



News Release

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Ohio Legal Help and Ohio Supreme Court Improve Access to Protection Order Forms for Victims of Domestic Violence

Secure, private new hub allows users to complete CPO forms online

COLUMBUS, Ohio – [Ohio Legal Help](#), a statewide, mobile-first website with free civil legal information and resources, announced a new online tool that enables domestic violence victims and survivors to more safely and easily access and complete the legal forms they need to obtain a civil protection order. It's estimated that 50,000 users will access the new hub and tools within a year.

The [online domestic violence and dating violence tool](#) on OhioLegalHelp.org was developed in partnership with the Ohio Supreme Court's Advisory Committee on Domestic Violence, the Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) and The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland. The new tool allows users to easily retrieve and fill out the forms online, starting and stopping as they need to, and saving the information as they go. The site is accessible by mobile phone, tablet, or computer.

"This project is part of our continued effort to improve access to courts and make court forms more accessible through the effective use of technology," said Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor.

"Completing a civil protection order petition with the help of an attorney or advocate is always best," said Meigs County Common Pleas Judge Linda Warner, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Domestic Violence. "But petitioners often come to court and file without either. And COVID made that even more stressful. This site allows victims to complete the forms with a guided interview, along with legal and advocacy service referral information, not to mention all of Ohio Legal Help's other resources."

The partners began discussing the site last summer as the pandemic's isolating characteristics raised concerns about increases in violence and abuse. ODVN, a network of 75 local domestic violence programs that serve all 88 Ohio counties, reported in May that the number of calls to hotlines nearly tripled at some programs in the past year.

"The pandemic has isolated families and increased stress, which can escalate tensions in the home," said Ohio Legal Help Executive Director Susan Choe. "We created the My OLH user hub to make accessing needed information and filling out forms online easier and, thanks to our partners, we now have specific tools for those struggling with domestic abuse."

Ohio Legal Help's website has assisted over 800,000 users during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It has been an invaluable resource, providing accurate and timely information on issues such as the eviction moratorium, unemployment benefits, returning to work and stimulus

checks. Ohio Legal Help has also responded to the specific needs brought on by the pandemic, including easier access to legal forms and court documents.

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Ohio Legal Help is a nonprofit organization that launched in 2019 to help all Ohioans access the civil justice system. We provide plain language legal help information, interactive self-help tools, and connections to local legal and community resources that can help people resolve their legal issues. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ohio Legal Help has helped over 800,000 users access free legal information, court forms and resources. To visit Ohio Legal Help, go to www.ohiolegalhelp.org.