ARRIVING TO THE 280TH PROTECTIVE ORDER COURT

* Arrive 30 – 45 minutes before your scheduled hearing time to get through security.
* The 280th Protective Order court is located on the 1st floor of the Juvenile Justice Center located at 1200 Congress St., Houston, TX 77002 (to the right once you get through security).
* Doors to the 280th courtroom open 5-10mins before 9am.
* You’ll check in with the bailiff before entering the courtroom. If you are late, please be sure to check in with the bailiff to let the Court know you’re present.
* Silence your cell phone.
* No hats.
* Only bottled water allowed, no other drinks (i.e.: soda, coffee).
* No chewing gum—at all. There is tissue and a trashcan available for proper disposal.
* The applicant (that’s you) goes to the right side of the court room to sit (there will be signs).
* **If you need an interpreter, speak to the court coordinator or court clerk. The bailiff can point you to the court coordinator or court clerk.**
* If you are male, please make sure your shirt is tucked into your pants.

COURT PROCEDURES:

1. Docket call begins at 9am sharp - so be seated in your designated area.
2. When the Judge calls your case name and number, **stand,** and say that you’re here (e.g., “here, your honor”)
	1. **Do not leave during docket call.**
	2. **Stand when addressing the court (speaking to the Judge).**
3. After docket call, the Judge will then begin calling the parties in each case to present their case.
4. If your name was not called, let a bailiff know.
5. Make sure your evidence is in order.
	1. Evidence includes but is not limited to photos, videos, medical records, chat records, eyewitnesses, past protective orders, and/or anything else that helps your case.
		1. If you have hardcopy evidence, make sure to bring at least **four (4) copies** to court. You will have to supply the respondent/respondent’s attorney, the court reporter, and the Judge a copy of the evidence.
		2. If there will be audio/video evidence, you’ll need to have your own device (laptop, phone, tablet, etc.) to present the evidence. Please back them up to a thumb drive (USB) and provide it to the court reporter.
		3. ***If you have any questions about how to label evidence; you can contact Ehdi Sepulveda, court reporter for the 280th, at ehdi\_sepulveda@justex.net She speaks Spanish as well!***

HEARING PROCEDURES:

1. The Judge will call your name and ask you to approach when it’s time for your hearing. The bailiffs will direct you to stand in front of the Judge. The Judge will announce the case for the record and swear all parties in.
	1. If you are afraid of standing near the respondent, you can ask the bailiff to stand between you and the respondent (or stay nearby).
2. The Judge will ask you, the applicant, to present your case first. You will be able to explain why you need protection from the respondent. The Judge may ask questions about your situation. ***You cannot read off of a paper.***
	1. Provide a **CLEAR STORY** with specific **dates and times** of incidents (at least provide the month and year of the incidents). *For example, instead of saying: the Respondent is always threatening you,* ***state when (month and year) the Respondent threatened you and how (in person, via phone, text, or social media).***
		1. When discussing these incidents, you can present the evidence that you may have related to that incident.
		2. ***Speak slowly and clearly for the court reporter who is taking official record of everything.***
		3. Please stick to the reason you are applying for a Protective Order and issues relating to the allegations of family violence.
	2. **Do not interrupt others while they are speaking—the court reporter cannot document people speaking over each other.**
	3. Stand when you address the court (speak to the Judge), respond with “yes/no, your honor.”
	4. The respondent’s attorney may object (see below for QR Code with list of objections and the meaning) to some of the things you say. Listen to the Judge’s ruling on that objection before continuing. **Sustained means the objection is allowed**, and **overruled means it’s been denied.**
3. When you finish presenting your case, the respondent or their attorney will have an opportunity to ask you questions. Do your best to remain calm during this time. Answer questions directly (e.g., if it’s a yes or no question, response with a simple yes or no) and truthfully.
4. The respondent will then have an opportunity to present their case, including presenting evidence and calling witnesses.
	1. Do not interrupt them unless you have an objection (see below for QR Code with list of objections and the meaning).
	2. You or your attorney will be given an opportunity to ask the respondent questions. Please stick to asking questions regarding the family violence.
5. The Judge will then make a ruling.
	1. If a Protective Order is granted, the Judge will detail the type of protective order granted, the length of time it will be in effect, and the conditions of the order.
	2. If a Protective Order is not granted and you still have concerns about your safety, feel free to contact Deborah Alexis, court advocate to discuss safety plan options. You can contact her by email (dalexis@hcdvcc.org) or by phone/text (713-261-2356).

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| **QR Code for Types of Objections:**Qr code  Description automatically generated | **How to Serve Someone\*:**Qr code  Description automatically generated |
| **\*FYI:** You should only use service by registered or certified mail if you know that the respondent will sign for the certified letter. If someone else signs for the letter or the respondent does not sign his or her name exactly as it is written on your petition, you will have to pay another fee and have the respondent served a different way. |