

Safety When Going to Court

If you are going to court for a final protective order, your abuser may also be coming to court. Here are some ideas on keeping safe in court.

Getting to court:

- Plan on getting to court a half hour or more before your hearing. That way, you may get to court before your abuser does. This can make it safer for you to get into the building.
- Your Summit County Victim Advocate will meet you to assure you are kept in a separate area from the abuser.
- Bring a friend or family member with you.
- The Summit County bailiffs will always be present to assure your safety.
- Have a friend drive you. It's best to get someone whose car your abuser doesn't know. Ask your friend to drop you off at the courthouse entrance, instead of having you walk in from the parking lot.
- If you have to drive yourself, try to keep your abuser from recognizing your car. If you can, borrow or rent a car that your abuser doesn't know. If you drive your own car, consider parking in the parking lot of the adjacent building near the deputies vehicles.

Once you're inside the courthouse:

- Travel in a group with the people who came with you. Pick a person who will only pay attention to the surroundings and safety considerations.
- Immediately look for your victim advocate. If she is not there, please ask a bailiff if you may be seated in an area away from the abuser.
- Let the bailiff or courthouse security know if your abuser sits next to you or tries to harass you. Ask the bailiff to keep your abuser away from you.

Leaving the courthouse:

- The advocate will need a few minutes after the hearing to obtain the judges signature on the order, make copies and disseminate them. Please remain in the court room or an area designated by the advocate, separate from the abuser while this process is completed. Have a police officer or sheriff walk out with you.
- At the end of your hearing, your advocate will ask your abuser to leave first or "detain" your abuser - to hold him until you can leave.
- Have someone walk you to your vehicle or...
- Have a friend pick you up at the exit.

