

and

Sullivan of the House

An Act relating to courts; authorizing appointment of court referees for certain purposes; providing for compensation of court referees; establishing duties of court referees; stating effect of certain orders; amending 22 O.S. 2001, Sections 60.3, as amended by Section 3, Chapter 407, O.S.L. 2003, and 60.4, as amended by Section 4, Chapter 407, O.S.L. 2003 (22 O.S. Supp. 2004, Sections 60.3 and 60.4), which relate to protective orders; allowing court referees to enter certain orders; stating effect of certain orders; repealing Section 9, Chapter 400, O.S.L. 2002 (43 O.S. Supp. 2004, Section 104.1), which relates to district court referees; providing for codification; and declaring an emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 127 of Title 20, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. Presiding judges of the district court may appoint court referees in their judicial districts to hear designated cases as assigned by the presiding judge. The referee may preside over and adjudicate other matters of the district court as assigned by the presiding judge of the district court.

B. Reasonable compensation for the referees shall be fixed by that presiding judge.

C. A referee may approve and enter orders, both final and temporary, of the district court and any such order not objected to within three (3) days of the date of filing of the order shall be deemed confirmed by the district court. During the three-day period, the order of the referee shall be valid and in effect until confirmed, modified or vacated by the district court.

SECTION 2. AMENDATORY 22 O.S. 2001, Section 60.3, as amended by Section 3, Chapter 407, O.S.L. 2003 (22 O.S. Supp. 2004, Section 60.3), is amended to read as follows:

Section 60.3 A. If a plaintiff requests an emergency ex parte order pursuant to Section 60.2 of this title, the court shall hold an ex parte hearing on the same day the petition is filed, if the court finds sufficient grounds within the scope of the Protection from Domestic Abuse Act stated in the petition to hold such a hearing. The court may, for good cause shown at the hearing, issue any emergency ex parte order that it finds necessary to protect the victim from immediate and present danger of domestic abuse, stalking, or harassment. The emergency ex parte order shall be in effect until after the full hearing is conducted. Provided, if the defendant, after having been served, does not appear at the hearing, the emergency ex parte order shall remain in effect until the defendant is served with the permanent order. If the terms of the permanent order are the same as those in the emergency order, or are less restrictive, then it is not necessary to serve the defendant with the permanent order. The Administrative Office of the Courts shall develop a standard form for emergency ex parte protective orders. A request for an emergency ex parte protective order may be heard by a district court referee as authorized pursuant to Section 1 of this act. If an emergency ex parte protective order is granted by a district court referee, it shall be valid without the confirmation of the district court.

B. An emergency ex parte protective order authorized by this section shall include the name, sex, race, date of birth of the defendant, and the dates of issue and expiration of the protective order.

C. If a plaintiff requests an emergency temporary ex parte order of protection as provided by Section 40.3 of this title, the judge who is notified of the request by a peace officer may issue

such order verbally to the officer or in writing when there is reasonable cause to believe that the order is necessary to protect the victim from immediate and present danger of domestic abuse. When the order is issued verbally the judge shall direct the officer to complete and sign a statement attesting to the order. The emergency temporary ex parte order shall be in effect until the close of business on the next day the court is open for business after the order is issued.

SECTION 3. AMENDATORY 22 O.S. 2001, Section 60.4, as amended by Section 4, Chapter 407, O.S.L. 2003 (22 O.S. Supp. 2004, Section 60.4), is amended to read as follows:

Section 60.4 A. 1. A copy of the petition, notice of hearing and a copy of any emergency ex parte order issued by the court shall be served upon the defendant in the same manner as a bench warrant. In addition, if the service is to be in another county, the court clerk may issue service to the sheriff by facsimile or other electronic transmission for service by the sheriff. Any fee for service of an emergency ex parte order, petition for protective order, and notice of hearing shall only be charged pursuant to subsection C of Section 60.2 of this title and, if charged, shall be the same as the sheriff's service fee plus mileage expenses.

2. Emergency ex parte orders shall be given priority for service and can be served twenty-four (24) hours a day when the location of the defendant is known. When service cannot be made upon the defendant by the sheriff, the sheriff may contact another law enforcement officer or a private investigator or private process server to serve the defendant.

3. An emergency ex parte order, a petition for protective order, and a notice of hearing shall have statewide validity and may be transferred to any law enforcement jurisdiction to effect service upon the defendant.

4. The return of service shall be submitted to the sheriff's office in the court where the petition, notice of hearing or order was issued.

5. When the defendant is a minor child who is ordered removed from the residence of the victim, in addition to those documents served upon the defendant, a copy of the petition, notice of hearing and a copy of any ex parte order issued by the court shall be delivered with the child to the caretaker of the place where such child is taken pursuant to Section 7303-1.1 of Title 10 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

B. 1. Within twenty (20) days of the filing of the petition for a protective order, the court shall schedule a full hearing on the petition, if the court finds sufficient grounds within the scope of the Protection from Domestic Abuse Act stated in the petition to hold such a hearing, regardless of whether an emergency ex parte order has been previously issued, requested or denied. Provided, however, when the defendant is a minor child who has been removed from the residence pursuant to Section 7303-1.1 of Title 10 of the Oklahoma Statutes, the court shall schedule a full hearing on the petition within seventy-two (72) hours, regardless of whether an emergency ex parte order has been previously issued, requested or denied.

2. The court may schedule a full hearing on the petition for a protective order within seventy-two (72) hours when the court issues an emergency ex parte order suspending child visitation rights due to physical violence or threat of abuse.

3. If service has not been made on the defendant at the time of the hearing, the court shall continue the hearing.

4. A petition for a protective order shall automatically renew every twenty (20) days until the defendant is served. A petition for a protective order shall not expire and must be dismissed by court order.

5. Failure to serve the defendant shall not be grounds for dismissal of a petition or an ex parte order unless the victim requests dismissal.

C. 1. At the hearing, the court may impose any terms and conditions in the protective order that the court reasonably believes are necessary to bring about the cessation of domestic abuse against the victim or stalking or harassment of the victim or the victim's immediate family and may order the defendant to obtain domestic abuse counseling or treatment in a program certified by the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services at the defendant's expense pursuant to Section 644 of Title 21 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

2. If the court grants a protective order and the defendant is a minor child, the court shall order a preliminary inquiry in a juvenile proceeding to determine whether further court action pursuant to the Oklahoma Juvenile Code should be taken against a juvenile defendant. The hearing for a final protective order may be conducted by a district court referee authorized pursuant to Section 1 of this act. Protective orders entered by the referee shall serve as findings of fact, conclusions of law and recommendations to the court. If no objection is filed within three (3) days from the date the order is filed, the order shall be deemed confirmed by the district court. During the three-day period, the order of the referee shall be valid and in effect until confirmed, modified or vacated by the district court.

D. Final protective orders authorized by this section shall be on a standard form developed by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

E. 1. After notice and hearing, protective orders authorized by this section may require the plaintiff or the defendant or both to undergo treatment or participate in the court-approved counseling services necessary to bring about cessation of domestic abuse

against the victim pursuant to Section 644 of Title 21 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

2. Either party or both may be required to pay all or any part of the cost of such treatment or counseling services. The court shall not be responsible for such cost.

F. When necessary to protect the victim and when authorized by the court, protective orders granted pursuant to the provisions of this section may be served upon the defendant by a peace officer, sheriff, constable, or policeman or other officer whose duty it is to preserve the peace, as defined by Section 99 of Title 21 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

G. 1. Any protective order issued on or after November 1, 1999, pursuant to subsection C of this section shall be for a fixed period not to exceed a period of three (3) years unless extended, modified, vacated or rescinded upon motion by either party or if the court approves any consent agreement entered into by the plaintiff and defendant.

2. The court shall notify the parties at the time of the issuance of the protective order of the duration of the protective order.

3. Upon the filing of a motion by either party to modify, extend, or vacate a protective order, a hearing shall be scheduled and notice given to the parties. At the hearing, the issuing court may take such action as is necessary under the circumstances.

4. If a child has been removed from the residence of a parent or custodial adult because of domestic abuse committed by the child, the parent or custodial adult may refuse the return of such child to the residence, unless upon further consideration by the court in a juvenile proceeding, it is determined that the child is no longer a threat and should be allowed to return to the residence.

H. 1. It shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly and willfully seek a protective order against a spouse or ex-spouse

pursuant to the Protection from Domestic Abuse Act for purposes of harassment, undue advantage, intimidation, or limitation of child visitation rights in any divorce proceeding or separation action without justifiable cause.

2. The violator shall, upon conviction thereof, be guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment in the county jail for a period not exceeding one (1) year or by a fine not to exceed Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00), or by both such fine and imprisonment.

3. A second or subsequent conviction under this subsection shall be a felony punishable by imprisonment in the custody of the Department of Corrections for a period not to exceed two (2) years, or by a fine not to exceed Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000.00), or by both such fine and imprisonment.

I. 1. A protective order issued under the Protection from Domestic Abuse Act shall not in any manner affect title to real property, purport to grant to the parties a divorce or otherwise purport to determine the issues between the parties as to child custody, visitation or visitation schedules, child support or division of property or any other like relief obtainable pursuant to Title 43 of the Oklahoma Statutes, except child visitation orders may be temporarily suspended or modified to protect from threats of abuse or physical violence by the defendant or a threat to violate a custody order.

2. When granting any protective order for the protection of a minor child from violence or threats of abuse, the court shall allow visitation only under conditions that provide adequate supervision and protection to the child while maintaining the integrity of a divorce decree or temporary order.

J. 1. A court shall not issue any mutual protective orders.

2. If both parties allege domestic abuse by the other party, the parties shall do so by separate petitions. The court shall review each petition separately, in an individual or a consolidated

hearing and grant or deny each petition on its individual merits. If the court finds cause to grant both motions, the court shall do so by separate orders and with specific findings justifying the issuance of each order.

3. The court may only consolidate a hearing if:

a. the court makes specific findings that:

(1) sufficient evidence exists of domestic abuse, stalking, harassment or rape against each party, and

(2) each party acted primarily as aggressors, and

b. the defendant filed a petition with the court for a protective order no less than three (3) days, not including weekends or holidays, prior to the first scheduled full hearing on the petition filed by the plaintiff, and

c. the defendant had no less than forty-eight (48) hours' notice prior to the full hearing on the petition filed by the plaintiff.

K. The court may allow a plaintiff or victim to be accompanied by a victim support person at court proceedings. A victim support person shall not make legal arguments, however, a victim support person who is not a licensed attorney may offer the plaintiff or victim comfort or support and may remain in close proximity to the plaintiff or victim.

SECTION 4. REPEALER Section 9, Chapter 400, O.S.L. 2002 (43 O.S. Supp. 2004, Section 104.1), is hereby repealed.

SECTION 5. It being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is hereby declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

Passed the Senate the 28th day of February, 2005.

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Presiding Officer of the Senate

Passed the House of Representatives the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_,  
2005.

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Presiding Officer of the House  
of Representatives