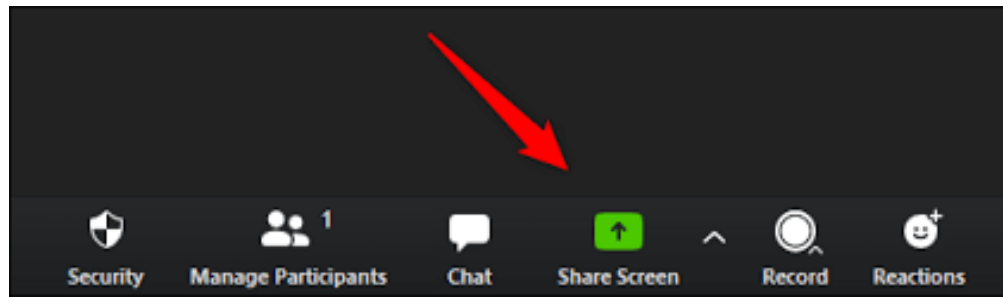
The Judge will call your name and ask you to approach when it’s time for your hearing. The bailiffs will direct you to stand in front of the Judge. The Judge will announce the case for the record and swear all parties in.

- a. The bailiff will stand between you and the respondent.
 - b. If you brought a witness to testify, they will need to leave the courtroom during your testimony. They should not speak to fellow witnesses or anyone else about the case during this time.
2. The Judge will ask you, the applicant, to present your case first. You will be able to explain why you need protection from the respondent. The Judge may ask clarifying questions about your situation. ***You cannot read a prewritten statement.***
 - a. Provide a **CLEAR STORY** with **dates and times** of incidents (at least provide the month and year of the incidents). ***For example, instead of saying: the Respondent is always threatening you, state when (month and year) the Respondent threatened you and how (in person, via phone, text, or social media).***
 - i. When discussing these incidents, you can present the evidence that you may have related to that incident.
 - ii. ***Speak SLOWLY AND CLEARLY for the court reporter who is taking official record of everything.***
 - iii. Please stick to the reason you are applying for a Protective Order and issues relating to the allegations of family violence.
 - b. **Do not interrupt others while they are speaking—the court reporter cannot document people speaking over each other.**
 - c. Stand when you address the court (speak to the Judge), respond with “yes/no, your honor.”
 - d. The respondent’s attorney may object (*see below for QR Code with list of objections and the meaning*) to some of the things you say. Listen to the Judge’s ruling on that objection before continuing. **Sustained means the objection is allowed, and overruled means it’s been denied.**



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3. To present any video, audio, or photos you'll need **your own laptop**:
 - a. Go to: <https://zoom.us/join>
 - b. Enter the Zoom Meeting ID: 827 828 1236 (no password is required)
 - c. The host will let you into ZOOM.
 - d. Please put yourself on mute upon entering.
 - e. You will then click on "share screen" (see below)



- f. There will be an option to connect your audio and video.
 - g. You can join WITH or WITHOUT video.
 - h. Be sure to click on "share sound."
4. When you finish presenting your case, the respondent or their attorney will have an opportunity to ask you questions. Do your best to remain calm during this time. Answer questions directly (e.g., if it's a yes or no question, response with a simple yes or no) and truthfully.
5. The respondent will then have an opportunity to present their case, including presenting evidence and calling witnesses.
 - a. Do not interrupt them unless you have an objection (*see below for QR Code with list of objections and the meaning*).



- b. You or your attorney will be given an opportunity to ask the respondent questions. Please stick to asking questions regarding the family violence.
6. The Judge will then make a ruling.
 - a. If a Protective Order is granted, the Judge will detail the type of protective order granted, the length of time it will be in effect, and the conditions of the order. *Feel free*

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to contact an advocate from HCDVCC to discuss how to best use your protective order, report violations etc. You can contact DVHRT Program Manager by email (ncantu@hcdvcc.org) to be connected to an advocate that can assist you.

b. Types of protective orders:

No Contact	Restrictive Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the name suggest, there should be no contact by the Respondent to the Applicant. • If there is a pending divorce, communications should go through the attorneys on the case. • The Respondent should also not contact you through third parties (friends, family members, colleagues, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This typically issued when both parties share children. • Contact should be strictly about the health, education, and well-being of the children. Preferably through a parenting app. (i.e., AppClose, OurFamilyWizard, TalkingParents, etc.). • Communication cannot be harassing or threatening.

a. *If a Protective Order is not granted and you still have concerns about your safety, feel free to contact DVHRT Program Manager by email (ncantu@hcdvcc.org) to be connected to an advocate that will help you in creating a safety plan.*