



EXPLAINER: More NWT residents are now eligible for Emergency Protection Orders

The Government of the Northwest Territories has updated the *Protection Against Family Violence Act*, which legislates Emergency Protection Orders in the territory. These updates mean that more NWT residents may now be eligible to apply for an Emergency Protection Order.

Emergency Protection Orders are short-term legal orders used to protect people in cases of family and/or intimate partner violence, particularly in situations where there is immediate danger. They involve a court hearing over the phone with a Justice of the Peace and are often granted within a matter of hours.

Emergency Protection Orders last for up to 90 days and can:

- Order the abusive person to stay away from the applicant and their children;
- Allow the applicant to stay in their home without the abusive person being there; and/or
- Require the RCMP to take away any weapons the abusive person may have, among other things.

The updated *Protection Against Family Violence Act* went into effect on July 17, 2026, with several significant changes. These include:

Stalking

Stalking within a family relationship, dating relationship, or care relationship is now accepted as grounds to seek an Emergency Protection Order. Stalking is understood as repeated behaviours that cause a person to reasonably fear for their safety, even when other forms of violence have not occurred. It can occur in-person, electronically (online), or indirectly through others. Examples of stalking include following a person, repeated direct or indirect communication, using electronic means to track or monitor a person, and repeated contact with family members or friends of the person, among other actions.

Expanded Relationship Categories

The updated *Protection Against Family Violence Act* also expands criteria around those eligible for an Emergency Protection Order. People in intimate (dating) relationships, regardless of whether they have lived together or not; family relationships by blood, marriage, or those considered as family; and care relationships where one person depends on the other due to disability, illness, or aging, can now apply for an Emergency Protection Order when they feel unsafe.

Application Process



If you are looking to apply for an Emergency Protection Order, you can call the YWCA NWT Alison McAteer House at **1-866-223-7775** any time of day or night. Trained staff will ask questions about your situation and why you feel you need emergency protection.

If your situation falls under the *Protection Against Family Violence Act*, staff will organize a telephone hearing with a Justice of the Peace. The Justice of the Peace decides if an Emergency Protection Order is approved, so they will want to hear about the situation as well. If the Emergency Protection Order is approved, the Order will be in effect after RCMP serves the respondent with a copy of the order.

It is important to note that Emergency Protection Orders are intended to provide short-term safety in cases of immediate danger; they are not meant to be long-lasting or permanent. If you require longer-term protection from an abusive person, there are options available, such as protection orders, peace bonds, restraining orders, and “no-contact” orders.

If you are experiencing violence and are looking for support, you can contact YWCA NWT’s 24/7 crisis line at **1-866-223-7775**. Staff can help you explore your options, apply for an Emergency Protection Order, discuss safety plans and longer-term orders, and provide referrals to other resources.