



CREATING FIREARMS SAFETY BROCHURES FOR SURVIVORS:

WHAT COMMUNITY PROGRAMS SHOULD CONSIDER

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A coordinated community response is essential to informing survivors of the firearm protections in your jurisdiction.

One of the most critical ways that civil and criminal justice system actors can enhance the safety of victims is by enforcing federal, state, and tribal statutes and court orders that prohibit abusers from possessing firearms.

The importance of consistently enforcing these firearm prohibitions cannot be overstated, as it is a key strategy in reducing the threat of lethal violence and enhancing victim safety. Together with community-based advocacy organizations, system actors can work to ensure existing legal mechanisms to identify and restrict abusers' access to firearms are fully implemented and enforced.

Firearms are commonly used by abusers to harm their intimate partners. One of the first steps victims may take to seek safety is obtaining a civil protection order (CPO). A CPO can prevent abusive behavior, contact, communication, and possession of firearms, providing stability for victims and their children. However, accessing some remedies, such as removing firearms, can be complicated due to the complex legal process to obtain a protection order. Additionally, most victims seek a protection order without legal or advocacy assistance, which adds to the complexity. It's crucial for system actors and community-based organizations to provide information and resources to help victims navigate the process of removing firearms from their abuser during the protection order process and reduce the confusion they face.

This sample template is for use by community-based advocacy programs and Coordinated Community Response (CCR) teams that seek to provide community-informed, survivor-centered assistance to individuals who have questions about the removal of firearms from their abuser in the protection order process. CCR teams are an important resource in ensuring the response to victims' needs and efforts to hold offenders accountable. Together members of the CCR can create or strengthen links with communities' allies to improve direct responses to victims.

Guidance to Consider When Creating Your Brochure:

1. All participants should understand survivors' specific needs, challenges, and the resources available to address the issuance and enforcement of protection orders and firearms in domestic violence situations within their community.
2. Include input from survivors and survivor agencies to ensure the brochure is accessible and meets the needs of survivors in your community.
3. Use plain language, clear headings, bullet points, a large font version, and visual elements to enhance readability for various readers.
4. Include guidance on seeking a CPO, firearm removal, enforcement procedures, and resources for survivors. Provide a list of additional resources, such as websites, helpline numbers, support organizations, and legal references.
5. Consider providing print copies and utilizing a QR code to make the brochure accessible to as many individuals as possible in addition to posting the brochure on websites.
6. Coordinate with the judiciary to ensure that the brochure meets appropriate guidelines for display at the courthouse and the clerk's office.
7. Connect with community-based organizations and culturally specific organizations where pro se litigants may seek help for co-related issues such as housing and immigration to obtain input on the brochure and identify distribution locations.
8. Include non-traditional allies who often connect with survivors regularly. To maximize the brochure's reach to survivors, possible distribution locations may include faith-based programs, hair salons, barber shops, medical centers, and other professional networks. Be mindful to seek permission from the organizations or businesses before posting or distributing the brochure.
9. Ensure that the brochure is available in multiple languages, specifically those languages that are most spoken in your community, to increase accessibility for those who are limited in English proficiency.

Note: Federally funded programs should seek final review and approval from the appropriate program manager before dissemination.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT FIREARMS AND YOUR SAFETY

SURVIVOR FIREARM INFORMATION TEMPLATE

[DOWNLOAD THE TEMPLATE HERE](#)

The following pages consist of direct language from the template.

Use this as a worksheet to collaborate with domestic violence advocacy agencies as well as system actors to customize the template for this jurisdiction.

When determining how to include information that is specific to your jurisdiction consider the following questions:

What system actors are needed to provide this information?

Do certain laws apply?

Do certain court policies or procedures apply?

Use the text boxes at the bottom of each section to write the language that you will insert into the template.

ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR SAFETY?

- Is your [insert your protection order relationship requirements, for example, partner or household family member] physically abusing or threatening to abuse you?
- Does this person have a gun?
- Has this person threatened to get a gun?
- Does this person have a history of using guns to threaten you or others?
- Has this person ever threatened to commit suicide or threatened to hurt or kill you or another family member?
- Would you feel safer if a court prohibited this person from purchasing or possessing a firearm as part of a protection order?
- Would you like to talk to someone confidentially about your options and safety planning around firearms?
- If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, please review this brochure to find out what you can do to increase your safety AND find free advocacy assistance.

INSERT YOUR PROTECTION ORDER RELATIONSHIP REQUIREMENTS, FOR EXAMPLE, PARTNER OR HOUSEHOLD FAMILY MEMBER:

WHERE CAN YOU FIND ASSISTANCE?

You may wish to connect with a Victim Advocate.

A victim advocate can provide free assistance with safety planning, ongoing support in the petition and protection order process, accompaniment to legal proceedings, discussion of non-legal options, connection to legal services and other services.

If you choose to file a protection order, it is IMPORTANT that you properly fill out all sections of the protection order petition. An advocate can help you if you have questions. **[Insert information on obtaining a copy of the petition, i.e., online link, e-filing portal, clerk’s office.]**

You have the right to keep your address confidential. [insert safe at-home information if applicable for the state]

INSERT INFORMATION ON OBTAINING A COPY OF THE PETITION, I.E., ONLINE LINK, E-FILING PORTAL, CLERK’S OFFICE:

INSERT ADDRESS CONFIDENTIALITY INFORMATION IF APPLICABLE FOR THE STATE:

Things YOU Should Know:

The clerk’s office cannot provide you with legal advice. Remember, the respondent is entitled to access any information provided to the court.

A judge can grant you (as the petitioner) a protection order based on what you write in your petition and say in court. A protection order can impose restrictions on the person you are filing against (this person is known as the respondent in the protection order process). [insert information about ex parte relief and final protection order relief available]. When filing a protection order, YOU have the right to request that firearms be removed from the respondent. You may ask the court not to allow the respondent access to firearms, turn over any firearms in their possession, and provide proof that they did so.

Abusers may use firearms in many ways to harm, harass, intimidate, or coerce you. It is important that you let the court know about any of the following:

- The respondent threatening to injure, kill, intimidate, or coerce you with a firearm.
- The respondent physically displaying a firearm to intimidate or coerce you to do something.
- The respondent physically uses a firearm to assault you.
- The respondent doing any of the above actions to another person.

It is important to be prepared to explain to the judge why you believe the respondent should not have access to firearms. [Insert criteria to request firearm removal and in the protection order process the information needed to be included in the petition process around firearms]

INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT EX PARTE RELIEF AND FINAL PROTECTION ORDER RELIEF AVAILABLE:

INSERT CRITERIA TO REQUEST FIREARM REMOVAL AND IN THE PROTECTION ORDER PROCESS THE INFORMATION NEEDED TO BE INCLUDED IN THE PETITION PROCESS AROUND FIREARMS:

EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT YOUR PETITION

You are responsible for providing information or Witnesses (people who witnessed events, such as friends, family, teachers, neighbors, childcare providers, etc). to the court to support your petition. [insert additional information] Examples of documents include [Please include examples specific to your jurisdiction]:

- Photographs (injuries or damaged property)
- Voicemail, audio, and video recordings (containing threatening messages).
- Written communications (such as text messages, letters, emails, and social media posts)
- Medical records
- Police reports

INSERT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT ANY RULES THAT APPLY IN YOUR JURISDICTION TO SUBMIT EVIDENCE, SUCH AS FILING AN EVIDENCE OR WITNESS LIST, OR WHETHER OR NOT THE SURVIVOR CAN USE A PHONE TO SHOW EVIDENCE.

PLEASE INCLUDE EXAMPLES OF COMMONLY USED EVIDENCE SPECIFIC TO YOUR JURISDICTION:

WHAT [INSERT NAME OF STATE] SAYS ABOUT FIREARMS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

For more information, scan this QR code to find information on your state firearm laws. [insert information QR on firearm laws]

INSERT INFORMATION QR ON FIREARM LAWS:

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

[Insert the process after receiving PO] Please always keep a copy of the protection order with you (PDF, hardcopy, cloud link) and share a copy as appropriate with family, friends, schools, and employers. For example, give a copy to your child's school so they know that the abuser is not allowed to pick up or come near the child. Give your employer a copy of the protection order to make plans to keep the respondent from approaching you at work.

Under the full faith and credit provision of the Violence Against Women Act, states, tribes, and territories must recognize and enforce valid protection orders issued by other states, tribes, and territories. This means courts and law enforcement officers must enforce ALL terms and conditions of the order, including any firearm prohibitions. If the respondent has violated the court order, you may wish to contact local law enforcement and/or speak to a victim advocate about how to inform the court of the violation.

Violation of a Protection Order: If you believe the respondent has violated the protection order by not complying with the firearm removal provisions, you may wish to do the following:

- Contact law enforcement. [insert appropriate process for your jurisdiction]. For example, an officer can arrest a respondent if an officer has reasonable cause to believe the respondent has violated the protection order. The detailed information you provide regarding the type and location of firearms will be useful to assist law enforcement in identifying and removing the weapons from the respondent.
- Contact an advocate. [insert your jurisdiction-specific process.] You may file a motion/petition for civil contempt. You may also want to modify or extend your order. An advocate can assist you with these steps. If the respondent is found to be in violation of the order, the court may extend the order of protection in some cases.

INSERT THE PROCESS AFTER RECEIVING PO:

INSERT APPROPRIATE PROCESS FOR YOUR JURISDICTION TO CONTACT LAW ENFORCEMENT & YOUR LOCAL ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION (USE THIS IN THE NEXT SECTION AS WELL)

HOW TO OBTAIN FREE ADVOCACY HELP:

[insert information]

Crime Victim Rights: If the respondent/abuser faces criminal charges for abusing you, you have the right as a crime victim to be reasonably protected from your abuser and to have your voice heard during the criminal case. You may request the court prohibit the defendant from using or possessing firearms as a condition of release or probation. [insert information on crime victims' rights for your jurisdiction].

For victim support, please contact the Victim Witness Coordinator at [insert information].

INSERT INFORMATION ON CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS FOR YOUR JURISDICTION AND FOR YOUR VICTIM WITNESS COORDINATOR:

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

¹[Battered Women's Justice Project, Research at the Intersection of Intimate Partner Violence and Firearms, 2024.](#)

²[When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2022 Homicide Data \(October 2024\)](#)

³ It is important to include domestic violence advocates, culturally specific community-based service providers, faith-based entities, civil attorneys, community stakeholders, victim witness advocates/coordinators in the criminal system, law enforcement, probation and parole, and prosecutors within your coordinated community response team. For further assistance in creating a coordinated community response team, please contact [BWJP's National Center on Reimaging Coordinated Community Response \(CCR\)](#).

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