

Civil Protection Order Filings and Exhibits: How to present your evidence

How can I give information to the judge/commissioner in my case?

- File documents into your case file at the court clerk's office before your hearing.
 - You must have copies of anything you file served on the other party to your case. See service instructions [here](#).
 - Your deadline to file and serve documents depends on the local court. Ask the clerk how many days before the hearing you need to file.
 - In some courts, you must deliver an extra copy to the judge/commissioner as "working papers" to make sure they will see it before your hearing. Ask the clerk if working papers are required in your court.
 - Your documents must be on single-sided letter-size paper and meet the other requirements of [General Rule 14](#). If you want to file something that does not meet those requirements, such as audio or video files, you can offer them as exhibits at your hearing. (See below.)
- Present information during a hearing.
 - You can testify when the court calls on you to speak.
 - You can add to your testimony by offering exhibits to support what you say. You must give the other party a copy of your exhibits.

What happens to documents I file?

- The court clerk puts them in the official court record where the judge/commissioner and the public can see them. In District Court, records are kept for three years. In Superior Court, they are kept forever.
- Anyone can see documents you file in the court record unless they are sealed.
 - It is possible to seal some records, but you must follow the process and meet the requirements in [General Rule 15](#). The court must find that compelling privacy or safety concerns outweigh the public interest in access to the court record. Many documents with sensitive, personal, or embarrassing information cannot be sealed. To ask the court to seal your document, file a Motion and Order to Seal. Contact the court clerk for local instructions.
 - An easier option to protect privacy is to black out (redact) sensitive information such as addresses and account numbers. You are required not to include personal identifiers in your filed documents pursuant to [General Rule 31\(e\)](#). When you are deciding what to black out, remember the judge will not be able to see it either.
 - Some documents are automatically sealed by law, including the Law Enforcement and Confidential Information form.

How do I offer an exhibit at a hearing?

- Before the hearing, write an "Exhibit List" of the things you want to submit as evidence. Include a short description of each item so the clerk can identify them.
 - Check with your court clerk about local procedures for presenting exhibits. Each court may have its own forms and timelines for presenting exhibits before the hearing. The procedure for remote hearings may be different from in-person hearings.
 - You must serve a copy of your exhibits on the other party to your case.

- During the hearing, when it is your turn to speak, offer your exhibits one at a time by identifying each one and explaining its importance to your case.
 - Ask the court to formally admit each exhibit as evidence.
 - The clerk will keep any exhibits used in the hearing for a few months. Eventually, the exhibits will be returned to you or destroyed. While they are with the clerk, exhibits are available to the public unless sealed. But they may only be viewed at the courthouse while a clerk watches the exhibits.

