



Administrative Office of the Courts

P.O. Box 4820, Portland, Maine 04112-4820

Tel: (207) 822-0792

Mary Ann Lynch
Government & Media Counsel
P.O. Box 4820
Portland, Maine 04112-4820

Tel: (207) 592-5940
mary.ann.lynch@courts.maine.gov

Maine Judicial Branch Releases Updated Guide to Help Unrepresented People Involved in Protection from Abuse or Protection from Harassment Cases.

November 21, 2016, Portland, Maine –For Immediate Release. Chief Justice Leigh I. Saufley announced that the Maine Judicial Branch has released an updated and expanded *Citizens’ Guide to Protection From Abuse and Protection From Harassment Cases*, to assist people involved in civil protection from abuse and harassment cases. Last year, nearly 5,500 protection from abuse and 2,500 protection from harassment cases were filed in Maine District Courts. In most cases neither party was represented by attorneys.

“The updated guide is one of a growing number of resources the Judicial Branch provides to help unrepresented people use Maine courts effectively,” said the Chief Justice. “Often, protection from abuse and harassment cases require swift action from the District Court judge hearing the case. It is essential that both plaintiffs and defendants have clear and comprehensive information on how to file a complaint, how to respond to a complaint, and what protection the court may provide either by way of an emergency order or other long-term relief.”

The Judicial Branch website also provides information on how local police may assist victims of abuse and domestic violence to prevent further harm while the victim pursues a temporary or longer term restraining or protection order.

In addition to the 26-page updated Guide, every district court clerk’s office has forms plaintiffs can use to begin a protection from abuse or protection from harassment case. Defendants may also use the Guide to help them respond to a case brought against them and to prepare for the final hearing. Court forms are available on the Maine Judicial Branch website at: http://www.courts.maine.gov/fees_forms/index.html

Many frequently used forms have been translated into the eight most common non-English languages used in Maine courts, and interpreters are available by telephone at all court clerk’s offices.

Filing fees are never charged in protection from abuse cases and if the plaintiff has little or no income, fees in a protection from harassment cases may be waived. The Guide explains the key differences between the two laws and gives practical information on how to complete the forms for the appropriate type of case and prepare for a hearing in the case. The Legislature has amended the protection from abuse and protection from harassment laws in recent years, and the Guide includes updated information on these recent amendments.

The Guide also provides contact information for domestic violence and sexual assault advocacy organizations, and legal assistance resources. The Guide is available on the Maine Judicial Branch website at:

http://www.courts.maine.gov/reports_pubs/pubs/hanbooks_guides/pa_ph/index.html

Copies of the Guide are also available at the Maine District Courts and appropriate governmental, advocacy, and legal aid organizations around the State.