

ONE THING YOU CAN DO.

DC

When someone you love is showing warning signs that they might try to harm themselves, it can feel like there there is nothing you can do in such a high-stakes and emotional situation.

But there is one thing you *can do*: you can request a protective order to temporarily remove guns from the situation and help keep your loved one safe.

In a moment of crisis, access to a gun can be the difference between life and death. If you're seeing signs that someone you love is considering harming themselves, you can seek an Extreme Risk Protection Order to temporarily suspend their access to firearms, which are the most lethal form of suicide - until the crisis passes.

Access to a gun can be the difference between life and death in a moment of crisis. Keep your loved one safe with an extreme risk protection order.

What does DC's extreme risk protection order do?

An Extreme Risk Protection Order is a court order that temporarily restricts a person's access to guns when they pose a significant danger to themselves or others.

These orders are designed to help law enforcement and concerned family members intervene quickly in dangerous situations.

Who can request an extreme risk protection order in DC?

Under DC law, a law enforcement officer, a person's family member or dating partner, or a mental health professional may file a petition for an extreme risk protection order.

A family member is defined as:

- Spouse
- Domestic partner
- Parent
- Child
- Any person who regularly resides in the household
- Anyone related by blood, marriage, adoption, or guardianship
- Anyone in a romantic, dating, or sexual relationship

How do I file a petition for an extreme risk protection order?

To seek an extreme risk protection order, a petitioner can file an application directly with the Superior Court or contact a member of law enforcement to discuss any concerns with them. Law enforcement can then investigate any concerns and then request the extreme risk protection order from the Superior Court.

What happens after an extreme risk protection order has been requested?

Once the court receives a request (called a "petition") for an extreme risk protection order, the court will notify the person and schedule a court hearing within 10 days to determine whether the order should be issued.

If, at the hearing, a court finds that a person poses a significant danger of suicide or of causing bodily injury to another person by having guns, the judge will make a court order that requires the person's firearms to be held by law enforcement for as long as the order is in effect.

The person will not be able to purchase new firearms while the order is in effect.

How long does an extreme risk protection order last?

A final extreme risk protection order lasts for one year.

At the end of a year, the person who petitioned the court — either law enforcement, a family member, or a mental health professional — may ask the court to renew the order. The order can only be extended if another hearing is held and the court determines the risk of harm remains and the renewal order is necessary.

I'm afraid to wait until a court hearing is scheduled. What if the person is in immediate danger of harming themselves or someone else?

Concern for the safety of the person, or of the public, may demand that action be taken before the scheduled hearing date, to prevent immediate danger.

To protect a person or public safety during this time, a judge may issue an emergency extreme risk protection order that restricts a person's access to firearms before the person has been notified of the petition, and before a full hearing is held.

How long do emergency extreme risk protection orders last?

Emergency extreme risk protection orders last only until the court hearing on a final (one-year) extreme risk protection order.

Because these orders only stay in place for a short period of time — up to 10 days— they balance the urgent need for public safety with the due process rights of all involved.

Will an extreme risk protection order go on someone's criminal record?

No. An Extreme Risk Protection Order is a civil court order. Its sole purpose is to remove firearms from a person who poses a danger of causing harm to themselves or to others. The court's decision to issue the order does not cause the person to have a criminal record.

If you have immediate safety concerns, call 911 for emergency assistance.

If you believe that a loved one is a risk to their own safety, you may wish to encourage them to seek expert help. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, seven days a week at:

**www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
text HOME to 741741**