

**TOO
INTO
you**

GUIDE TO SAFETY ORDERS IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS

Recent changes to the Domestic Violence Act means that you can now apply for a Safety Order in a dating relationship.



1. What is a Safety Order?

A Safety Order gives you **legal protection** from an abusive boyfriend or ex. It makes it illegal for them to be violent or threaten violence against you, be verbally abusive, or even contact you. Changes in the law now make it possible for someone in a dating relationship to get a Safety Order. A Safety Order can last up to 5 years.



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2. How do I apply for a Safety Order?

You don't need legal presentation at this point so you can apply for a Safety Order in person through your local District Court. However, if you wish, you can ask a solicitor to make an application on your behalf. Your boyfriend or ex does not need to be present or know about you taking this first step. After the application he will be notified of the application and the date of the court hearing.

When making an application for a Safety Order, you can also apply for a **temporary Protection Order** from the Court on the same day. A Protection Order gives you **immediate protection and lasts up to your Safety Order hearing date.**

You will need to mention the evidence you have for the full hearing. This may include reports from your GP, hospital and/or the Gardaí. You must also bring proof of identity such as a passport or driving license.

3. How much does it cost?

There are **NO** court fees. However, it is **advisable to have legal representation** (solicitor/barrister) at the full court hearing and if you are not entitled to legal aid you may wish to hire a private solicitor.

Always check first if you are entitled to legal aid and contact the Legal Aid Board. The Legal Aid Board also have an online calculator where you can check this.

If you are entitled to legal aid, there are no contributory costs for legal aid if you are applying for a Domestic Violence Order.



4. What happens at my Safety Order hearing?

At the Safety Order hearing, you and your boyfriend or ex will be in court. You will give evidence and answer questions from his solicitor. Your boyfriend or ex can respond and your solicitor can question him. It is always advisable to have legal representation. If your boyfriend or ex is representing himself at the hearing the Court may prevent him from personally cross-examining you.

Safety Order hearings are held in **private**. There are restrictions on what can be said outside of court, and there are media restrictions on reporting.

5. What happens if I get a Protection or Safety Order?

You will be given a document called a Protection or Safety Order and you should keep a copy of this with you at all times. Your boyfriend or ex and your local Garda station will be sent copies of the Protection and Safety Order. **The Order is not in effect until it is served on your boyfriend or ex.**

You should also bring the Order to your local Garda station to make sure they have a copy. The judge may direct the Order to be served by the Gardaí.

If your boyfriend or ex breaks any conditions of the Protection or Safety Order it is a criminal offence.

6. What happens if I don't get a Protection or Safety Order?

Under the new law the Court should provide the reasons why they did not give you a Protection or Safety Order. Court accompaniment support workers will be able to talk through what has happened and **work with you on an alternative safety plan.**



7. Who can help me through this process?

The Women's Aid 24hr National Freephone Helpline is available for you to talk to on 1800 341 900 and can provide information on court accompaniment and one to one support services near where you live.

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