

Defending a Contempt Case in the Family Division (Domestic Violence and VASPA)

A Primer for Assigned Counsel

**Written by the Working Group on *Pro bono* Attorney Training
Materials—Domestic Violence Contempt Matters**

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Note: This document is provided as a reference tool for attorneys who are appointed via the Madden v. Delran list. It is current through the date of publication. It does not replace the attorney's own research and evaluation of the legal and procedural issues involved. An attorney has an ongoing duty to be informed of current law, cases, and Court Rules.

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CHAPTER 1 - OVERVIEW

You have received a *pro bono* domestic violence contempt case assignment – your client has been charged with violating a restraining order ... *what happens next?*

The initial steps for any domestic violence disorderly persons offense case involve obtaining information on the case and contacting your client. These first steps are set forth below.

Additionally, there are several paths that a defendant charged with a domestic violence disorderly persons offense may take through the criminal justice system, depending on the facts of the case. An attorney's responsibilities will vary depending on which path the defendant is travelling. For instance, it is possible that your client has been detained. An overview of these various routes through the justice system and your required involvement in each are provided in Appendix E.

A. Quick First Steps - Obtaining Information and Contacting Your Client

1. After receiving your *pro bono* assignment from the vicinage *pro bono* coordinator, you will likely be contacted by a member of the Judiciary's Family Division staff and provided with the necessary paperwork (either electronically or in paper form) for the case.
2. Review this manual for an overview of the legal issues involved, as well as conduct your own research and consider accessing resources provided in the manual's appendix.
3. Contact your client to introduce yourself and explain that you will be assuming responsibility for his/her case. If you need assistance with reaching your client, you may contact the county *pro bono* coordinator who assigned you the case (phone numbers and addresses of the coordinators are found on the Judiciary's public website, www.njcourts.gov under "attorneys" and under "*pro bono*"). Information on how to contact an incarcerated client is provided in the FAQ section in this manual.
4. Arrange a meeting with your client (telephonically, virtually, or in person). At that meeting, obtain relevant information from your client that may support the case, including documentation that may be presented to the court as evidence. If your client is detained pretrial, determine if they wish to appeal the order of detention. See Appendix E.

5. Inform your client of the potential consequences of a conviction for a domestic violence offense, including the mandatory forfeiture of firearms, firearms purchaser identification card, a lifetime ban on firearms possession, N.J.S.A. 2C:25-27(c), and the need to provide a DNA sample, N.J.S.A. 53:1-20.17.

6. Inform your client of legal recourse available if they are found guilty in the domestic violence contempt matter (i.e., appeal).

CHAPTER 2 – ASSIGNMENT

You have been assigned to represent an indigent defendant charged with violating a domestic violence restraining order. The purpose of this chapter is to explain how you were assigned a *pro bono* case.

In Madden v. Delran, 126 N.J. 591 (1992), the Supreme Court reaffirmed the bar's duty to represent indigent defendants without pay where the Legislature has made no provision for the Public Defender to represent defendants who are entitled to counsel. The Court recognized that it was placing a burden on the bar that should be more generally shared by the public at large. The Court said: "We realize it is the bar that is bearing the burden . . . We trust that the bar understands the strong policy considerations that have persuaded us. As has so often been the case, it is the bar that makes the system work, often without compensation." Id. at 614.

Attorneys are most frequently assigned from the mandatory *pro bono* list to represent defendants who have been charged with contempt of a domestic violence restraining order as defined in N.J.S.A. 2C:29-9(b), a disorderly persons offense. Although disorderly persons offenses are normally heard in municipal court, these contempt charges are heard in the Family Part of the Chancery Division of the Superior Court. N.J.S.A. 2C:25-30. Since the charge does not meet the legal criteria for the assignment of a public defender, assignment from the *pro bono* list is appropriate under Madden v. Delran.

Attorneys are assigned *pro bono* cases through the *pro bono* computer system, which was developed, and is currently maintained, by the Administrative Office of the Courts. The Supreme Court in Madden chose the current system of *pro bono* assignments to spread the burden among as many attorneys as possible. The system maintains a list of attorneys eligible for *pro bono* assignment in each county. The attorneys are assigned cases in the order mandated by the Supreme Court in Madden. That is, the attorneys are ordered by the number of *pro bono* cases the attorney has handled in the past and then alphabetically. As such, at the top of the list are the attorneys who have never handled a *pro bono* case, in alphabetical order. Next on the list are attorneys who have only handled one case, in alphabetical order, etc. Attorneys are called upon whenever their name reaches the top of the list, and a letter of notification is sent via email or a phone call to the attorney is attempted. The number of *pro bono* cases an attorney is required to handle depends on the number of attorneys in the county and the number of *pro bono* assignments in that county.

When the county *pro bono* coordinator needs to assign a *pro bono* case, they will request a name and the computer generates the next attorney on the list. Attorneys are not required to perform a certain number of *pro bono* hours per year. Rather, attorneys are required to complete an assigned *pro bono* case, no matter how many hours that may require.

Rule 2:7-2(d) governs the extent of the *pro bono* attorney's obligation on appeal. That rule provides:

Assigned counsel representing a defendant in a non-indictable prosecution shall file an appeal for a defendant who elects to exercise his or her right to appeal. An attorney filing a notice of appeal shall be deemed the attorney of record for the appeal unless the attorney files with the notice of appeal an application for the assignment of counsel on appeal.

If the defendant is being prosecuted in municipal court for a related disorderly persons offense, such as simple assault, the *pro bono* attorney is **not** responsible for representing the defendant in that matter. The municipal public defender will represent the indigent defendant in municipal court.

An attorney in New Jersey is responsible for mandatory *pro bono* service unless they fit within one of the exemption categories established by the Supreme Court. Currently 11 exemption categories are referenced by numbers 81-91. Most of these categories relate to various kinds of government service, but there are also exemptions for retired attorneys (exemption code 86), attorneys who do other types of *pro bono* service (exemption code 88), and out-of-state attorneys (exemption code 90). As part of the annual attorney registration each spring, attorneys are asked to fill out the *pro bono* questionnaire, in which they certify to their exemption status.

CHAPTER 3 - CONTEMPT

The law of contempt is derived from common law, statutes, rules of court, and judicial decisions. Contempt includes disobedience of a judicial or protective order. The essence of the offense is defiance of public authority. In the context of domestic violence, contempt is based upon a violation of a restraining order pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2C:29-9(b)(1) and (2), which reads as follows:

b. (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, a person is guilty of a crime of the fourth degree if that person purposely or knowingly violates any provision in an order entered under the provisions of the “Prevention of Domestic Violence Act of 1991,” P.L.1991, c. 261 (C.2C:25-17 et al.) or an order entered under the provisions of a substantially similar statute under the laws of another state or the United States when the conduct which constitutes the violation could also constitute a crime or a disorderly persons offense.

Orders entered pursuant to paragraphs (3), (4), (5), (8) and (9) of subsection b. of section 13 of P.L.1991, c. 261 (C.2C:25-29) or substantially similar orders entered under the laws of another state or the United States shall be excluded from the provisions of this paragraph.

(2) In all other cases a person is guilty of a disorderly persons offense if that person purposely or knowingly violates an order entered under the provisions of the “Prevention of Domestic Violence Act of 1991,” P.L.1991, c. 261 (C.2C:25-17 et al.) or an order entered under the provisions of a substantially similar statute under the laws of another state or the United States.

Orders entered pursuant to paragraphs (3), (4), (5), (8) and (9) of subsection b. of section 13 of P.L.1991, c. 261 (C.2C:25-29) or substantially similar orders entered under the laws of another state, or the United States shall be excluded from the provisions of this paragraph.

A violation of this statute can constitute either a fourth-degree crime or a disorderly persons offense. Many times, the offense is charged as a fourth-degree crime and is downgraded by the County Prosecutor. When the charge is a disorderly persons contempt, or downgraded to such, the complaint is prosecuted by the County Prosecutor in the Family Part, Chancery Division of the Superior Court. N.J.S.A.

2C:25-30.¹ Since an indigent defendant charged with a disorderly persons contempt may be subject to significant fines or a term of incarceration, they are entitled to the appointment of *pro bono* counsel.

A. Elements of the Offense

Defendants charged with contempt are presumed to be innocent of the offense unless proven guilty. N.J.S.A. 2C:1-13(a). For a defendant to be found guilty of the disorderly persons offense of contempt, the State has the burden of proving beyond a reasonable doubt² the following three elements:

1. There was a court order entered under the provisions of the "Prevention of Domestic Violence Act of 1991"³ or a substantially similar statute under the laws of another state or the United States;
2. The defendant knew of the existence of the order; and
3. The defendant purposely or knowingly violated a provision of the order.⁴

Violations of terms of a restraining order entered under N.J.S.A. 2C:25-29b(3), (4), (5), (8), and (9) and similar laws of other jurisdictions are not considered to be contempt within the meaning of N.J.S.A. 2C:29-9(b).⁵

In a prosecution for contempt, it makes no difference that the underlying domestic violence restraining order was subsequently rejected, withdrawn, or otherwise dismissed. See State v. Sanders, 327 N.J. Super. 385 (App. Div. 2000).

B. Commission of the Offense

Typically, a disorderly persons contempt offense will involve a situation where the defendant has initiated contact with a victim of domestic violence. The contact is

¹ Rule 5:-1 provides:

The rules in Part V shall govern family actions; all family actions shall also be governed by the rules in Part I insofar as applicable. Civil family actions shall also be governed by the rules in Part IV insofar as applicable and except as otherwise provided by the rules in Part V. Criminal and quasi-criminal family actions shall also be governed by the rules in Part III insofar as applicable except as otherwise provided by the rules in Part V. Juvenile delinquency actions shall be governed by the rules in Part III insofar as applicable and except as otherwise provided by the rules in Part V.

² N.J.S.A. 2C:1-13a

³ N.J.S.A. 2C:25-17 to -35

⁴ N.J.S.A. 2C:2-2b(1) or (2)

⁵ For enforcement of these orders, see N.J.S.A. 2C:25-30.

prohibited as it follows the issuance of either a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) or a Final Restraining Order (FRO). The charge may be initiated by law enforcement officials who have received information related to the violation from the protected victim or another party. If police witness the violation, they will immediately arrest the defendant pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2C:25-31 and prepare a complaint charging contempt. Law enforcement will seek prompt judicial review of the issues related to probable cause and the decision as to whether the charge is placed on a warrant or summons, which will determine whether the defendant is detained until their First Appearance. If the defendant is not present, the police will utilize the same procedure and, upon issuance by a judicial officer, will seek to arrest the defendant under the authority of a warrant.

Remember, the underlying act that violates the restraining order does not have to constitute a criminal offense, such as an assault. A defendant may place a phone call or send a text message to the victim in violation of the restraining order, even though the phone call or text message standing alone is not a criminal offense. See State v. L.C., 283 N.J. Super. 441 (App. Div. 1995), certif. denied, 143 N.J. 325 (1996).

C. No Contact Provision as Part of Pretrial Release

If the contempt charge is placed on a warrant, there may be a condition prohibiting defendant from having any contact with the alleged victim imposed as part of the initial release at the defendant's appearance at a Centralized First Appearance/Central Judicial Processing court event. This condition is independent of any no contact provision contained in a TRO or FRO. Presumably, the Centralized First Appearance/Central Judicial Processing court will be aware of any TRO or FRO and ensure that conditions of release operate in coordination with the TRO or FRO and do not conflict. An additional condition may be home detention with an electronic ankle bracelet and an exclusion zone around the victim. See Appendix E for more detail regarding the path a defendant takes through the criminal justice system in this area and possible responsibilities of the attorney at each point.

D. Defenses

The defendant may assert a wide variety of factual or affirmative defenses to the contempt charge, including self-defense, necessity, diminished capacity and/or statute of limitations, which for a disorderly persons offense is one year pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2C:1-6b(2). See Appendix A for flow chart of a domestic violence case.

Please note, it is not a defense to a contempt charge that the TRO or FRO was later vacated or dismissed. The State need only prove that the order was in effect at the time

of the alleged contempt. See State v. Sanders, 327 N.J. Super. 385 (App. Div. 2000). Nor is it a defense that the victim consented to the contact. The restraining order must be obeyed until the court acts to change, rescind, or dismiss the order. The behavior of the parties to the order cannot serve as a defense. State v. Washington, 319 N.J. Super. 681 (Law Div. 1998).

E. Consequences of Conviction

As assigned attorney, you should advise your client of potential consequences of conviction of the charge against him/her – including all fines, penalties, firearms restrictions, and incarceration exposure.

A disorderly persons contempt is considered to be a petty offense. Accordingly, there is no right to indictment or trial by jury in Family Court. In fact, these offenses are not considered crimes under New Jersey law. N.J.S.A. 2C:1-4b. A person who has been convicted of a contempt offense under N.J.S.A. 2C:29-9(b)(2) is subject to the following range of sanctions:

Jail Term up to 180 days	N.J.S.A. 2C:43-8
Fine up to \$1000	N.J.S.A. 2C:43-3c
\$50 VCCO Assessment	N.J.S.A. 2C:43-3.1a(2)(a)
\$75 Safe Neighborhoods Fund	N.J.S.A. 2C:43-3.2a(1)
Term of Probation	N.J.S.A. 2C:45-1
\$100 DV Surcharge	N.J.S.A. 2C:25-29.4

Defendants convicted of a disorderly persons contempt will also be required to be fingerprinted, if they were not fingerprinted at the time of arrest for this specific offense. N.J.S.A. 53:1-15.

Defendants will also be required to submit DNA and to pay associated costs, if they have not previously provided a DNA sample. N.J.S.A. 53:1-15; N.J.S.A. 53:1-20.20.

Defendants convicted of crimes or offenses involving domestic violence are prohibited from purchasing, owning, possessing, or controlling firearms and from receiving or retaining a firearms purchaser identification card or permit to purchase a handgun N.J.S.A. 2C:58-3. Purchase of firearms.

Any person convicted of a second or subsequent non-indictable domestic violence contempt offense shall serve a mandatory minimum jail term of not less than 30 days. N.J.S.A. 2C:25-30.

F. Sentencing

Sentencing under the New Jersey Code of Criminal Justice for disorderly persons offenses generally involves a weighing of various aggravating and mitigating factors listed in N.J.S.A. 2C:44-1. Of particular importance are aggravating factors related to the defendant's prior record, harm to the victim and the risk that the defendant will commit another offense. There are also aggravating factors specific to domestic violence offenses.⁶ Conversely, statutory mitigating factors are related to lack of harm, acts taken under strong provocation and facilitation of the offense by the victim.

In the event the defendant is sentenced to a term of incarceration, they are entitled to day-for-day credit for time served pending disposition of the case. See R. 3:21-8 and R. 7:9-3. Moreover, a defendant with no prior record is also entitled to a presumption of non-incarceration upon conviction, unless specific conditions exist. N.J.S.A. 2C:44-1e. However, any person convicted of a second or subsequent non-indictable domestic violence contempt offense shall serve a minimum jail term of not less than 30 days. N.J.S.A. 2C:25-30.

G. Companion Offense to Contempt

On occasion, the contempt charge may be accompanied by other criminal charges for the commission of separate disorderly persons or petty disorderly persons offenses. When this occurs, the contempt and companion offenses will be heard together in Family Court. While sanctions for a disorderly persons offense were explained above, petty disorderly persons offenses carry the following range of sanctions:

Jail Term up to 30 days	N.J.S.A. 2C:43-8
Fine up to \$500	N.J.S.A. 2C:43-3d
VCCO Assessment \$50	N.J.S.A. 2C:43-3.1a(2)(a)
Safe Neighborhoods Fund \$75	N.J.S.A. 2C:43-3.2a(1)
Term of Probation	N.J.S.A. 2C:45-1a
Domestic Violence Surcharge \$100	N.J.S.A. 2C:25-29.4

Defendants convicted of certain petty disorderly persons offenses may also be required to be fingerprinted if they were not fingerprinted at the time of arrest. N.J.S.A. 53:1-15. Defendants convicted of crimes or offenses involving domestic violence are prohibited from purchasing, owning, possessing, or controlling firearms and from receiving or

⁶ See N.J.S.A. 2C:44-1a(14) and (15).

retaining a firearms purchaser identification card or permit to purchase a handgun.
N.J.S.A. 2C:58-3. Purchase of firearms.

Non-citizen defendants convicted of a violation of a restraining order / offense involving domestic violence may be subject to adverse immigration consequences. Please see, Chapter 5, “Plea Conference,” infra.

CHAPTER 4 – DISCOVERY

- A. **Discovery Requests to the Prosecutor Seeking Discovery from the State** (Your assignment order should provide the information on whom to contact in the prosecutor's office to obtain your discovery). The rule governing discovery in criminal cases is R. 3:13-3. You may obtain discovery from the Prosecutor's office by registering here [eDiscovery Welcome \(njediscovery.com\)](http://njediscovery.com).

Rule 3:13-3(a)

Pursuant to R. 3:13-3(a), when the prosecutor has made a plea offer, defense counsel may ask the prosecutor to inspect and copy or photograph any relevant and discoverable material.

Rule 3:13-3(b)

Pursuant to R. 3:13-3(b), defense counsel should request from the prosecutor, in writing, a discovery package of all relevant and discoverable material, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Complaint or CDR (Complaint Disposition Record);
2. Copy of Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) or Final Restraining Order (FRO); and Proof of Service, if available;
3. Police Report(s) and any witness statements;
4. Affidavit of Probable Cause;
5. Defendant's criminal history (rap sheet);
6. Any other records which may either incriminate or exculpate the defendant, including cell phone records or email messages;
7. Public Safety Assessment (PSA);
8. Preliminary Law Enforcement Investigative Report (PLEIR); and
9. Central Judicial Processing (CJP) Pretrial Release Order with conditions.

B. Inspection

Rule 3:13-3(c)

Pursuant to R. 3:13-3(c), the prosecutor shall permit the defendant to inspect and copy or photograph the following relevant material if not given as part of the discovery package:

1. Books, tangible objects, papers or documents obtained from or belonging to the defendant;
2. Records of the defendant's statements or confessions and a summary of the defendant's admissions against interest that are not recorded but are known to the prosecutor;
3. Results or reports of physical or mental exams or scientific tests or experiments made in connection with the matter that are within the possession, custody, or control of the prosecutor;
4. Reports or records of the defendant's prior convictions;
5. Books, papers, documents, tangible objects, buildings, or places within the possession, custody or control of the prosecutor;
6. Names, addresses, and birthdates of any persons whom the prosecutor knows to have relevant evidence or information which may lead to them being called as a witness in the case;
7. Records of statements of any persons named above in subsection (6) which are within the possession, custody, or control of the prosecutor and any relevant record of those persons' prior convictions;
8. Police reports within the possession, custody, or control of the prosecutor; and
9. Names and addresses of each person whom the prosecutor expects to call to trial as an expert witness, the expert's qualifications, the subject matter on which the expert is expected to testify, a copy of the report of such an expert witness, or, if no report is prepared, a statement of the facts and opinions to which the expert is expected to testify and a summary of the grounds for each opinion.

C. Seeking Discovery to Support a Defense:

1. You want to seek discovery of any evidence that may show that the complaint is:

- a. Legally insufficient (i.e., failure to charge a crime);
- b. Factually insufficient (i.e., the evidence in support of the complaint is insufficient, inadequate, or incompetent); or
- c. Based on unconstitutional State conduct.

If the evidence you obtain shows legal or factual insufficiency of the complaint, you should file a motion to dismiss the complaint.

You also want to seek discovery of any evidence that will show that the complaint is based on the

State's conduct that either grossly violates the defendant's constitutional rights or is otherwise fundamentally unfair. If you obtain evidence that shows such prosecutorial or police misconduct, you should file a motion to dismiss.

You want to seek any discovery that would show that the defendant was never served with the restraining order at issue or that would show that the defendant lacked requisite knowledge of the restraints. N.J.S.A. 2C:29-9 (b) provides: "a person is guilty of a disorderly persons offense if that person **purposely or knowingly** violates an order entered under the provisions of the 'Prevention of Domestic Violence Act of 1991,' P.L.1991, c.261 (C.2C:25-17 et al.) or an order entered under the provisions of a substantially similar statute under the laws of another state or the United States." (emphasis added).

2. Discovery of Exculpatory Evidence

You want to seek discovery of any exculpatory evidence, and you should file a motion to dismiss if the prosecutor failed to present to you any exculpatory evidence in its possession. State v. Hogan, 144 N.J. 216, 236-239 (1996); State v. Womack 145 N.J. 576, cert. denied, 519 U.S. 1011 (1996).

D. Discovery to Support Other Defenses

You should seek discovery of any evidence that could support any other viable defense, such as a lack of jurisdiction or double jeopardy.

When appropriate, you should also seek discovery of any evidence that will support other Code defenses, including:

1. De minimis Claim. If the discovery shows that the violation could be considered de minimis, you should file a motion to dismiss the complaint. (Only the Assignment Judge may dismiss a prosecution pursuant to the *de minimis* statute). State v. Vitiello, 377 N.J. Super. 452, 455 (App. Div. 2005); Pressler, Current N.J. Court Rules, comment 3.5 on R. 3:10-2 (2017);
2. Defense of Another. If defendant had a reasonable belief in the need to use force to protect another. State v. Colon, 298 N.J. Super. 569, 576 (App. Div.), certif. denied, 150 N.J. 27 (1997);
3. Duress. If the defendant was coerced into committing conduct in circumstances that a person of reasonable firmness could not be expected to withstand. N.J.S.A. 2C:2-9(a); State v. B.H., 183 N.J. 171, 193 (2005);
4. Entrapment. See State v. Johnson, 127 N.J. 458, 464-475 (1992); State v. Florez, 261 N.J. Super. 12, 27-28 (App. Div. 1992), aff'd, 134 N.J. 570 (1994);
5. Intoxication. Involuntary or pathological intoxication is an affirmative defense under the Criminal Code. See State v. Sette, 259 N.J. Super. 156, 169-171 (App. Div.), certif. denied, 130 N.J. 597 (1992). However, voluntary intoxication is not a defense under the Code unless it negates an element of the offense. State v. Warren, 104 N.J. 571, 577 (1986). For example, voluntary intoxication may be a defense to a disorderly persons contempt charge, because it has a knowing mental element;
6. If the defendant reasonably but mistakenly believes facts that negate the culpability element of an offense. State v. Sexton, 160 N.J. 93, 106-07 (1999);
7. Necessity. N.J.S.A. 2C:3-2(a);
8. Renunciation of Purpose in a Conspiracy. N.J.S.A. 2C:5-2(e);
9. Self-Defense. State v. O'Neil, 219 N.J. 598 (2014);
10. Statute of Limitations. R. 3:10-2 (2017);
11. Third Party Guilt. A defendant has a constitutional right to attempt to prove his or her innocence by proving that the crime was committed by a third party. State v. Fortin, 178 N.J. 540, 590-591 (2004); State v. Jimenez, 190 N.J. 397 (2006).

E. Defendant's Competency

If appropriate, you may need to explore whether the defendant is competent to plead guilty or stand trial. N.J.S.A. 2C:4-4 provides that “no person who lacks capacity to understand the proceedings against him/her or who cannot assist in their own defense shall be tried, convicted or sentenced for the commission of an offense as long as the incapacity is present.” N.J.S.A. 2C:4-5 provides: “If there is reason to doubt the defendant’s ability to proceed, the prosecutor, defense counsel or the court on its own motion, may seek to appoint a qualified psychiatrist or licensed psychologist to examine and report upon the mental condition of the defendant.” The findings of this evaluation may determine the disposition of the charges. N.J.S.A. 2C:4-6.

F. Discovery to Determine Competency of State's Witnesses

In some instances, a defendant may challenge the mental status of the State’s witnesses, see State v. Franklin, 49 N.J. 286, 287-88 (1967), and even may challenge the mental competency of a victim. See State v. Olivio, 123 N.J. 550, 552-53 (1991).

G. Reciprocal Discovery Obligations that Defense Counsel Owes to the State

Under certain circumstances, the defendant has reciprocal discovery obligations and must provide notice to the prosecution if they intend to assert affirmative defenses.

1. Written Notice of Affirmative Defenses:

Pursuant to R. 3:12-1, no later than seven days before the arraignment or status conference, a defendant must serve on the prosecutor written notice of either an intention to claim affirmative defenses or an intention to rely on the following sections of the Code of Criminal Justice including the following:

- a. Duress, N.J.S.A. 2C:2-9;
- b. Entrapment, N.J.S.A. 2C:2-12;
- c. Ignorance or Mistake, N.J.S.A. 2C:2-4;
- d. Intoxication, N.J.S.A. 2C:2-8;
- e. Insanity, N.J.S.A. 2C:4-1. In State v. Worlock, 117 N.J. 596, 606-15 (1990), the Court reaffirmed the State’s adherence to the M’Naghton Rule to determine legal insanity. Note: the defendant’s burden of proof of insanity is by only a preponderance of the evidence. State v. Lewis, 67 N.J. 47, 48 (1975);

- f. Justification, N.J.S.A. 2C:3-1 to -11; and
- g. Lack of Requisite State of Mind (Mental disease or defect), N.J.S.A. 2C:4-2.

A defendant's burden of proof is to raise a reasonable doubt as to his mental capacity to form intent. N.J.S.A. 2C:4-2; State v. Johnson, 120 N.J. 263, 299-300 (1990); State v. Murray, 240 N.J. Super. 378, 398 (App. Div.), certif. denied, 122 N.J. 334 (1990). In State v. Galloway, 133 N.J. 631, 647 (1993), the Court held that "all mental deficiencies, including conditions that cause a loss of emotional control, may satisfy the diminished capacity defense if the record shows that experts in the psychological field believe that that kind of mental deficiency can affect a person's cognitive faculties, and the record contains evidence that the claimed deficiency did affect the defendant's cognitive capacity to form the mental state necessary for the commission of the crime".

2. Notice of Alibi

Pursuant to R. 3:12-2, the defendant is required to provide to the prosecutor written notice of intent to use an alibi defense.

Note: A defendant is not required to provide the State with notice of any defenses not covered by R. 3:12-1 or R. 3:12-2.

H. Depositions

Pursuant to R. 3:13-2, if it appears that a material witness is likely to be unable to testify at trial because of death, physical, or mental incapacity, defense counsel may make a motion, with notice to the parties, for a deposition of the witness and for the production of designated books, and nonprivileged papers, documents, or tangible objects to be produced at the same time and place.

The deposition must be videotaped unless the court orders otherwise, R. 3:13-2(b), and may be used at trial in lieu of the live testimony of the witness in open court if the witness is unable to testify because of death or physical or mental incapacity or if the court finds that the party offering the deposition has been unable to procure the attendance of the witness by subpoena or otherwise. R. 3:13-2(c).

CHAPTER 5 – PLEA CONFERENCE

A. Overview

Your first appearance in court will typically be at the plea conference. By this time, you should have already received the discovery from the prosecutor. If not, the prosecutor will provide the discovery to you at the conference. This may also be your first occasion to meet with your client, especially if they are in jail. You should read over the discovery, discuss the case with your client, and then meet with the prosecutor. Upon your arrival in court, you should introduce yourself to the prosecutor.

The prosecutor will make a plea offer to resolve the case. You will then privately discuss the plea offer with your client.

B. Consequences of a Guilty Plea

You must fully advise your client of the plea and the consequences of accepting it. It has been held that if defense counsel fails to adequately communicate a plea offer to a defendant, that such is *prima facie* evidence of inadequate representation of counsel. State v. Powell, 294 N.J. Super. 557 (App. Div.1996). Please refer to Chapter 3, “Contempt” for a listing of sanctions.

As indicated in the previous chapters, the relevant charging statute for contempt of a restraining order is N.J.S.A. 2C:29-9(b). A defendant who is found guilty of contempt may be sentenced to up to six (6) months in the county jail. It is important that you advise your client that **if there is a second or subsequent guilty plea or conviction for contempt, the defendant must serve a minimum of not less than thirty (30) days in the county jail.** N.J.S.A. 2C:25-30. However, this is not the case if the defendant is convicted simultaneously of multiple contempt charges even if the conduct occurred on separate occasions.

All clients should be advised that if an individual is not a citizen of the United States, a determination of guilt to a violation of a restraining order or other offense may result in the following:

- It may result in your removal from the United States;
- It may stop you from being able to legally enter or re-enter the United States;
- It may prevent you from ever becoming a naturalized American citizen.

Clients who are not citizens or who are unsure whether they are citizens have the right to seek advice from an attorney about the effect the alleged conduct and participation in the proceeding may have on immigration status.

Prosecutor's Offer and Court's Consideration of Aggravating/Mitigating Factors

Typically, for a first offense, the prosecutor will offer a plea of probation. This is fact sensitive, however. Again, depending on the circumstances, the prosecutor may insist on jail time (which would include time the defendant has already served if arrested and jailed on the warrant). The court may impose jail time for a first contempt offense if aggravating circumstances outweigh mitigating circumstances. N.J.S.A. 2C:44-1.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2C:44-1, aggravating circumstances considered by the court are:

1. The nature and circumstances of the offense, and the role of the actor therein, including whether or not it was committed in an especially heinous, cruel, or depraved manner;
2. The gravity and seriousness of harm inflicted on the victim, including whether or not the defendant knew or reasonably should have known that the victim of the offense was particularly vulnerable or incapable of resistance due to advanced age, ill-health, or extreme youth, or was for any other reason substantially incapable of exercising normal physical or mental power of resistance;
3. The risk that the defendant will commit another offense;
4. A lesser sentence will depreciate the seriousness of the defendant's offense because it involved a breach of the public trust under chapters 27 and 30, or the defendant took advantage of a position of trust or confidence to commit the offense;
5. There is a substantial likelihood that the defendant is involved in organized criminal activity;
6. The extent of the defendant's prior criminal record and the seriousness of the offenses of which he has been convicted;
7. The defendant committed the offense pursuant to an agreement that he either pay or be paid for the commission of the offense and the pecuniary incentive was beyond that inherent in the offense itself;
8. The defendant committed the offense against a police or other law enforcement officer, correctional employee or fireman, acting in the performance of his duties while in uniform or

exhibiting evidence of his authority; the defendant committed the offense because of the status of the victim as a public servant; or the defendant committed the offense against a sports official, athletic coach or manager, acting in or immediately following the performance of his duties or because of the person's status as a sports official, coach or manager;

9. The need for deterring the defendant and others from violating the law;
10. The offense involved fraudulent or deceptive practices committed against any department or division of State government;
11. The imposition of a fine, penalty or order of restitution without also imposing a term of imprisonment would be perceived by the defendant or others merely as part of the cost of doing business, or as an acceptable contingent business or operating expense associated with the initial decision to resort to unlawful practices;
12. The defendant committed the offense against a person who he knew or should have known was 60 years of age or older, or disabled;
13. The defendant, while in the course of committing or attempting to commit the crime, including the immediate flight therefrom, used or was in possession of a stolen motor vehicle;
14. The offense involved an act of domestic violence, as that term is defined in subsection a. of section 3 of P.L.1991, c. 261 (C.2C:25-19), committed in the presence of a child under 16 years of age; and
15. The offense involved an act of domestic violence, as that term is defined in subsection a. of section 3 of P.L.1991, c. 261 (C.2C:25-19) and the defendant committed at least one act of domestic violence on more than one occasion.

Mitigating circumstances considered by the court are:

1. The defendant's conduct neither caused nor threatened serious harm;
2. The defendant did not contemplate that his conduct would cause or threaten serious harm;
3. The defendant acted under a strong provocation;
4. There were substantial grounds tending to excuse or justify the defendant's conduct, though failing to establish a defense;
5. The victim of the defendant's conduct induced or facilitated its commission;
6. The defendant has compensated or will compensate the victim of his conduct for the damage or injury that he sustained, or will participate in a program of community service;
7. The defendant has no history of prior delinquency or criminal activity or has led a law-abiding life for a substantial period of time before the commission of the present offense;
8. The defendant's conduct was the result of circumstances unlikely to recur;
9. The character and attitude of the defendant indicate that he is unlikely to commit another offense;
10. The defendant is particularly likely to respond affirmatively to probationary treatment;
11. The imprisonment of the defendant would entail excessive hardship to himself or his dependents;
12. The willingness of the defendant to cooperate with law enforcement authorities;
13. The conduct of a youthful defendant was substantially influenced by another person more mature than the defendant.

D. The Defendant Accepts the Plea Offer

When the case is ready to be presented to the court, the prosecutor and you will be asked to place your appearances on the record. The defendant will then be administered the oath. The prosecutor will place the terms of the plea agreement on the record. You will likely be asked if you concur with the prosecutor's recitation of the plea agreement. Please see Directive #23-21, Family - Domestic Violence - New Plea Form for Use in Domestic Violence Contempt Matters. This Directive promulgates the Domestic Violence Contempt and Related Disorderly Persons and Petty Disorderly Persons Plea Form, CN 12692 for use when the court accepts a plea in domestic violence contempt matters heard in the Superior Court, Family Division.

A factual basis for the guilty plea will have to be placed upon the record. In other words, either you or the prosecutor will ask questions of the defendant regarding his or her conduct and the defendant will have to acknowledge his or her guilt. This will be discussed further below. Before doing so, however, the court will make sure that the defendant understands the consequences of the plea.

The court has discretion whether to accept a defendant's guilty plea. Prior to accepting the plea, the court should first address the defendant as to his or her personal understanding of the charge and the consequences of accepting a plea. When addressing the defendant, the court must question the defendant under oath or by affirmation. State v. Herman, 47 N.J. 73 (1966); State v. Reali, 26 N.J. 222 (1958); State v. James, 84 N.J. Super. 109 (App. Div. 1964). The line of questioning is to ensure that the defendant is properly represented and is acting voluntarily, and not under the influence of threats, promises, or inducements not disclosed on the record.

The questions asked of a defendant before the factual basis is taken should cover the following:

1. Whether the defendant understands the charges and the plea;
2. Whether the defendant is pleading guilty freely and voluntarily;
3. Whether the defendant understands that by pleading guilty, certain rights are forfeited, including but not limited to:
 - a. The right to a trial, where the State must prove one guilty beyond a reasonable doubt,
 - b. The right to remain silent,
 - c. The right to confront the witnesses;

4. Whether the defendant understands by pleading guilty, they will:
 - a. Have a criminal record,
 - b. Pay a VCCO fine of \$50 for each count to which they are pleading guilty,
 - c. Pay a transactional fee of \$1.00 for each occasion when making a payment or installment payment for any offense, and a transactional fee of \$2.00 for each occasion when making a payment or installment payment for any offense and the sentence is to probation, or otherwise requires payments of financial obligations to the probation division,
 - d. Pay a Safe Neighborhood Services Fund assessment of \$75 for each docket under which they are pleading guilty,
 - e. Pay a surcharge of \$100 for each guilty plea to one of the 19 criminal code statutes set forth at N.J.S.A. 2C:25-19,
 - f. Pay a fee for the term of probation;
5. Whether the defendant's assigned counsel answered all questions and if the defendant is satisfied with advice received from counsel;
6. Whether the defendant is under the influence of any alcohol, drug, or other mind-altering substance which would affect the defendant's ability to understand the plea or the proceedings; and
7. Whether the defendant has any questions concerning the plea.

Again, the requirements for accepting a plea require a determination that the plea was entered into freely and voluntarily. The defendant must have adequate representation. The judge will consider the mental state of the defendant. A plea is not automatically deemed involuntary because defendant may be under the influence of a prescription medication. State v. Clark, 104 N.J. Super. 67, 70 (Law Div. 1968), aff'd, 110 N.J. Super. 562 (App. Div.), certif. denied, 57 N.J. 135 (1970), and State v. Miles, 229 N.J. 83 (2017).

Under State v. McIlhenny, 357 N.J. Super. 380, 384-85 (App. Div.), certif. denied 176 N.J. 430 (2003), there must be full prosecutorial disclosure, an adequate factual basis, with the plea being entered voluntarily; there is no requirement that the judge accepting the plea be aware of all exculpatory material in the investigation.

In addition to the voluntary requirement when accepting a plea, the court is also concerned with the procedural elements. For each crime, the court must conclude that

there is a factual basis for every element of the crime being pled. If there is not a factual basis for each element, then the court must reject the plea. State v. Pineiro, 385 N.J. Super. 129, 137 (App. Div. 2006), State v. Nolan, 205 N.J. Super. 1 (App. Div. 1985). A defendant, on appeal, can raise whether there was a factual basis for the plea and, if not, it may serve as the basis of an ineffective assistance of counsel claim.

The questions asked of a defendant to establish the factual basis for the guilty plea should cover the following:

1. That the defendant was aware of the existence of the restraining order barring the defendant from having contact or communication with the victim;
2. Whether the defendant violated the restraining order;
3. The circumstances surrounding the violation of the restraining order, including all necessary facts to establish the violation; and
4. If the defendant is also pleading guilty to other charges (i.e., harassment), the defendant must acknowledge that they committed the necessary elements of that offense.

After the defendant sets forth an adequate factual basis for the plea of guilt, the court will ask you if you would like to be heard before sentencing. At this time, you can request that any fines be paid over a period of probation (if probation is part of the plea). You can advise the court of any other relevant facts or circumstances that you believe would impact the court's ultimate decision regarding the plea. The court may also ask the defendant if there is anything they would like to say before sentencing. The court will ask the prosecutor the same thing.

Typically, the court will accept the terms of the plea agreement. At the conclusion of this proceeding, the court will discharge any bail posted by the defendant. The defendant will be presented with an appeal rights form at the conclusion of the proceeding. You and the defendant will have to sign the form before you leave.

E. The Defendant Rejects the Plea Offer

If your client refuses to accept the plea offer, you should advise the prosecutor. Perhaps with some additional discussion, the case can be resolved. If not, the court will set a trial date. As assigned counsel, you will have to handle the trial. See Chapter 6, 'Trial,' infra.

If the defendant rejects the plea offer made by the prosecutor, you and the prosecutor will have to fill out a trial memorandum that will list any anticipated witnesses to be called at trial and set forth any stipulations.

The parties also will appear before the court. The oath will be administered to the defendant. The prosecutor will place the terms of the rejected plea offer on the record. You will be asked if that is your understanding of the plea offer.

The defendant will also be questioned about his or her understanding of the plea offer. The defendant will be made aware of the consequences of rejecting the plea offer and advised of the maximum penalties that may be imposed if the defendant is found guilty of the charge(s). The court will confirm that the defendant wishes to reject the plea.

Any bail posted by the defendant will be continued. The defendant will be reminded that they must continue to abide by the restraining order (if it still exists) and any pretrial release conditions. The court will set a trial date, which will be inserted into the trial memorandum. The court will advise the defendant that if there is no appearance at the trial, any bail will be forfeited and a bench warrant will be issued for the defendant's arrest.

F. The Prosecutor's Request to Dismiss

In some cases, the prosecutor may decide to dismiss the case at the plea conference if they are unable to prove the elements of the offense beyond reasonable doubt. This may occur, for instance, if there is no proof that the defendant knew of the existence of the restraining order.

In this event, the parties will appear before the court and the oath will be administered to the defendant. The prosecutor will place the reasons for the request to dismiss on the record.

If the court accepts the dismissal, any bail will be discharged. The defendant will be reminded to abide by the restraining order (if it still exists).

CHAPTER 6 – TRIAL

As noted in the previous chapter, if the case did not resolve at the plea conference the matter is scheduled for trial. A trial memorandum may have been prepared at the plea conference in which all witnesses were listed. Alternatively, you may be in communication with the prosecutor regarding witnesses the State intends to call at trial. However, you should subpoena any witness you will rely upon at trial. You should not rely on the State to secure your witnesses, as the State is not required to subpoena your witnesses, nor is the State required to subpoena witnesses they have placed on a witness list. You are responsible for ensuring that witnesses you need appear at court.

Before the commencement of trial, you or the State may ask the court to sequester witnesses. This application is made to ensure that witnesses do not hear the testimony of others, thereby impacting their own recollection. The case is heard before a judge – there is no jury, as the defendant is not entitled to a jury.

The prosecutor may make an opening statement and then you will make an opening statement. The prosecutor will call the State's witnesses. You will have an opportunity to cross-examine each of the State's witnesses.

At the end of the State's case, you can make a motion to dismiss if there is insufficient evidence to support a finding of guilt. If that motion is granted, the case is dismissed. If that motion is denied, you should proceed and call your first witness. The prosecutor will be permitted to cross-examine your witnesses.

Under the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution, the defendant has the right to remain silent. Therefore, they need not testify at the trial. You should advise your client of this.

The State must prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, that the defendant knowingly violated a restraining order or protective order. See State v. S.K., 423 N.J. Super. 540, 546 (App. Div. 2012) (the relevant provision of the order was overly broad and virtually impossible for defendant to obey at all times; also, defendant's testimony was not an adequate factual basis to prove he had violated the order). See also State v. Finamore, 338 N.J. Super. 130, 138 (App. Div. 2001).

After hearing from the witnesses, you will make a closing argument, followed by the prosecutor's closing argument. Depending on the complexity of the matter, the

number of witnesses called, and the evidence submitted, the court may request written submissions.

Again, depending on the length and complexity of the case, the court may decide the case immediately from the bench or may prepare a written decision. R. 2:7-2(d) governs the extent of the *pro bono* attorney's obligation on appeal. You may find information about filing an appeal as well as the appropriate forms here [Appellate Division | NJ Courts](#).

CHAPTER 7 – VICTIM’S ASSISTANCE SURVIVOR PROTECTION ACT (VASPA)

A. BACKGROUND

The "Sexual Assault Survivor Protection Act of 2015" (SASPA) took effect on May 7, 2016 and was amended January 9, 2017.

SASPA authorized the court to issue temporary and final protective orders on behalf of victims of "nonconsensual sexual contact," "sexual penetration," or "lewdness," as these terms are defined in the law, or attempts at such conduct.

In 2023, the Governor signed into legislation the "Victim’s Assistance Survivor Protection Act (VASPA). The new law, L. 2023, c. 127, amended the "Sexual Assault Survivor Protection Act of 2015" (SASPA), N.J.S.A. 2C:14-13, and renamed it the "Victim’s Assistance and Survivor Protection Act" (VASPA) because it also covers interactions not of a sexual nature. Significantly, VASPA expands the scope of SASPA to authorize the New Jersey Superior Court to issue temporary or final protective orders to victims, regardless of their current or prior relationship status to the abuser, by expanding the eligible acts for which a protective order may be obtained to now include stalking and cyber-harassment.

Under the law, any person alleging to be a victim of nonconsensual sexual contact, sexual penetration, lewdness, stalking, cyber-harassment or an attempt at such conduct, who is not otherwise eligible to seek a restraining order as a victim of domestic violence pursuant to the "Prevention of Domestic Violence Act of 1991" may file an application with the Superior Court seeking a temporary protective order.

The application may be filed by a parent or guardian on behalf of a victim when the person is under 18 years of age or has a developmental disability or is mentally incapacitated to the extent that the person is incapable of providing consent to certain sexual conduct. VASPA is not applicable to situations involving allegations of misconduct against a minor by a parent or guardian when such misconduct is being alleged by the other parent or guardian. Such incidents are instead to be reported to the Division of Child Protection and Permanency in the Department of Children and Families for investigation.

The law clarifies that if the alleged offender is an unemancipated minor, the victim must seek relief pursuant to the provisions of the New Jersey Code of Juvenile Justice. The new law provides that the court may issue a temporary protective order regardless of whether criminal charges related to the incident were filed or disposed.

In addition, the law clarifies that the filing of an application for a temporary protective order does not bar the filing of a criminal complaint or a prosecution for the same act.

Under the law, a judge of the Superior Court is authorized to enter an emergency *ex parte* protective order when necessary to protect the safety and well-being of the alleged victim on whose behalf the relief is sought. A temporary protective order issued under the law remains in effect until further order of a judge of the Superior Court.

A final protective order issued pursuant to VASPA shall be issued only after a finding or an admission is made that the respondent committed an act of nonconsensual sexual contact, sexual penetration, lewdness, or stalking or cyber-harassment or any attempt at such conduct, against the alleged victim. Once issued, the protective order remains in effect until further order of a judge of the Superior Court.

VASPA provides that a respondent's violation of any protective order issued under its provisions constitutes an offense under a new subsection d. of N.J.S.A. 2C:29-9. Under subsection d., a person is guilty of a crime of the fourth degree if that person purposely or knowingly violates any provision in an order entered pursuant to VASPA.

B. CONTEMPT

Contempt of a VASPA or SASPA Protective Order pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2C:29-9d(1) and (2) reads as follows:

(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, a person is guilty of a crime of the fourth degree if that person purposely or knowingly violates any provision in an order entered under the provisions of P.L.2015, c. 147 (C.2C:14-13 et al.) or an order entered under the provisions of a substantially similar statute under the laws of another state or the United States when the conduct which constitutes the violation could also constitute a crime or a disorderly persons offense.

(2) In all other cases a person is guilty of a disorderly persons offense if that person purposely or knowingly violates an order entered under the provisions of P.L.2015, c. 147 (C.2C:14-13 et al.) or an order entered under the provisions of a substantially similar statute under the laws of another state or the United States.

As used in this section, “state” means a state of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, or any territory or insular possession subject to the jurisdiction of the United

States. The term includes an Indian tribe or band, or Alaskan native village, which is recognized by a federal law or formally acknowledged by a state.

If you are representing a client charged with the disorderly persons offense of contempt of a VASPA or SASPA Protective Order, the procedures outlined in Chapters 3 through 5 should be followed. You should advise your client of the consequences of a conviction (Chapter 3), you should seek discovery from the prosecutor (Chapter 4), and the plea conference and trial will be handled in the same manner as with a charge of contempt of a temporary or final restraining order (Chapters 5 and 6).

CASE SUMMARIES RELATED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CONTEMPT AND THE SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVOR PROTECTION ACT OF 2015

The following are many of the cases that may have application in your case. This list is not exhaustive and is current as of June 2022:

Arrest

- State v. Smith, 374 N.J. Super. 425 (App. Div. 2005)

The police may question those present at the scene of domestic violence without giving Miranda warnings as long as the inquiries are “reasonably related to confirming or dispelling suspicion and those questioned are not restrained to a degree associated with formal arrest”.

Contact

- State v. J.T., 294 N.J. Super. 540 (App. Div. 1996)

Standing at victim’s property line and staring at her house without speaking is “contact”.

Contempt charge where the municipal judge failed to comply with R. 5:7A

- State v. Masculin, 355 N.J. Super. 250 (Ch. Div. 2002)

A defendant may be found guilty of contempt for violating a TRO even when the municipal judge who issued the order failed to comply with R. 5:7A.

Criminal Case Heard before Contempt Case

- State v. Nelson, 255 N.J. Super. 270 (Law Div. 1992)

Delaying Family Part contempt trial to conclusion of criminal trial may be appropriate to avoid prejudice.

Dating

- S.K. v. J.H., 426 N.J. Super. 230 (App. Div. 2012)

A trial court erred by granting plaintiff a final restraining order under the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act because the single date upon which she and defendant had been on the night of the assault was insufficient to constitute a dating relationship.

- C.C. v. J.A.H., 463 N.J. Super. 419 (App. Div. 2020)

The term “dating relationship” under the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act should be construed liberally in accordance with the strong public policy against domestic violence, regardless of whether the parties ever went on a “traditional” in-person date.

Domestic Contretemps

- State v. Wilmouth, 302 N.J. Super. 20 (App. Div. 1997)

A defendant cannot be deemed to be in contempt of a domestic violence restraining order where his conduct conforms with the parties’ understanding of the terms of the order, and where his conduct does not, in itself, constitute domestic violence.

- State v. Krupinski, 321 N.J. Super. 34 (App. Div. 1999)

Defendant’s conviction for contempt was reversed for two reasons. First, defendant was permitted under the matrimonial order to go onto the property to remove lawnmower. Second, defendant’s going onto property to remove lawnmower, delivering children to the front door, and giving wife the car seat, were “trivial, non-actionable events”.

Due Process

- G.M. v. C.V., 453 N.J. Super. 1 (App. Div. 2018)

The Appellate Panel reversed the Family Part’s Order denying a defendant’s request to vacate a Final Restraining Order for failure to provide a transcript of the FRO. However, the transcript was unavailable because the record was not capable of transcription by no fault of defendant. Therefore, the Appellate Court remanded to determine whether defendant showed a change in circumstances to dissolve the FRO. If not, the trial court was to recreate the record consistent with the procedures set forth by the Appellate Court in the opinion.

- D.M.R. V. M.K.G., 467 N.J. Super. 308 (App Div. 2021)

The trial court violated defendant's due process rights by going forward with a FRO trial less than twenty-four hours after being served with a domestic violence complaint under the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (PDVA), N.J.S.A. §§ 2C:25-17 to 2C:25-35, because defendant was not served with a copy of the complaint by the first hearing, and the trial court emailed her a copy of the complaint and scheduled the matter for trial the following day, which provided defendant less than twenty-four

hours' notice to prepare and defend herself. Sufficient evidence supported the determination that defendant committed the predicate act of harassment consistent with the PDVA, N.J.S.A. § 2C:25-19, because defendant was at plaintiff's house at an inconvenient hour accompanied by other people and she knocked on the door with a purpose to annoy.

Factual Finding or Admission Required to Enter FRO

- J.S. v. D.S., 448 N.J. Super. 17 (App. Div. 2016)

Restraining order cannot be entered by consent or without a factual foundation. Trial court must elicit a factual foundation even where defendant agrees to entry of a restraining order.

Harassment

- State v. Hoffman, 149 N.J. 564 (1997)

The Supreme Court overruled the Appellate Division and found that the act of sending in the mail a torn-up copy of a court order was an act of contempt and did constitute a “contact” and was in fact a “communication”.

- State v. L.C., 283 N.J. Super. 441 (App. Div. 1995), certif. denied, 143 N.J. 325 (1996)

The Appellate Division affirmed the finding that defendant-wife was guilty of contempt by going to residence of and speaking to husband's girlfriend who was a protected party.

- State v. Castagna, 387 N.J. Super. 598 (App. Div.), certif. denied, 188 N.J. 577 (2006)

To prove that defendant caused another to make harassing communications on his behalf (1) the defendant must have had a purpose to harass; and (2) the statements to the intermediary must have been made with the purpose that they be passed on to the victim.

Household members

- S.P. v. Newark Police Dep't., 428 N.J. Super. 210 (App. Div. 2012)

Plaintiff and her attacker were boarders in a rooming house. As such, they can be considered "household members" under the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act.

- R.G. v. R.G., 449 N.J. Super. 208, 213, 220, 228-30 (App. Div. 2017)

The 2015 Amendments expanded the jurisdictional scope of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act so that former household member now includes any person who "was at any time a household member." Consequently, jurisdiction was established even though the two brothers had not resided together in thirty-six years.

- S.C. v. J.D., 462 N.J. Super. 452 (Ch. Div. 2019)

The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act extends to half-siblings as "household members" under N.J.S.A. 2C:25-19(d), notwithstanding the parties' separate residences.

Indigency

- State v. Ashford, 374 N.J. Super. 332 (App. Div. 2004)

An indigent defendant is entitled to assignment of counsel when charged with a disorderly persons offense of contempt and criminal mischief. Waiver of that right to counsel must be knowing and fully informed and is subject to retraction if imprisonment is imposed. The trial judge must be mindful of Crawford v. Washington, 541 U.S. 36, 124 S. Ct. 1354, 158 L. Ed. 2d 177 (2004), where an excited utterance by the victim as testified to by a police officer is insufficient to convict for contempt. The right of confrontation guaranteed by the Sixth Amendment requires that the victim be called as a witness if available.

"Knowing" violation of FRO

- State v. Finamore, 338 N.J. Super. 130 (App. Div. 2001)

Defendant's contempt conviction for telephoning victim four times about parenting time was overturned. The parties' 1995 property settlement agreement (entered after the FRO was ordered) was "rife" with provisions that invited or required some sort of contact between the parties.

- State v. D.G.M., 439 N.J. Super. 630 (App. Div. 2015)

Defendant violated the no contact communication provision of FRO by sitting near and briefly filming the victim at their child's soccer game. In his appeal of a contempt conviction under N.J.S.A. 2C:29-9(b), the Appellate Division held that while such conduct fell within the restraining order's prohibition on communication, the court

concluded that defendant could not have fairly anticipated the interpretation. Therefore, in applying the doctrine of lenity, the court reversed defendant's conviction.

Modification Applications

- *Finamore v. Aronson*, 382 N.J. Super. 514 (App. Div. 2006)

A defendant may attend a child's activities even when the FRO prohibits defendant contacting plaintiff unless the FRO expressly prohibits attendance at such activities. In this case, "the specific restriction was never ordered. Such a restriction cannot be inferred or presumed.

Protected Party (Fetus)

- *B.C. v. T.G.*, 430 N.J. Super. 455 (Ch. Div. 2013)

After learning that plaintiff was pregnant with his child, defendant and four accomplices severely beat her. Trial court entered the FRO, restraining defendant's contact with plaintiff, her parents, siblings, and plaintiff's unborn child, upon birth. The trial court held that although plaintiff's fetus was not a "person" under New Jersey law, nothing in the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act precluded the court from entering an order of protection stating that the unborn child, upon birth, was automatically included as an "additional person" protected from defendant.

Reconciliation as Defense

- *State v. Washington*, 319 N.J. Super. 681 (Law Div. 1998)

Even though parties had reconciled and lived together from October 1996 until December 1997, the August 7, 1995, FRO was valid and continued in effect. The defense that the order was rendered null and void by the reconciliation was rejected.

Right to Counsel

- *State v. Ashford*, 374 N.J. Super. 332 (App. Div. 2004)

An indigent defendant is entitled to assignment of counsel when charged with a disorderly persons offense of contempt and criminal mischief. Waiver of the right to counsel must be knowing and fully informed and subject to retraction if imprisonment is imposed. The trial judge must be mindful of *Crawford v. Washington*, 541 U.S. 36, 124 S. Ct. 1354, 158 L. Ed. 2d 177 (2004), where an excited utterance by the victim as testified to by police officer is insufficient to convict for contempt. The right of

confrontation guaranteed by the Sixth Amendment requires that the victim be called as a witness if available.

- A.A.R. v. J.R.C 471 N.J. Super.584 (App.Div. 2022)

Because the trial judge did not advise defendant of his legal exposure or of his due process right to counsel, the final restraining order (FRO) entered under the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (PDVA) based on a predicate act of assault, N.J.S.A. § 2C:12-1, was vacated. Defendant was not advised in advance of trial that he had a right to retain legal counsel, and that alone required reversal because defendant did not clearly and knowingly waive his right. Moreover, the judge did not inform defendant of the significant consequences of an FRO under the PDVA, N.J.S.A. §§ 2C:25-30 and 2C:25-34 including placement on a domestic abuser registry, until after he issued a decision.

Search Warrants

- State v. Hemenway, 239 N.J. 111 (2019)

Warrants may only issue upon probable cause, and the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (PDVA) can still accomplish the protection of domestic violence victims without weakening fundamental constitutional guarantees. The PDVA empowers a judge to issue a TRO to protect a victim of domestic violence and to enter an order authorizing the police to search for and seize from the defendant's home, or any other place, weapons that may pose a threat to the victim. In this case, the Court considered whether the reasonable cause standard for the issuance of a domestic violence search warrant for weapons set forth in N.J.S.A. 2C:25-28(j) and a 2002 case is incompatible with the Fourth Amendment and Article I, Paragraph 7 of the New Jersey Constitution.

The Court held that the beneficent goal of protecting domestic violence victims must be accomplished while abiding by well-established constitutional norms. Before issuing a warrant to search for weapons under the PDVA, a court must find that there is (1) probable cause to believe that an act of domestic violence has been committed by the defendant; (2) probable cause to believe that a search for and seizure of weapons is necessary to protect the life, health or well-being of a victim on whose behalf the relief is sought; and (3) probable cause to believe that the weapons are located in the place to be searched. Transposed into the context of a domestic violence search warrant for weapons, probable cause requires that the issuing court only have a well-grounded suspicion.

Service

- State v. Mernar, 345 N.J. Super. 591 (App. Div. 2001)

The contempt complaint was dismissed because of the absence of proof of valid service of the TRO by law enforcement. The State appealed dismissal on the basis that defendant had actual notice of the TRO. The charge of violation of TRO was reinstated by the Appellate Division. A contempt action may proceed against the defendant who has actual knowledge of the restraints imposed, even though the TRO was not regularly served.

Severance of Offenses

- State v. Lozada, 357 N.J. Super. 468, 469 (App. Div. 2003)

The trial court erred in failing to sever for trial charges of third-degree stalking and fourth-degree violation of a domestic violence restraining order, and convictions on both offenses were reversed.

- State v. Chenique-Puey, 145 N.J. 334 (1996)

A TRO was issued against defendant ex-boyfriend. On several occasions, defendant violated the terms of the restraining order. On one occasion, defendant threatened to kill his ex-girlfriend. Defendant's girlfriend called the police and defendant was charged with third degree terroristic threats, fourth degree unlawful possession of a weapon, a knife, and fourth degree contempt of a judicial restraining order. At the beginning of the trial, defendant filed a motion to sever the contempt charge, which was denied, by the trial court. Ultimately, defendant was convicted of the terroristic threats and contempt counts. On appeal, the Appellate Court reversed the trial court's decision, holding that the trial court erred when it denied defendant's severance motion. The Supreme Court affirmed the appellate court's decision, holding that separate trials were required because evidence of the restraining order unfairly prejudiced defendant on the terroristic-threats count.

Sexual Assault Survivor Protection Act of 2015 (SASPA)

- C.R. v. M.T., 248 N.J. 428, September 28, 2021,

In this case, the Court considered, for the first time, the standard that should apply in determining whether an alleged sexual assault victim was too intoxicated to give consent under the Sexual Assault Survivor Protection Act of 2015 (SASPA). The appropriate standard to determine whether sexual activity was consensual under the SASPA, N.J.S.A. 2C:14-14(a)(1), was not the prostration of faculties standard, but the standard articulated in a criminal case of Interest of M.T.S., which was applied from

the perspective of the alleged victim, and victim and required a showing that sexual activity occurred without the alleged victim's freely and affirmatively given permission to engage in that activity. The Court held that the standard for consent for an alleged victim in a SASPA case should be no different than the standard for consent for an alleged victim in a criminal sexual assault case, and the trial court applied a different standard, which required a reversal and a remand of the case to the trial court for assessment under the standard articulated in M.T.S.

- R.L.U. v. J.P., 457 N.J. Super. 129, App. Div., 2018

The final protective order against defendant pursuant to the Sexual Assault Survivor Protection Act (SASPA), N.J.S.A. §§ 2C:14-13 to 2C:14-21, was reversed because the trial court erred by concluding defendant's 2005 sexual assault against plaintiff served as the predicate act for a SASPA order following his actions toward her in 2017 as defendant's actions in the convenience store in 2017 were not acts or attempts at nonconsensual sexual contact with plaintiff. The court held that the SASPA could not be used to impose a restraining order on defendant based on conduct that occurred before SASPA's effective date as SASPA did not permit such retroactive application.

Specificity of Relief

- State v. S.K., 423 N.J. Super. 540 (App. Div. 2012)

Defendant's conviction for violating a domestic violence restraining order vacated and the complaint is dismissed because the provision of the order prohibiting defendant from "any other place where plaintiff is located" was overly broad and not authorized by the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, and because defendant did not provide a sufficient factual basis for his guilty plea and conviction.

Status Conferences

- State v. Brito, 345 N.J. Super. 228 (App. Div. 2001)

Defendant was charged with contempt for violating a FRO. The trial judge dismissed the complaint when complainant failed to appear at the status conference. The dismissal was reversed on the basis that the complaint could not be dismissed for failure of the State's witness (the alleged victim) to appear for a routine status conference even though the notice provided by the court indicated that it would be so dismissed.

TRO violations

- State v. Sanders, 327 N.J. Super. 385 (App. Div. 2000)

Defendant's contempt conviction for violating a TRO (which was later vacated after trial) was upheld. An order of the court must be obeyed unless and until a court acts to change or rescind it.

Transcript

- G.M. v. C.V., 453 N.J. Super. 1 (App. Div. 2018)

Defendant violated the no contact communication provision of the FRO by sitting near and briefly filming the victim at their child's soccer game. In his appeal of a contempt conviction under N.J.S.A. 2C:29-9(b), the Appellate Division held that while such conduct fell within the restraining order's prohibition on communication, the court concluded that defendant could not have fairly anticipated the interpretation. Therefore, in applying the doctrine of lenity, the court reversed defendant's conviction.

Weapons

- State v. Hemenway, 239 N.J. 111 (2019)

Warrants may only issue upon probable cause, and NJ's Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (PDVA) can still accomplish the protection of domestic violence victims without weakening fundamental constitutional guarantees. The PDVA empowers a judge to issue a TRO to protect a victim of domestic violence and to enter an order authorizing the police to search for and seize from the defendant's home, or any other place, weapons that may pose a threat to the victim. In this case, the Court considered whether the reasonable cause standard for the issuance of a domestic violence search warrant for weapons set forth in N.J.S.A. 2C:25-28(j) and a 2002 case is incompatible with the Fourth Amendment and Article I, Paragraph 7 of the New Jersey Constitution.

The Court held that the beneficent goal of protecting domestic violence victims must be accomplished while abiding by well-established constitutional norms. Before issuing a warrant to search for weapons under the PDVA, a court must find that there is (1) probable cause to believe that an act of domestic violence has been committed by the defendant; (2) probable cause to believe that a search for and seizure of weapons is necessary to protect the life, health or well-being of a victim on whose behalf the relief is sought; and (3) probable cause to believe that the weapons are located in the place to be searched. Transposed into the context of a domestic violence search warrant for weapons, probable cause requires that the issuing court only have a well-grounded suspicion.

- State v. W.C., 468 N.J. Super. 324 (App Div. 2021)

The Appellate Panel found that the lower court properly denied the State's motion for forfeiture of defendant's weapons, initially seized pursuant to a domestic violence TRO entered in response to a complaint filed by his wife, pursuant to the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, because the State's reliance on N.J.S.A. § 2C:25-29(b) as the basis for defendant's alleged disability under N.J.S.A. § 2C:58-3(c)(6) was not supported by the evidence as the lower court determined the FRO was entered in error and vacated the FRO as a result.

- State v. Cassidy, 179 N.J. 150 (2004)

Even if a TRO or FRO fails to meet the “technical and substantive requirements for a restraining order” and therefore is “an invalid order . . . the order nonetheless has legal effect until vacated”.

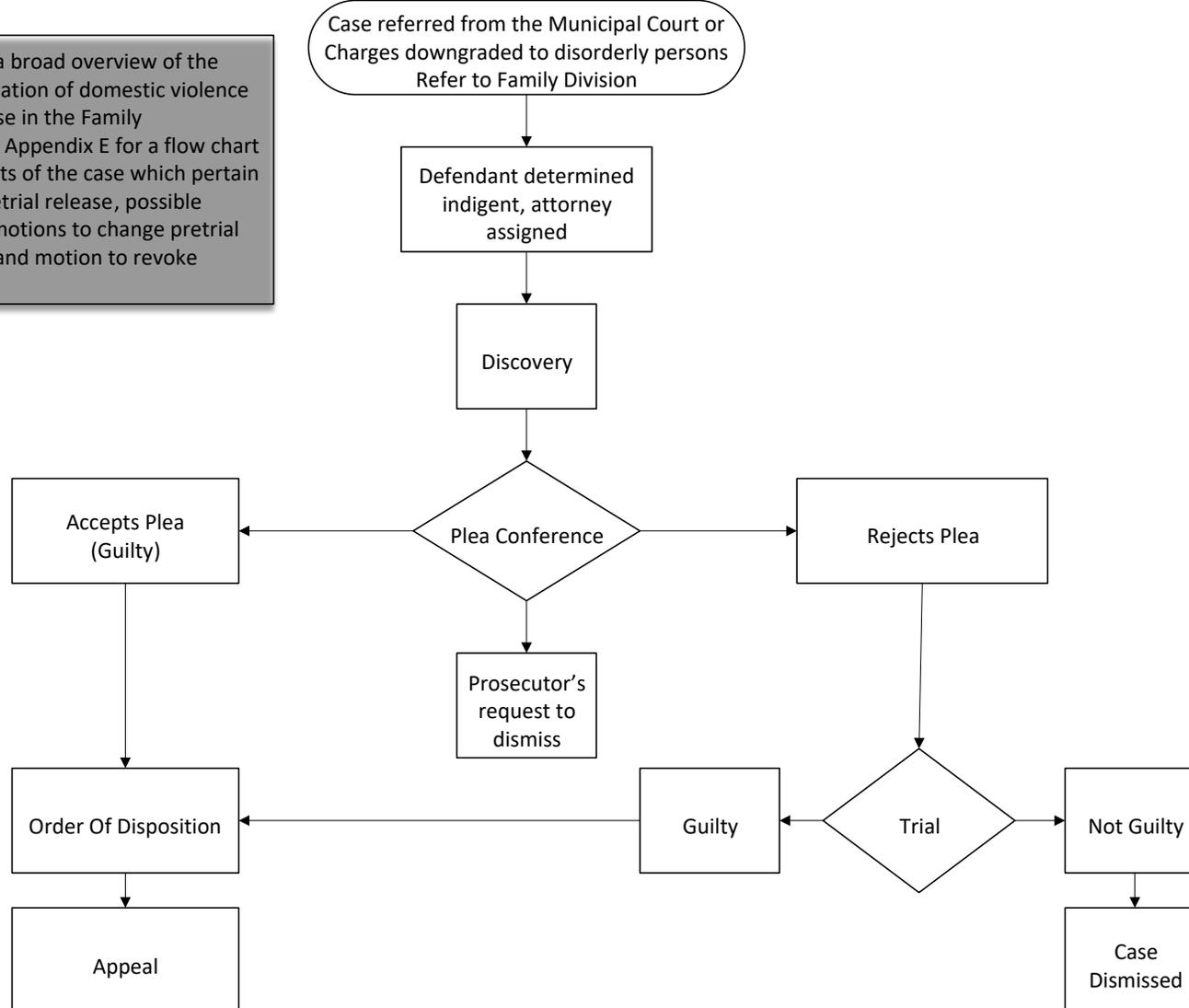
30-day sentence for second contempt conviction

- State v. Bowser, 272 N.J. Super. 582 (Law Div. 1993)

Mandatory 30-day sentence for contempt does not apply to a defendant who is convicted simultaneously on multiple contempt charges that occur on separate occasions.

APPENDIX A FAMILY DIVISION DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CONTEMPT CASE FLOW

This chart provides a broad overview of the progression of a violation of domestic violence restraining order case in the Family Division. Please see Appendix E for a flow chart of the pretrial aspects of the case which pertain to: conditions of pretrial release, possible pretrial detention, motions to change pretrial release conditions, and motion to revoke pretrial release.



**APPENDIX B
SAMPLE DISCOVERY LETTER**

October 23, 2017

SAMPLE

Kim Fawn, County Prosecutor
Basin County/Prosecutor's Office
123 Nowhere Road
Holiday, New Jersey 88888

RE: State vs. Jane Doe
Complaint No. W2017-0000
N.J.S.A. 2C:29-9

Dear Ms. Fawn:

I have been appointed by the Court to represent the interests of Jane Doe with regard to the above-captioned matter in Family Court. Demand is hereby made for any and all discoverable material available related to this matter.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation.

Very truly yours,

LAW OFFICE
JOHN DOE

JD:db cc: Family Court Criminal Case
Management

*The included sample letter is to be used as a guide or example and must be adjusted to suit your client's needs. The New Jersey Judiciary is providing this letter as an informational item and disclaims any and all responsibility or liability that may be asserted or claimed arising from, or claimed to have arisen from, reliance upon the use of this sample letter by any person.

APPENDIX C LINKS TO HELPFUL RESOURCES

Domestic Violence Procedures Manual: [New Jersey Domestic Violence Procedures Manual \(njcourts.gov\)](https://www.njcourts.gov/domestic-violence-procedures-manual/)

Vicinage Family Division Website and Contact Information [Directory of Superior Court Family Division Offices | NJ Courts](https://www.njcourts.gov/directory-of-superior-court-family-division-offices/)

Vicinage Criminal Division Website and Contact Information [Criminal Division Manager Conference Contact List | NJ Courts](https://www.njcourts.gov/criminal-division-manager-conference-contact-list/)

New Jersey Judiciary Domestic Violence Page

This includes N.J.S.A. 2C:25-17 et seq. and the New Jersey Domestic Violence Procedures Manual. [Domestic Violence | NJ Courts](https://www.njcourts.gov/domestic-violence/)

The New Jersey Pretrial Justice Manual

Created by the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey and the New Jersey Office of the Public Defender - guidance on representing clients under the Criminal Justice Reform law. https://www.nacdl.org/NJPretrial_Release/

Instructions on Filing in the Judiciary's Appellate Division (if you are given a case at the appellate level)

This includes explanation, links, and forms for mandatory eFiling, as well as discussion of the standard of review.

[Appellate Division | NJ Courts](https://www.njcourts.gov/appellate-division/)

APPENDIX D

OVERVIEW OF ROUTES THROUGH THE PRETRIAL JUSTICE SYSTEM FOR A DEFENDANT CHARGED WITH A DISORDERLY PERSONS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENSE

This section provides information on the criminal justice processes your client may have been subject to pretrial - after a complaint has been issued against him/her for the domestic violence contempt charge.

The Criminal Justice Reform Act (CJRA) N.J.S.A. 2A:162-15 et seq., went into effect on January 1, 2017, and profoundly changed the criminal justice system relating to pretrial release. In the past, the system was heavily reliant upon monetary bail. CJRA provides judges the authority to release defendants on their own recognizance or with certain non-monetary conditions, such as GPS monitoring and reporting to Pretrial Services. While monetary bail is disfavored, it can still be ordered. N.J.S.A. 2A:162-15. Judges also, in certain circumstances, have the “authority to detain defendants prior to trial if they present a serious risk of danger, flight, or obstruction.” State v. Robinson, 229 N.J. 44, 55 (2017).

A. Overview of the Path through the Criminal Justice System

When a defendant is arrested on a domestic violence contempt charge(s), the defendant will either be issued a complaint-summons or a complaint-warrant. R. 3:3-1. This decision will be made at the time of the arrest before you have been appointed. This information is provided as an overview so that you understand how your client moves through the justice system.

If the defendant is issued a complaint-summons, the defendant will be released on his or her own recognizance. Ibid. If the defendant is issued a complaint-warrant, the defendant will be transported to the county jail and temporarily detained for the Pretrial Services Unit (a part of the Judiciary) to prepare a risk assessment with recommendations on conditions of release. R. 3:26-1.

B. Centralized First Appearance Court – Conditions of Pretrial Release

For defendants charged on a disorderly persons offense on a warrant, the defendant must appear at a Centralized Judicial Processing (CJP)/Centralized First Appearance court event where the judge will make a decision on pretrial release conditions for the defendant. R. 3:26-1. This CJP first appearance must occur no later than 48 hours after the defendant’s commitment to county jail. Ibid.

The State Office of the Public Defender has agreed to represent indigent defendants at CJP pretrial release hearings. As such, *pro bono* attorneys are not involved at this stage of the case. The court must consider the Pretrial Services Program’s risk assessment and recommendations on conditions of release before making any pretrial release decision. R. 3:26-1(a). The Public Safety Assessment (PSA) is an automatic tool that considers three pretrial risk indicators: a six-point failure to appear (FTA) scale, a six-point new criminal activity (NCA) scale and a new violent criminal activity (NCVA) flag.

Once a risk assessment has been conducted, the statute requires a court to consider the assessment “and any information that may be provided by a prosecutor or the . . . defendant” in reaching its

decision regarding whether the defendant should be detained or released and, if released, on what conditions. N.J.S.A. 2A:162-16. The statute provides a hierarchy for making such decisions, favoring release on the least restrictive conditions that “in the judgment of the court, will reasonably assure their presence in court when required, the protection of the safety of any other person or the community, and that the defendant will not obstruct or attempt to obstruct the criminal justice process.” Many defendants are released on their own recognizance or on a combination of nonmonetary conditions. R. 3:26-1(a). The court may detain a defendant without bail, upon a motion of the prosecutor and after a hearing.

If you have any questions about interpreting the Public Safety Assessment, please contact the Criminal Division Managers’ Office and request to speak to the Pretrial Services Unit, Assistant Division Manager. Contact information is found in Appendix D, ‘Links to Helpful Resources’.

C. Pretrial Detention

At the motion of the prosecutor, the court may hold a hearing to determine whether the defendant should be detained while awaiting the disposition of his or her case. R. 3:4A. This hearing will be held in Superior Court, Criminal Part. The State Public Defender has agreed to represent these defendants at the detention hearings when they occur shortly after the CJP pretrial release hearing. Therefore, *pro bono* attorneys are not involved at this stage in the case. The information in this section is provided so that you will have an overview of what has occurred regarding your client’s path through the criminal justice system.

At a detention hearing, the court shall determine whether any amount of monetary bail or nonmonetary conditions or combination of monetary bail and conditions, including those set forth in N.J.S.A. 2A:162-17(b), “will reasonably assure the eligible defendant's appearance in court when required, the protection of the safety of any other person or the community, and that the eligible defendant will not obstruct or attempt to obstruct the criminal justice process.” N.J.S.A. 2A:162-19(c). See R. 3:4A. The Rules of Evidence do not apply, so hearsay is permitted. N.J.S.A. 2A:16219(e). The State is not compelled to call a live witness at the detention hearing to establish probable cause. State v. Ingram, 230 N.J. 190 (2017).

Rule 3:4(b)(5) states that the State must rebut the presumption of pretrial release by clear and convincing evidence. The State must first establish probable cause that the defendant committed the offense. Probable cause consists of a “well grounded” suspicion that an offense has been committed. There is a rebuttable presumption against detention. N.J.S.A. 2A:162-8(b). “[T]he State must rebut the presumption that some amount of monetary bail, non-monetary conditions, or a combination thereof would reasonably assure (1) the defendant's appearance in court when required, (2) the protection of the safety of any other person or the community, and (3) that the defendant will not obstruct or attempt to obstruct the criminal justice process. State v. C.W., 449 N.J. Super. 231, 249 (App. Div. 2017). The information to be considered by the court at a detention hearing is delineated in N.J.S.A. 2A:162-20. See State v. C.W., *supra*.

If the judge determines that the defendant should be detained, they will be returned to county jail.⁷

⁷ If the defendant is detained, they may not be incarcerated for more than six months on the disorderly persons offense of contempt. R. 7:8-11. The defendant must be released but may be released with conditions.

The defendant may appeal the detention order; however, the State Office of the Public Defender has indicated that it will **not** represent an indigent defendant whose highest charge is a disorderly persons offense on an appeal to the Appellate Division. Therefore, the *pro bono* attorney will be required to step into the case for an appeal of a detention order (if appointment has not already occurred).

D. Appeal of Pretrial Detention Order

Under R. 2:9-13, a defendant who is ordered detained pretrial has **seven (7) days** from the entry of the court order to file a notice of appeal. If the notice of appeal is not filed within that timeframe, the defendant may file a motion to request permission to file the notice of appeal beyond the seven days provided by R. 2:9-13(b). The motion must be supported by a certification explaining the delay in filing and why leave to file as within time should be granted.⁸ The filing of an appeal of a Detention Order does not stay the case, *i.e.*, the case continues in the appropriate division, unless so ordered by the Appellate Division. R. 2:9-13(f).

As a result, if your *pro bono* case involves a defendant who has been ordered detained – the first obligation you will likely have is to immediately contact your client and ascertain whether they seek to appeal the detention order. Time is of the essence because of the short deadline for submission of a notice to appeal. R. 2:9-13. The Appellate Division requires that appeals be filed electronically. Detailed instructions on eFiling and the filing of appeals from detention motions are found on the Judiciary’s public website on the Appellate Court webpage: <https://www.njcourts.gov/courts/appellate#toc-forms-and-filing-information>.

Link to Appellate forms: <https://www.njcourts.gov/courts/appellate#toc-forms-and-filing-information>

E. Possible Changes in Conditions of Release

If your client has been released on conditions, those conditions may be subject to change. Part III of the Rules of Court provides guidance on review of conditions in the criminal arena.

Rule 3:26-2(c) provides that the court may review the conditions of pretrial release set pursuant to R. 3:26-1 on its own motion, or upon motion by the prosecutor or the defendant alleging that there has been a material change in circumstance that justifies a change in conditions. Any review of conditions pursuant to this rule shall be decided within 30 days of the filing of the motion. Upon a finding that there has been a material change in circumstance, the judge may set new conditions of release but may not order the defendant detained except as provided in R. 3:4A.

Some examples of scenarios which may give rise to a motion for change in conditions of release might include (on defendant’s side) a new job with a new schedule that may impact existing electronic

⁸ Attorneys assigned pursuant to Madden v. Delran to represent defendants on appeal who are detained pretrial on disorderly persons offenses involving domestic violence matters have seven (7) days from the entry of the pretrial detention order to file an appeal. The Appellate Division has provided that in the event that deadline is missed, assigned attorneys for these defendants are advised that in the absence of objections, motions to file a notice of appeal as within time, filed within 21 days of entry of the pretrial detention order and simultaneously with the notice of appeal, will be granted.

monitoring restrictions, or (on the State's side) information that the defendant has not reported to Pretrial Services as required or has contacted a person whom they are prohibited from contacting.

When the prosecutor makes a motion for revocation of release, it will most often be heard at a 'violation of monitoring' hearing. At such a hearing, the defendant has the right to be represented by counsel, to be provided with all available discovery, afforded the right to testify, to present witnesses, to cross-examine witnesses who appear at the hearing and to present information by proffer or otherwise. R. 3:26-2(d).

You will be responsible for representing the defendant at the violation of monitoring hearing or any reconsideration of conditions of release hearing. R. 3:26-2(d).

At a violation of monitoring hearing the court, upon a finding, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the defendant while on release violated a restraining order or condition of release, or upon a finding of probable cause to believe that the defendant has committed a new crime while on release, may revoke the defendant's release and order that the defendant be detained pending trial. Ibid. In making such a determination, the court considers all relevant circumstances including but not limited to the nature and seriousness of the violation or criminal act committed. Ibid. In order to revoke defendant's release, the court must find by clear and convincing evidence that no monetary bail, non-monetary conditions of release or combination of monetary bail and conditions would reasonably assure the defendant's appearance in court when required, the protection of the safety of any other person or the community, or that the defendant will not obstruct or attempt to obstruct the criminal justice process. Ibid.; N.J.S.A. 2A:162-24.

The defendant may appeal either an initial order of detention or a later revocation of release – these appeals are heard in the Appellate Division. R. 2:9-13. The *pro bono* Madden attorney is responsible for representing the defendant in any appeal of a pretrial order of detention.

Note: shaded boxes—court events at which pro bono Madden attorneys required to be involved **Overview of Routes through the Pretrial Justice System for a Defendant Charged with a Disorderly Persons Domestic Violence Offense** Defendant allegedly engaged in conduct which constitutes a violation of a restraining order, giving rise to a charge of violating N.J.S.A.

Police officer requests and is granted **warrant** for defendant's arrest. After arrest, defendant follows any one (or more) of pretrial paths set forth below. Underlying case still progresses. Case ends with hearing on original charge (see box at bottom of page).

Police officer issues **summons** for defendant – defendant instructed to come to court to answer charges on certain date. See Appendix A for flow chart on progression of DV Family Court case.

Defendant arrested and taken to county jail where risk assessment run to inform conditions of release

Central Judicial Processing (CJP) / Centralized First Appearance (CFA) court event held within 48 hrs of arrest– judge determines conditions of release (e.g., stay away from alleged victim, house arrest)

You will get case - meet with your client

At (or before) CJP, prosecutor may make a motion for pretrial detention of defendant – this motion heard in Superior Court Criminal.

Defendant released & complies with conditions. Next step - handling of original charge -violation of restraining order- in **Superior Court Family Part** (see box at bottom)

Defendant released and fails to comply with conditions (e.g., commits new offense, contacts victim when told not to).

Defendant may want conditions changed (e.g., modify electronic monitoring). Makes motion before **Family Part Judge** **You must represent defendant**

Detention hearing in Superior Court Criminal Division. State Public Defender will represent defendant.

'Violation of Monitoring' hearing may be held in Superior Court **Family Part**. It can occur at same time as hearing on underlying contempt charge – but not always. **(You must represent defendant)**

Be aware: while issues of pretrial conditions and detention are addressed – the case on the original charge continues to progress

Defendant ordered detained. Can appeal. You must represent defendant on appeal.

Defendant not ordered detained. Must be released; potentially on stricter conditions.

At violation of monitoring hearing - defendant may be released- potentially on stricter conditions.

At violation of monitoring hearing, prosecutor may make motion for revocation of pretrial release.

Defendant's appeal of detention order to Appellate Division – **(You must represent defendant)**

Revocation of release hearing - Superior Court (prosecutor wants defendant detained). **(You must represent defendant)**

Be aware: conclusion of underlying case makes pretrial issues of release/detention, etc. moot

Motion denied – defendant released, potentially on stricter conditions.

Motion granted– defendant detained pretrial. Defendant can appeal – Appellate Div.

Defendant's appeal of detention order to Appellate Div. – **(You must represent defendant)**

*Be aware: you are **not** responsible for the appeal of case – but must file notice of appeal if requested and file application to be relieved as counsel*

Hearing in Superior Court Family Division for ORIGINAL CHARGE - violation of restraining order - N.J.S.A. 2C:29-9(b). (You must represent defendant)
See Appendix A for flow chart on progression of DV Family Court case.

APPENDIX E FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. My client is incarcerated. How do I arrange to meet with him or her at the jail or prison and who is responsible for making sure my client is brought to court?

New Jersey has three (3) types of facilities: Federal prisons, state prisons and county jails. You will need to call the facility and ask for the Warden's Office. For county jails, the Sheriff's Department may also be of help in arranging visits or calls. There will be someone assigned in the administration to assist in communication with prisoners. Depending on the type of facility, you may be able to arrange to have phone or videoconferences with your client. Make sure you are on time for scheduled calls, as the facilities cannot accommodate late starts or time overruns.

The facility will give you an address at which to send documents to your client. You will want to ask for your client's identification number and use that on all written communication. Be prepared for delays as mail goes through inspection and may be delayed in getting to the inmate.

For court appearances, provide the facility information to your judge's staff. They will be able to arrange for your client to appear by videoconference for most appearances. You may find other helpful information at:

www.state.nj.us/corrections

<https://www.nj.gov/corrections/pages/OffenderInformation.html>

<http://www.njcjwa.org/jails.html>

2. My client does not speak English. How do I arrange for an interpreter at conferences (either at my office, on the phone or at the county jail) with my client and who pays for it?

The Judiciary's language access policy is set forth in Directive #21-23, which can be found on the Judiciary's website at the following link: [Directive #21-23 Updated New Jersey Judiciary Language Access Plan Supersedes Directive #10-22 \(njcourts.gov\)](#). The plan sets forth the following:

Standard 1.4.3:

R. 1:13-2(b) provides in pertinent part that "no attorney [assigned to represent a person by reason of poverty] shall be required to expend any personal funds in the prosecution of the cause." Accordingly, pro bono

attorney requiring interpreter services must use the Registry to select and hire an approved interpreter. The pro bono attorney or interpreting service shall submit a standard payment voucher to the vicinage Trial Court Administrator for payment of the fees for the interpreting services. Staff interpreters are not permitted to provide interpreting services during case preparation, and as such may not be assigned to assist the pro bono attorney prior to any court related event. Except for the use of interpreters, at the court's discretion, to interpret brief attorney-client communications immediately before, during or after court proceedings, as forth in 1.2.1 above, interpreters who provide interpreting services during case preparation, should not, wherever practicable, interpret in court-related proceedings involving the case.

3. My client appears unstable or incompetent. How do I arrange to have him or her assessed? Who pays for the assessment?

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2C:4-4, no person who lacks capacity to understand the proceedings against him/her or who cannot assist in their own defense shall be tried, convicted, or sentenced for the commission of an offense as long as the incapacity is present. If there is reason to doubt the defendant's ability to proceed, the prosecutor, defense counsel or the court on its own motion, may seek to appoint a qualified psychiatrist or licensed psychologist to examine and report upon the mental condition of the defendant. N.J.S.A. 2C:4-5. The findings of this evaluation may determine the disposition of the charges. See N.J.S.A. 2C:4-6.

4. My client wants the parties' minor child to testify. Are there special procedures I need to follow?

The general rule is that every person is qualified to testify, as long as they are competent to do so.

State v. R.W., 104 N.J. 14, 19 (1986); State v. Walker, 325 N.J. Super 35, 40 (App. Div. 1999). These tests do not change when assessing a juvenile. State v. R.W., supra, 104 N.J. at 20. As always, whether to permit a particular person to testify is within the discretion of the trial court.

5. My client claims that he did not know about the underlying restraining order. What is the process for filing motions in a contempt case?

As with all motions, the motion must be in writing and must comply with R. 5:5-4(d), Motions in Family Actions.

- 6. I never handled a domestic violence case, or for that matter, any family-related matter. I exclusively practice real estate law. Can I be excused from the assignment? If I can't be excused, can I at least arrange for a colleague, my law associate or partner to represent the defendant on my behalf?**

Lack of familiarity with the subject matter is generally not a reason to be relieved of a *pro bono* assignment. Any request to be excused from the assignment should be presented to the Assignment Judge. You are permitted to reach out for assistance in the completion of the assignment to other attorneys – you will still get credit for completion of the assignment. However, you remain responsible for the representation of your client. Please review the *pro bono* information page on the Judiciary's public website for information about *pro bono* assignments, found here: [Pro Bono | NJ Courts](#)

- 7. My client alleges the complaint is frivolous. The victim initiated the contact. Can my client file a cross-complaint or seek recovery against the victim?**

A victim, or plaintiff, in a restraining order is not prohibited from anything pursuant to that restraining order. Therefore, a victim can never violate a restraining order. Restraining orders only ever enjoin defendants.

- 8. I was appointed to represent the defendant on a contempt charge, but the prosecutor also charged the defendant with a criminal offense in connection with the contempt. Do I have to handle that charge as well?**

If the defendant is being prosecuted in municipal court for a related disorderly persons offense, such as simple assault, the *pro bono* attorney is not responsible for representing the defendant in that matter. The municipal public defender will represent the indigent defendant in municipal court.

- 9. What is Criminal Justice Reform, and does it apply to my client?**

Please see the Appendix E of this manual discussing the role of Criminal Justice Reform and your client's case.

- 10. My client and I disagree on whether they should accept the plea offered by the prosecutor. Since there is a breakdown of communication, can I be relieved of my assignment?**

A difference in strategy would not necessarily constitute a reason to be relieved from an assignment. Counsel should explain various litigation options to the client, and to guide him or her appropriately. In extreme instances, a difference in strategy may be a reason to be relieved from an assignment. Counsel that wishes to pursue such a

withdrawal must adhere to the requirements put forth in R. 1:11-2, Withdrawal or Substitution, as guided by R.P.C. 1:16, Declining or Terminating Representation.

11. My client wants to appeal the judge’s decision. Am I responsible for filing the appeal and/or representing the defendant on appeal and, if so, where can I obtain information on how to file an appeal?

Rule 2:7-2(d) governs the extent of the *pro bono* attorney’s obligation on appeal. That rule provides:

Assigned counsel representing a defendant in a non-indictable prosecution shall file an appeal for a defendant who elects to exercise his or her right to appeal. An attorney filing a notice of appeal shall be deemed the attorney of record for the appeal unless the attorney files with the notice of appeal an application for the assignment of counsel on appeal.

Should you choose to continue with representation on appeal – or, if you are initially assigned an appeal by the *pro bono* coordinator – information on the mandatory electronic filing in the Appellate Division (including step-by-step instructions and videos) can be found on the Appellate Division homepage, located here:

<https://www.njcourts.gov/courts/appellate>

12. How do I handle expenditures or expenses on behalf of my client (e.g., cost for experts, transcripts, etc.)?

Rule 1:13-2(b) provides in relevant part that “no attorney assigned to represent a person by reason of poverty... shall be required to expend any personal funds in the prosecution of the cause.” Several cases have discussed the payment of litigation related expenses where the litigant is indigent. See In the Matter of Cannady, 126 N.J. 486 (1991) (regarding payment for ancillary defense costs in criminal matters). Rule 2:5-3(d) provides in relevant part that “if the appellant is indigent and is entitled to have a transcript of the proceedings below furnished without charge for use on appeal, either the trial or the appellate court, on application, may order the transcript prepared at public expense.”

13. Why is my client wearing an electronic ankle bracelet and what does it mean?

A judge released your client from jail and imposed a condition of release, home detention with an electronic ankle bracelet. In addition, there is a zone around the victim and your client is not permitted to enter it.