Domestic Violence & Restraining Orders

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Overview

A 209A abuse prevention order can be issued the same day you walk into court. Most people searching for a restraining order lawyer do not realize how quickly Massachusetts courts can act, or how much relief a single order can provide: no-contact provisions, stay-away requirements, temporary custody, and even orders requiring an abuser to vacate a shared home. Chapter 209A applies when abuse involves a household member, family member, or someone with whom you have or had a dating relationship. But the order itself is only the beginning. Facing domestic violence is frightening, and the legal process can feel overwhelming when safety is your immediate concern. Without proper legal guidance, victims risk incomplete petitions that fail to address the full scope of the threat, or orders that expire without extension because the follow-up hearing was not adequately prepared. Understanding both the power and the limits of a 209A order is the first step toward protection.

How We Help Victims of Domestic Violence

Cohen Cleary represents victims of domestic violence at every stage of the 209A abuse prevention order process, from the initial emergency petition through extension hearings and enforcement.

Our domestic violence attorneys assist clients with:

- Emergency ex parte 209A orders, obtained without advance notice to the abuser when there is an immediate risk of harm
- Preparation for the 10-day hearing, where the court decides whether to extend the order after the respondent has an opportunity to be heard
- Orders that address the full range of available relief, including no-contact provisions, vacate orders removing the abuser from a shared residence, temporary custody of minor children, and support
- Requests to extend a restraining order when the threat of abuse persists beyond the initial order period
- Coordination with related family law proceedings, including divorce, custody, and child support matters that frequently overlap with protective order cases
- Safety planning that goes beyond the courtroom, connecting clients with local shelter resources, victim advocates, and support services

Working with a 209A attorney ensures your petition is thorough from the outset. We prepare every filing with the understanding that the 10-day hearing is where protection is either secured or lost.

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Why Clients Choose Cohen Cleary

At Cohen Cleary, our practice teams combine deep subject-matter experience with disciplined execution and responsive client service. We do not take a one-size-fits-all approach. Every matter is handled with careful preparation, clear communication, and a strategy tailored to the client's goals and the realities of the forum.

Clients choose Cohen Cleary because we deliver:

Practice-Focused Legal Experience

Our attorneys work in defined practice areas, allowing us to develop practical insight into the legal, procedural, and regulatory nuances that matter most in each case. This focus allows us to anticipate issues, avoid unnecessary delays, and position matters for efficient resolution.

Clear Guidance and Proactive Communication

We prioritize clarity at every stage. Clients receive straightforward explanations of their options, timely updates on developments, and practical advice grounded in real-world outcomes.

Strategic Advocacy with Trial Readiness

Whether a matter calls for negotiation, mediation, or litigation, our attorneys prepare every case with discipline and foresight. We pursue efficient resolution when possible and are fully prepared to advocate aggressively when necessary to protect our clients' interests.

Regional Knowledge and Local Presence

With offices throughout Massachusetts and experience across New England courts and agencies, we bring local insight and regional reach to every matter.

Client-Centered Service

We treat every matter with urgency and respect. Our clients rely on us for responsive service, sound judgment, and steady counsel through complex legal challenges.

In our family law work, this approach helps clients navigate domestic violence and protective order matters with clarity, efficiency, and confidence.

Our Approach to Domestic Violence

A 209A protective order provides immediate legal protection, but it is not self-enforcing. Victims need both the legal order and a practical safety plan. The order itself can sometimes escalate danger if the respondent perceives a loss of control. We tell our clients that the court filing is one component of a larger strategy. Our attorneys prepare clients for what happens after the order issues: what constitutes a violation, why violations carry mandatory arrest, how to document breaches, and when to contact law enforcement. We also address the downstream legal consequences, because a 209A proceeding frequently intersects with pending or anticipated divorce, custody, and support matters. Treating the protective order in isolation is a common and costly mistake.

Serving Domestic Violence Victims Across Massachusetts

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and Rhode Island

Cohen Cleary maintains offices in Taunton and Plymouth, positioning the firm to respond quickly to domestic violence matters across southeastern Massachusetts. Our attorneys regularly appear in Probate and Family Courts in Bristol County, Plymouth County, and Norfolk County, as well as District Courts where emergency 209A petitions are filed. The firm represents clients throughout Massachusetts and Rhode Island in protective orders and related family law matters, with the capacity to serve clients across New England.

Speak With Our Compassionate Domestic Violence Attorneys

If you need a protective order attorney or are facing an immediate threat of domestic violence, contact Cohen Cleary for urgent guidance. Our attorneys are available to discuss your situation, explain the 209A process, and help you take the legal steps necessary to protect yourself and your family. Call our office or submit a confidential inquiry to get started.

Frequently Asked Questions About Domestic Violence

Do I need evidence of physical injury to get a 209A order in Massachusetts?

No. Chapter 209A does not require proof of physical injury. Massachusetts courts can issue abuse prevention orders based on threats, fear of imminent serious physical harm, or a pattern of coercive and controlling behavior. Verbal threats, property destruction, and attempts to cause physical harm all qualify. You do not need a police report or photographs of injuries to petition the court, though any documentation you have will strengthen your case.

How quickly can I get an emergency restraining order?

An emergency ex parte 209A order can typically be obtained the same day you file. Massachusetts courts, including District Courts and Probate and Family Courts, are authorized to issue temporary orders without the respondent present when there is a substantial likelihood of immediate danger. The order remains in effect until a hearing within 10 court business days, at which point the court determines whether to extend it. A domestic abuse lawyer can help ensure your petition is complete before filing, so the process moves as quickly as possible.

What can a 209A order actually require?

A 209A order can include a range of protections: ordering the respondent to have no contact with you, requiring the respondent to stay away from your home, workplace, and school, ordering the respondent to vacate a shared residence, granting you temporary custody of children, ordering temporary support, and suspending the respondent's firearms license. The scope of available relief is broader than many people expect, and a well-prepared petition ensures the court considers every form of protection you need.

What happens if someone violates a restraining order?

Violation of a 209A order is a criminal offense in Massachusetts carrying mandatory arrest. Law enforcement is required to arrest a respondent who violates any provision of an active order, whether it involves direct contact, proximity violations, or any other prohibited conduct. Penalties can include jail time, fines, and additional restrictions. Documenting any violation and

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contacting police immediately is critical because courts take enforcement seriously, and a documented pattern of violations strengthens future extension requests.

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