



How to Get Things Done in King County Superior Court During COVID-19 When You Do Not Have an Attorney

The information below will help you access the court, file a legal case, and work on your existing case, during the continuing COVID-19 Pandemic. You are encouraged **not** to travel to the courthouses in person unless you are specifically asked or directed by the court to come in person. Help is available via email, Zoom, and phone so that you should not need to come to court. The court has temporarily changed some processes to make it easier to participate in a court case from home.

If you **do** go to any King County Superior Court location, you will be required to wear a face covering, ensuring your nose and mouth are covered to reduce the possible spread of COVID-19; this is by court order, found [here](#). If you have not received an exemption, yet refuse to wear a mask, you will be asked to leave the courthouse and staff will not assist you, as the court must balance the safety of everyone who works at or comes to our courthouses. A mask will be provided if you do not have one.

Most of the information you need can be found in different places on the court's website. This document lists all of the information you may need in one place, providing links to the website for more details.

Click on the links below to take you to the part(s) of this document that apply to you:

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Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPO):

Start a case:

1. **Get Help:** If you need help filing a Domestic Violence Order for Protection (DVPO), you may contact the Protection Order Advocacy Program (POAP) at:

- Seattle 206-477-1103, or
- Kent 206-477-3758.

More information about how to get help from POAP can be found [here](#).

2. **File on your own:** If you want to file a DVPO on your own, you will need to:

- a. **Fill out the Forms:** The forms can be downloaded from the drop-down box part way down the page found [here](#). You will need to scroll halfway down the page then click on “Domestic Violence Protection Order Forms” for the drop-down box.
- b. **File the Documents by Virtually:** Visit the King County Superior Court Clerk’s VIRTUAL DVPO Office online [here](#). On that page you will find instructions for choosing, filling out, and submitting the appropriate forms. You may access the Virtual DVPO Office by Zoom between 9AM – 4PM, Monday – Friday (closed from 12:15PM – 1:15PM for lunch). Visit the virtual office using this shortcut: [ZOOMDVPO](#). *If you need help using or installing Zoom, or more specific instructions regarding how to use the ZOOMDVPO shortcut, there is more information [here](#).*
- c. **Please note:** The King County Superior Court is **not** currently accepting walk-ins for Ex Parte Protection Orders. All hearings are currently being done virtually using Zoom/telephone. When you file your documents with the Clerk’s Office (virtually or onsite, if you must go in person) you will be provided with the information you need to have a virtual/telephone hearing with the court.
- d. **Also:** The clerk assisting you virtually cannot give you legal advice or tell you how to fill out the forms. If you need help, contact the POAP (see Step 1 above) or one of the domestic violence legal aid programs listed [here](#).
- e. **Instructions:** Additional instructions about filing a DVPO can be found [here](#).



DVPO hearings: All DVPO hearings are by Zoom, which may include joining Zoom via telephone, whenever possible. Directions on how to participate by phone are available online as follows:

1. **1st Appearance:** For information about how to appear in the “ex parte” department when asking for a new protection order, click [here](#). You will need to scroll down for the list of courtrooms, and for instructions regarding joining by telephone only. If a temporary protection order is approved, a full or “return hearing” will be set 14 days later with the family law motions department.
2. **Full Hearing/Return Hearing:** ***NOTE: These hearings will eventually transition from being heard telephonically, for which there are instructions below, to being heard by Zoom video/telephone. Check the court’s website for updates about this process regularly!*** As of 12/23/2020, to participate in the full/return DVPO hearing, you must contact the family law motions department of the court at least three (3) hours before the hearing by calling or emailing and providing your name, case number, hearing date, and the phone number you can be reached at for the hearing:
 - a. For Kent cases, email FamilyLawStaffMRJC@KingCounty.gov or call (206) 477-2750;
 - b. For Seattle cases, email FamilyLawStaffSeattle@KingCounty.gov or call (206) 477-1523.

For additional information, click [here](#). You will need to scroll down to the “Domestic Violence Protection Orders” section.

3. **Surrender Weapons Hearing:** If you have been ordered to appear for a weapons surrender compliance hearing, you must appear by phone. **At least 1 day before your hearing**, email your name, case number, the date of your hearing, and the phone number where you can be reached for your hearing to: weapons-surrender@kingcounty.gov. **If you do not have email**, call (206) 477-1367 to provide your telephone number. If you leave a voicemail, include your name, case number, and the date of your hearing.

Other Types of Protection Orders

In addition to Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPO), there are other types of protection orders available, including:

- Anti-Harassment and Anti-Stalking Protection Orders,
- Sexual Assault Protection Orders (SAPO),
- Vulnerable Adult Protection Orders (VAPO), and
- Extreme Risk Protection Orders.



- 1. Overview:** A description of the different protection orders is provided [here](#). You can find links to the forms for the different types of protection orders [here](#). You will need to scroll down on the page to the purple boxes, and choose which type of protection order you want information about.
- 2. Which Protection Order is Right for Me?** The flow charts available half-way down the page [here](#) may help you decide which protection order you want. This document also describes the different steps of the process of getting one of these protection orders.
- 3. Instructions:** Detailed instructions, explanations, and forms for all types of protection orders are available at <http://protectionorder.org/>.

For Anti-Harassment and Anti-Stalking Protection Orders, SAPOs, VAPOs, and Extreme Risk Protection Orders, under Emergency Orders of the King County Superior Court, your hearing will be telephonic. For SEATTLE information, please visit [here](#). For KENT case information, please visit [here](#). Or, you may call the numbers listed below on the Friday or Monday before your hearing to get the judge assigned, phone number, and PIN needed to call in for your hearing: Seattle 206-477-1400; or Kent 206-477-2600.

Family Law Cases

“Family Law Cases” include divorces, establishing or changing parenting plans, establishing parentage/paternity, de facto parentage, relocation, and establishing or modifying child support.

Get Help:

- 1. Facilitator’s Office:** A facilitator in the Family Law Information Center/Family Law Facilitator’s Office can:
 - Help you identify what type of family law case you might want to file;
 - Help you find the forms you need;
 - Give you free instructions for the case or motion you want to file;
 - Give you information about court processes; and
 - Help you fill out the legal forms.

You can call a facilitator between 8:30 AM and noon, Monday through Friday:

- For Seattle or Kent Cases, call 206-263-FLIC (206-263-3542)



- This is the *new* number for both locations; the previous numbers will continue to forward to this main line

For more information about getting help from the facilitators, click [here](#).

2. **Legal Advice:** [Click here to go to “Getting Legal Advice” section below.](#)

Start a Family Law Case:

1. **Fill out Forms:**

- a. **Instructions:** The family law facilitators have published instructions online for most family law cases. In the instructions, there are links to the forms you will need. Instructions can be found [here](#).

Also, you can call the facilitators with any questions about what instructions or forms you need. See the facilitator contact information in this document [here](#).

- b. **Get your forms online:** Required family law forms can be found [here](#).

2. **File Your Case:**

- a. **With a fee waiver:** Read the instructions [here](#) if you need to ask the court to waive the filing fee to start a new family law case.

- b. **Without a fee waiver:** Read the instructions [here](#) if you want to start a new family law case and you are going to pay the filing fee.

Family Law Motions:

1. **File a Motion:** After you file your family law case, you may want to file a motion to have the court give you temporary orders which would be in place until your case is finished. At this time, the court has some special procedures in place for family law motions, according to [Emergency Order 24](#). Instructions for choosing and setting the date for your family law motion can be found in the “Setting Family Law Motion Hearings” document, available [here](#). More information is also available [here](#).

2. **Agreed Temporary Orders:** Some agreed temporary orders can be submitted to the court for approval. Information on how to submit these agreed orders online, to the “orders for review” queue, is [here](#). *Please note:* agreed orders require signatures *from both parties*.



- 3. How to Participate in a Family Law Hearing:** Information on how to participate in your family law hearing is available [here](#).

Finalize your Family Law Case:

- 1. Trial:** Almost all family law trials from late March to July 10th were continued to July 20th or afterward. If you have not received a new trial date, contact your trial judge. Your trial judge's name is on the case scheduling order you received when your case was first filed and/or served. The judge's bailiff can be reached at judgename.court@kingcounty.gov, for example, smith.court@kingcounty.gov. Many trials are now taking place by video; your trial judge will give you instructions.
- 2. By Agreement:** Family law cases may be finalized by agreement. If you are self-represented and want to finalize your case by agreement, you must email your proposed final orders to facilitators@kingcounty.gov. Facilitators will work with a judge or commissioner to finalize your documents or give you instructions on what to do next. Please include in your email a phone number where you can be reached. If you cannot email your documents, for Kent or Seattle cases call 206-263-FLIC (206-263-3542) between 8:30 am and 12:00 noon.
- 3. By Default:** A default is when you ask the court to finalize your case because you have proven the other party was properly served but has not filed a response to the case in the time permitted to do so.
 - a. If the Other Party has Appeared But Not Filed a Response:** If the other party has participated in the case, but not filed a Response to the Petition, you **must** provide the other party with notice of your motion for default. For motions for default that **do** require notice, there is a separate calendar on Fridays at 1:30 pm in front of the Chief UFC Judge. The Notice of Court Date for that calendar can be found **HERE**. Self-represented parties should talk with the facilitator about how to note these default hearings.
 - b. If the Other Party has Not Appeared or Responded:**
 - i. Family Law Cases Without Children:** If your family law case does not involve children, you may submit motions for default that do **not** require notice to the other party to the Ex Parte Department via [Ex Parte via the Clerk](#) (click the link). Submit your motion to Ex Parte **only** if the other party has not participated in the case in any way.
 - ii. Family Law Cases With Children:** If your family law case does involve children, you may submit motions for default that do **not** require notice to the other party to the [Orders for Review](#) queue.



Probates and Wills:

These cases include new probates with or without a will (intestate cases).

1. **Start a Case:** To start a new probate, a new case in King County Superior Court needs to be started. General information about starting a new case is described [here](#).

NOTE: Petitions for new probates involving a will *must have the original will submitted*.

2. **Notice:** When starting a new probate, you need to determine whether any other people are entitled to notice of your petition.
 - a. **Without Notice:** To start a probate without prior notice to any other person, the petition and other documents must be submitted electronically using the Court's Ex Parte via the Clerk (EPVC) process.

Ex Parte Via the Clerk (EPVC): More information is available [here](#) by scrolling down and selecting "Probates." General information about EPVC is [here](#).

- b. **With Notice:** You must schedule a hearing to open a probate *with* notice to others on the 10:30 AM Ex Parte calendar. You may set the hearing for any day of the week with 14 days' notice to the court and to the other people who are required to get notice. All appearances are by telephone as described [here](#).
3. **More Information:** A useful resource which outlines the probate/wills process and offers free forms to use is www.kingcountyprobates.com, although the processes there have not been updated to reflect new COVID-19 procedures.

Guardianships

These cases involve a request that the Court appoint a guardian for a person thought to be unable to care for him/herself.

1. **Forms and Instructions:** The Court has a detailed guardianship web page with guardianship forms, instructions and many useful links, available [here](#).
2. **Start a Case:** General information about starting a new case is described [here](#).
3. Guardianship cases involving a party with minimal property or resources may be filed without paying a filing fee. Also, the appointment of a guardian ad litem



(GAL), which is required in most cases, may be done at public cost. For more information, click [here](#). Scroll down that page and select “Guardianships/Trusts.”

4. **Filing your Annual or Periodic Report:** Parties submitting annual or other periodic guardianship reports which do not require prior notice to any party or entity may submit those for approval using the Ex Parte via the Clerk (EPVC) process. For more information, click [here](#).

How to File Documents or a New Case During COVID-19

1. If you have an existing case, or would like to start a new case you can file documents in the following ways:
 - a. **E-file:** The court encourages you to turn in your documents electronically, which is called e-filing. Directions on how to e-file documents are [here](#). Click [here](#) for the website to e-file.
 - b. **Mail:** If you cannot e-file, you may turn in your documents by mailing them to the clerk’s office at the courthouse your case is assigned to. Addresses to the Clerk’s Offices can be found [here](#).

If you want a receipt showing your papers were filed, you must include a self-addressed, stamped envelope and an extra copy of the document you are filing. That extra copy will be stamped “received” and mailed back to you in the stamped envelope you provide. Make sure you list the case number on the front page of each document you want to be filed. Mail your documents at least three (3) days before the day they are due to permit enough time for the documents to be received and processed.

- c. **Drop Off:** If you cannot e-file or mail in your documents, you may still turn in papers in person at the courthouses; the clerk’s office addresses can be found [here](#). Because of COVID-19 social distancing rules, you may be required to drop off your paperwork rather than handing them to a staff person. If drop off is required, there will be signs explaining where and how to drop off your papers. Be sure to keep an extra copy of all documents you file, for your own records.
2. **More information:** Additional instructions on how to file documents are [here](#).



- 3. Ask a Clerk:** If you have questions, you can contact the King County Superior Court Clerk's office by phone, email or electronic instant message. Click [here](#) for contact information.

Getting Legal Advice & Assistance

While many programs are limiting in-person help at this time, you can still get legal help, including legal advice, at the programs listed below. Please note that these programs are separate from the King County Superior Court, and the court cannot guarantee that assistance will be available or offered to you. These are not the only programs offering legal assistance; you are encouraged to do your own research to find other resources.

King County Law Library

Contact the King County Law Library via email, phone, or their "Zoom" reference service Monday - Friday from 8-4:30. Law library staff cannot give legal advice but they can help locate DIY legal research materials, forms & instructions, and make referrals to free legal aid clinics. With their video reference service, they walk patrons through resources such as WA Law Help and can answer follow-up questions in real time. See <https://kcll.org/> for all reference options.

Forms The Law Library has several "Do-it-Yourself" form packets for sale, which offer step by step instructions with [blank forms](#). The Law Library will also print and mail on request for a small fee.

Videos & Workshops The Law Library has an ever expanding collection of videos to assist self-represented litigants with the basics of lawsuits along with other topics like drafting a valid will. <https://kcll.org/videos/>

The Law Library also offers free online workshops taught by attorneys on a variety of subjects. These include the four-part Self-Represented Litigant workshop series which introduces the basics of civil procedure, and the four-part Family Law series which covers the fundamentals of family law litigation. Information on registration can be found: <https://kcll.org/classes-at-the-law-library/classes/self-represented-litigant-workshops/>.

Northwest Justice Project Programs:

The Northwest Justice Project (NJP) offers legal advice, assistance, and advocacy in many different types of cases. To access its programs, including a legal advice hotline, during COVID-19, click [here](#).

Washington Law Help: Many legal forms and instructions are available at the Washington Law Help website, found [here](#). The website offers "drop down" menus with



links to information about your legal rights specific to health, housing, family law, employment, and more.

King County Bar Association Programs:

The King County Bar Association (KCBA) offers a variety of free legal help programs. For up-to-date information, click [here](#).

General Legal Advice and Help with Paperwork: Neighborhood Legal Clinics offer free legal advice and free assistance with legal paperwork in civil (not criminal) cases. The clinics are operating by phone during COVID-19. Start by calling (206) 267-7070 and leaving a voice mail. KCBA staff will call you back and schedule you for a virtual clinic. Their priorities right now are DV, Housing and Discrimination (employment; age; federal benefits; etc.). More information is available [here](#).

Legal Advice and Help with Family Law Issues: In addition to Neighborhood Legal Clinics, the KCBA has different programs for family law cases if family violence is present; you may call the KCBA at (206) 267-7047, leave a voicemail, and a staff member in the family law programs will call you back.

Legal Advice and Help with Housing Issues: The KCBA also offers the **Housing Justice Project (HJP)**, which is providing phone consultations for people with issues related to housing and eviction. Although in-person HJP clinics are currently closed, they are still available by telephone at (253) 234-4204. Leave a voicemail message and an HJP staff member will call you back. By phone, HJP continues to help people who may need to file a response, a notice of appearance, or other legal documents. HJP can also refer you to other assistance programs. While there is a statewide moratorium on unlawful detainers in place, HJP can provide information about what that means for you. More information is also available [here](#).

Unemployment and Consumer (Financial) Programs:

Unemployment Law Project has information available online [here](#) for issues related to employment (being laid off, **accessing unemployment benefits**, etc.), You can also call them at (206) 441-9178, or toll free at 1-888-441-9178.

The Northwest Consumer Law Center has information about legal clinics and webinars related to **debt collection, bankruptcy, foreclosure, evictions, and student loans** during COVID-19 is available here: [here](#).

Probate/Wills Information:

The King County Law Library offers two “Do it Yourself” probate packets available for sale; one for Opening Probate with a Will and one for Opening Probate without a Will. They are available here: <https://kcll.org/probate-packets/>. The Library also offers a



short video, infographic, and information on common questions on the Basics of Wills in Washington state, at <https://kcll.org/covid-wills/>.

Another useful resource that outlines the probate/wills process and offers free forms is www.kingcountyprobates.com, although the processes there have not been updated to reflect new COVID-19 changes.

Please continue to check the various programs' individual websites for updates as the situation with COVID-19 changes.