

**Chapter 50B.**  
**Domestic Violence.**

**§ 50B-1. Domestic violence; definition.**

(a) Domestic violence means the commission of one or more of the following acts upon an aggrieved party or upon a minor child residing with or in the custody of the aggrieved party by a person with whom the aggrieved party has or has had a personal relationship, but does not include acts of self-defense:

- (1) Attempting to cause bodily injury, or intentionally causing bodily injury; or
- (2) Placing the aggrieved party or a member of the aggrieved party's family or household in fear of imminent serious bodily injury or continued harassment, as defined in G.S. 14-277.3A, that rises to such a level as to inflict substantial emotional distress; or
- (3) Committing any act defined in G.S. 14-27.21 through G.S. 14-27.33.

(b) For purposes of this section, the term "personal relationship" means a relationship wherein the parties involved:

- (1) Are current or former spouses;
- (2) Are persons of opposite sex who live together or have lived together;
- (3) Are related as parents and children, including others acting in loco parentis to a minor child, or as grandparents and grandchildren. For purposes of this subdivision, an aggrieved party may not obtain an order of protection against a child or grandchild under the age of 16;
- (4) Have a child in common;
- (5) Are current or former household members;
- (6) Are persons of the opposite sex who are in a dating relationship or have been in a dating relationship. For purposes of this subdivision, a dating relationship is one wherein the parties are romantically involved over time and on a continuous basis during the course of the relationship. A casual acquaintance or ordinary fraternization between persons in a business or social context is not a dating relationship.

(c) As used in this Chapter, the term "protective order" includes any order entered pursuant to this Chapter upon hearing by the court or consent of the parties. (1979, c. 561, s. 1; 1985, c. 113, s. 1; 1987, c. 828; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 893, ss. 1, 3; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 591, s. 1; 1997-471, s. 1; 2001-518, s. 3; 2003-107, s. 1; 2009-58, s. 5; 2015-181, s. 36.)

**§ 50B-2. Institution of civil action; motion for emergency relief; temporary orders; temporary custody.**

(a) Any person residing in this State, or seeking relief for acts that have occurred in this State, may seek relief under this Chapter by filing a civil action or by filing a motion in any existing action filed under Chapter 50 of the General Statutes alleging acts of domestic violence against himself or herself or a minor child who resides with or is in the custody of such person. Any aggrieved party entitled to relief under this Chapter may file a civil action and proceed pro se, without the assistance of legal counsel. The district court division of the General Court of Justice shall have original jurisdiction over actions instituted under this Chapter. Any action for a domestic violence protective order requires that a summons be issued and served. The summons issued pursuant to this Chapter shall require the defendant to answer within 10 days of the date of service. Attachments to the summons shall include the complaint, notice of hearing, any temporary or ex

parte order that has been issued, and other papers filed. In compliance with the federal Violence Against Women Act, no court costs or attorneys' fees shall be assessed for the filing, issuance, registration, or service of a protective order or petition for a protective order or witness subpoena, except as provided in G.S. 1A-1, Rule 11.

(b) Emergency Relief. – A party may move the court for emergency relief if he or she believes there is a danger of serious and immediate injury to himself or herself or a minor child. A hearing on a motion for emergency relief, where no ex parte order is entered, shall be held after five days' notice of the hearing to the other party or after five days from the date of service of process on the other party, whichever occurs first, provided, however, that no hearing shall be required if the service of process is not completed on the other party. If the party is proceeding pro se and does not request an ex parte hearing, the clerk shall set a date for hearing and issue a notice of hearing within the time periods provided in this subsection, and shall effect service of the summons, complaint, notice, and other papers through the appropriate law enforcement agency where the defendant is to be served, if that agency is in North Carolina.

(c) Ex Parte Orders. –

- (1) Prior to the hearing, if it clearly appears to the court from specific facts shown, that there is a danger of acts of domestic violence against the aggrieved party or a minor child, the court may enter orders as it deems necessary to protect the aggrieved party or minor children from those acts.
- (2) A temporary order for custody ex parte and prior to service of process and notice shall not be entered unless the court finds that the child is exposed to a substantial risk of physical or emotional injury or sexual abuse.
- (3) If the court finds that the child is exposed to a substantial risk of physical or emotional injury or sexual abuse, upon request of the aggrieved party, the court shall consider and may order the other party to (i) stay away from a minor child, or (ii) return a minor child to, or not remove a minor child from, the physical care of a parent or person in loco parentis, if the court finds that the order is in the best interest of the minor child and is necessary for the safety of the minor child.
- (4) If the court determines that it is in the best interest of the minor child for the other party to have contact with the minor child or children, the court shall issue an order designed to protect the safety and well-being of the minor child and the aggrieved party. The order shall specify the terms of contact between the other party and the minor child and may include a specific schedule of time and location of exchange of the minor child, supervision by a third party or supervised visitation center, and any other conditions that will ensure both the well-being of the minor child and the aggrieved party.
- (5) Upon the issuance of an ex parte order under this subsection, a hearing shall be held within 10 days from the date of issuance of the order or within seven days from the date of service of process on the other party, whichever occurs later. A continuance shall be limited to one extension of no more than 10 days unless all parties consent or good cause is shown. The hearing shall have priority on the court calendar.
- (6) If an aggrieved party acting pro se requests ex parte relief, the clerk of superior court shall schedule an ex parte hearing with the district court division of the General Court of Justice within 72 hours of the filing for said relief, or by the

end of the next day on which the district court is in session in the county in which the action was filed, whichever shall first occur. If the district court is not in session in said county, the aggrieved party may contact the clerk of superior court in any other county within the same judicial district who shall schedule an ex parte hearing with the district court division of the General Court of Justice by the end of the next day on which said court division is in session in that county.

- (7) Upon the issuance of an ex parte order under this subsection, if the party is proceeding pro se, the Clerk shall set a date for hearing and issue a notice of hearing within the time periods provided in this subsection, and shall effect service of the summons, complaint, notice, order and other papers through the appropriate law enforcement agency where the defendant is to be served, if that agency is in North Carolina.

(c1) Ex Parte Orders by Authorized Magistrate. – The chief district court judge may authorize a magistrate or magistrates to hear any motions for emergency relief ex parte. Prior to the hearing, if the magistrate determines that at the time the party is seeking emergency relief ex parte the district court is not in session and a district court judge is not and will not be available to hear the motion for a period of four or more hours, the motion may be heard by the magistrate. When the office of the clerk is closed and a magistrate has been authorized under this section to hear a motion for emergency relief ex parte, an authorized magistrate shall accept for filing a complaint alleging domestic violence and motion for emergency relief ex parte, note thereon the filing date, and the magistrate shall issue a summons. Any endorsement or alias and pluries summons pursuant to G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4(d) shall be issued by the clerk, assistant clerk, or deputy clerk of the court in the county in which the action is commenced. Any complaint and motion for emergency relief ex parte and any other documents accepted for filing under this section and any order entered by the magistrate shall be delivered to the clerk's office for processing as soon as that office is open for business. If it clearly appears to the magistrate from specific facts shown that there is a danger of acts of domestic violence against the aggrieved party or a minor child, the magistrate may enter orders as it deems necessary to protect the aggrieved party or minor children from those acts, except that a temporary order for custody ex parte and prior to service of process and notice shall not be entered unless the magistrate finds that the child is exposed to a substantial risk of physical or emotional injury or sexual abuse. If the magistrate finds that the child is exposed to a substantial risk of physical or emotional injury or sexual abuse, upon request of the aggrieved party, the magistrate shall consider and may order the other party to stay away from a minor child, or to return a minor child to, or not remove a minor child from, the physical care of a parent or person in loco parentis, if the magistrate finds that the order is in the best interest of the minor child and is necessary for the safety of the minor child. If the magistrate determines that it is in the best interest of the minor child for the other party to have contact with the minor child or children, the magistrate shall issue an order designed to protect the safety and well-being of the minor child and the aggrieved party. The order shall specify the terms of contact between the other party and the minor child and may include a specific schedule of time and location of exchange of the minor child, supervision by a third party or supervised visitation center, and any other conditions that will ensure both the well-being of the minor child and the aggrieved party. An ex parte order entered under this subsection shall expire and the magistrate shall schedule an ex parte hearing before a district court judge by the end of the next day on which the district court is in session in the county

in which the action was filed. Ex parte orders entered by the district court judge pursuant to this subsection shall be entered and scheduled in accordance with subsection (c) of this section.

(c2) The authority granted to authorized magistrates to award temporary child custody pursuant to subsection (c1) of this section and pursuant to G.S. 50B-3(a)(4) is granted subject to custody rules to be established by the supervising chief district judge of each judicial district.

(d) Pro Se Forms. – The clerk of superior court of each county shall provide to pro se complainants all forms that are necessary or appropriate to enable them to proceed pro se pursuant to this section. The clerk shall, whenever feasible, provide a private area for complainants to fill out forms and make inquiries. The clerk shall provide a supply of pro se forms to authorized magistrates who shall make the forms available to complainants seeking relief under subsection (c1) of this section.

(e) All documents filed, issued, registered, or served in an action under this Chapter relating to an ex parte, emergency, or permanent domestic violence protective order may be filed electronically. (1979, c. 561, s. 1; 1985, c. 113, ss. 2, 3; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 893, s. 2; 1989, c. 461, s. 1; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 4, s. 1; 1997-471, s. 2; 2001-518, s. 4; 2002-126, s. 29A.6(a); 2004-186, ss. 17.2, 19.1; 2009-342, s. 2; 2012-20, s. 1; 2013-390, s. 1; 2015-62, s. 3(b); 2021-47, s. 10(i); 2022-47, s. 4(a); 2025-54, s. 9(a); 2025-70, s. 6(a).)

### **§ 50B-3. Relief.**

(a) If the court, including magistrates as authorized under G.S. 50B-2(c1), finds that an act of domestic violence has occurred, the court shall grant a protective order restraining the defendant from further acts of domestic violence. A protective order may include any of the following types of relief:

- (1) Direct a party to refrain from such acts.
- (2) Grant to a party possession of the residence or household of the parties and exclude the other party from the residence or household.
- (3) Require a party to provide a spouse and his or her children suitable alternate housing.
- (4) Award temporary custody of minor children and establish temporary visitation rights pursuant to G.S. 50B-2 if the order is granted ex parte, and pursuant to subsection (a1) of this section if the order is granted after notice or service of process.
- (5) Order the eviction of a party from the residence or household and assistance to the victim in returning to it.
- (6) Order either party to make payments for the support of a minor child as required by law.
- (7) Order either party to make payments for the support of a spouse as required by law.
- (8) Provide for possession of personal property of the parties, including the care, custody, and control of any animal owned, possessed, kept, or held as a pet by either party or minor child residing in the household.
- (9) Order a party to refrain from doing any or all of the following:
  - a. Threatening, abusing, or following the other party.
  - b. Harassing the other party, including by telephone, visiting the home or workplace, or other means.

- b1. Cruelly treating or abusing an animal owned, possessed, kept, or held as a pet by either party or minor child residing in the household.
    - c. Otherwise interfering with the other party.
  - (10) Award attorney's fees to either party.
  - (11) Prohibit a party from purchasing a firearm for a time fixed in the order.
  - (12) Order any party the court finds is responsible for acts of domestic violence to attend and complete an abuser treatment program if the program is approved by the Domestic Violence Commission.
  - (13) Include any additional prohibitions or requirements the court deems necessary to protect any party or any minor child.
- (a1) Upon the request of either party at a hearing after notice or service of process, the court shall consider and may award temporary custody of minor children and establish temporary visitation rights as follows:
  - (1) In awarding custody or visitation rights, the court shall base its decision on the best interest of the minor child with particular consideration given to the safety of the minor child.
  - (2) For purposes of determining custody and visitation issues, the court shall consider:
    - a. Whether the minor child was exposed to a substantial risk of physical or emotional injury or sexual abuse.
    - b. Whether the minor child was present during acts of domestic violence.
    - c. Whether a weapon was used or threatened to be used during any act of domestic violence.
    - d. Whether a party caused or attempted to cause serious bodily injury to the aggrieved party or the minor child.
    - e. Whether a party placed the aggrieved party or the minor child in reasonable fear of imminent serious bodily injury.
    - f. Whether a party caused an aggrieved party to engage involuntarily in sexual relations by force, threat, or duress.
    - g. Whether there is a pattern of abuse against an aggrieved party or the minor child.
    - h. Whether a party has abused or endangered the minor child during visitation.
    - i. Whether a party has used visitation as an opportunity to abuse or harass the aggrieved party.
    - j. Whether a party has improperly concealed or detained the minor child.
    - k. Whether a party has otherwise acted in a manner that is not in the best interest of the minor child.
  - (3) If the court awards custody, the court shall also consider whether visitation is in the best interest of the minor child. If ordering visitation, the court shall provide for the safety and well-being of the minor child and the safety of the aggrieved party. The court may consider any of the following:
    - a. Ordering an exchange of the minor child to occur in a protected setting or in the presence of an appropriate third party.
    - b. Ordering visitation supervised by an appropriate third party, or at a supervised visitation center or other approved agency.

- c. Ordering the noncustodial parent to attend and complete, to the satisfaction of the court, an abuser treatment program as a condition of visitation.
- d. Ordering either or both parents to abstain from possession or consumption of alcohol or controlled substances during the visitation or for 24 hours preceding an exchange of the minor child.
- e. Ordering the noncustodial parent to pay the costs of supervised visitation.
- f. Prohibiting overnight visitation.
- g. Requiring a bond from the noncustodial parent for the return and safety of the minor child.
- h. Ordering an investigation or appointment of a guardian ad litem or attorney for the minor child.
- i. Imposing any other condition that is deemed necessary to provide for the safety and well-being of the minor child and the safety of the aggrieved party.

If the court grants visitation, the order shall specify dates and times for the visitation to take place or other specific parameters or conditions that are appropriate. A person, supervised visitation center, or other agency may be approved to supervise visitation after appearing in court or filing an affidavit accepting that responsibility and acknowledging accountability to the court.

- (4) A temporary custody order entered pursuant to this Chapter shall be without prejudice and shall be for a fixed period of time not to exceed one year. Nothing in this section shall be construed to affect the right of the parties to a de novo hearing under Chapter 50 of the General Statutes.

(a2) If the court orders that the defendant attend an abuser treatment program pursuant to G.S. 50B-3(a)(12), the defendant shall begin regular attendance of the program within 60 days of the entry of the order. When ordering a defendant to attend an abuser treatment program, the court shall also specify a date and time for a review hearing with the court to assess whether the defendant has complied with that part of the order. The review hearing shall be held as soon as practicable after 60 days from the entry of the original order. The date of the review shall be set at the same time as the entry of the original order, and the clerk shall issue a Notice of Hearing for the compliance review to be given to the defendant and filed with the court on the same day as the entry of the order. If a defendant is not present in court at the time the order to attend an abuser treatment program is entered and the Notice of Hearing for review is filed, the clerk shall serve a copy of the Notice of Hearing together with the service of the order. The plaintiff may, but is not required to, attend the 60-day review hearing.

(a3) At any time prior to the 60-day review hearing set forth in subsection (a2) of this section, a defendant who is ordered to attend an abuser treatment program may present to the clerk a written statement from an abuser treatment program showing that the defendant has enrolled in and begun regular attendance in an abuser treatment program. Upon receipt of the written statement, the clerk shall remove the 60-day review hearing from the court docket, and the defendant shall not be required to appear for the 60-day review hearing. The clerk shall also notify the plaintiff that the defendant has complied with the order and that no 60-day review hearing will occur.

(b) Protective orders entered pursuant to this Chapter shall be for a fixed period of time not to exceed one year. The court may renew a protective order for a fixed period of time not to exceed two years, including an order that previously has been renewed, upon a motion by the aggrieved party filed before the expiration of the current order; provided, however, that a temporary award of custody entered as part of a protective order may not be renewed to extend a temporary award of custody beyond the maximum one-year period. The court may renew a protective order for good cause. If the hearing for a motion to renew a protective order is set on a date after which the current order will have expired, the court may temporarily renew the current order upon the ex parte application of the plaintiff for a fixed period of time not to extend beyond the date of the renewal hearing or 30 days from the date the current order is set to expire, whichever occurs first, absent the express written consent of both parties or their attorneys. This temporary renewal may not extend a temporary award of custody entered as part of a protective order beyond the maximum one-year period. If a temporary renewal is granted, and the defendant is not personally present in court, the order shall be served on the defendant in the same manner as an ex parte order issued pursuant to G.S. 50B-2. If a temporary renewal is granted, the Clerk shall provide a copy to the sheriff. The commission of an act as defined in G.S. 50B-1(a) by the defendant after entry of the current order is not required for an order to be renewed. Protective orders entered, including consent orders, shall not be mutual in nature except where both parties file a claim and the court makes detailed findings of fact indicating that both parties acted as aggressors, that neither party acted primarily in self-defense, and that the right of each party to due process is preserved. Protective orders entered pursuant to this Chapter expire at 11:59 P.M. on the indicated expiration date, unless specifically stated otherwise in the order.

(b1) A consent protective order may be entered pursuant to this Chapter without findings of fact and conclusions of law if the parties agree in writing that no findings of fact and conclusions of law will be included in the consent protective order. The consent protective order shall be valid and enforceable and shall have the same force and effect as a protective order entered with findings of fact and conclusions of law.

(b2) Upon the written request of either party at a hearing after notice or service of process, the court may modify any protective order entered pursuant to this Chapter after a finding of good cause.

(c) A copy of any order entered and filed under this Article shall be issued to each party. Law enforcement agencies shall accept receipt of copies of the order issued by the clerk of court by electronic or facsimile transmission for service on defendants. In addition, a copy of the order shall be issued promptly to and retained by the police department of the city of the victim's residence. If the victim does not reside in a city or resides in a city with no police department, copies shall be issued promptly to and retained by the sheriff, and the county police department, if any, of the county in which the victim resides. If the defendant is ordered to stay away from the child's school, a copy of the order shall be delivered promptly by the sheriff to the principal or, in the principal's absence, the assistant principal or the principal's designee of each school named in the order.

(c1) When a protective order issued under this Chapter is filed with the Clerk of Superior Court, the clerk shall provide to the applicant an informational sheet developed by the Administrative Office of the Courts that includes:

- (1) Domestic violence agencies and services.
- (2) Sexual assault agencies and services.
- (3) Victims' compensation services.
- (4) Legal aid services.

- (5) Address confidentiality services.
- (6) An explanation of the plaintiff's right to apply for a permit under G.S. 14-415.15.

(d) The sheriff of the county where a domestic violence order is entered shall provide for prompt entry of the order into the National Crime Information Center registry and shall provide for access of such orders to magistrates on a 24-hour-a-day basis. Modifications, terminations, renewals, and dismissals of the order shall also be promptly entered. (1979, c. 561, s. 1; 1985, c. 463; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 4, s. 2; 1995, c. 527, s. 1; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 591, s. 2; c. 742, s. 42.1; 1999-23, s. 1; 2000-125, s. 9; 2002-105, s. 2; 2002-126, s. 29A.6(b); 2003-107, s. 2; 2004-186, ss. 17.3-17.5; 2005-343, s. 2; 2005-423, s. 1; 2007-116, s. 3; 2009-425, s. 1; 2013-237, s. 1; 2015-176, s. 1; 2017-92, s. 2; 2019-168, ss. 1, 2(b); 2022-48, s. 1.)

### **§ 50B-3.1. Surrender and disposal of firearms; violations; exemptions.**

(a) Required Surrender of Firearms. – Upon issuance of an emergency or ex parte order pursuant to this Chapter, the court shall order the defendant to surrender to the sheriff all firearms, machine guns, ammunition, permits to purchase firearms, and permits to carry concealed firearms that are in the care, custody, possession, ownership, or control of the defendant if the court finds any of the following factors:

- (1) The use or threatened use of a deadly weapon by the defendant or a pattern of prior conduct involving the use or threatened use of violence with a firearm against persons.
- (2) Threats to seriously injure or kill the aggrieved party or minor child by the defendant.
- (3) Threats to commit suicide by the defendant.
- (4) Serious injuries inflicted upon the aggrieved party or minor child by the defendant.

(b) Ex Parte or Emergency Hearing. – The court shall inquire of the plaintiff, at the ex parte or emergency hearing, the presence of, ownership of, or otherwise access to firearms by the defendant, as well as ammunition, permits to purchase firearms, and permits to carry concealed firearms, and include, whenever possible, identifying information regarding the description, number, and location of firearms, ammunition, and permits in the order.

(c) Ten-Day Hearing. – The court, at the 10-day hearing, shall inquire of the defendant the presence of, ownership of, or otherwise access to firearms by the defendant, as well as ammunition, permits to purchase firearms, and permits to carry concealed firearms, and include, whenever possible, identifying information regarding the description, number, and location of firearms, ammunition, and permits in the order.

(d) Surrender. – Upon service of the order, the defendant shall immediately surrender to the sheriff possession of all firearms, machine guns, ammunition, permits to purchase firearms, and permits to carry concealed firearms that are in the care, custody, possession, ownership, or control of the defendant. In the event that weapons cannot be surrendered at the time the order is served, the defendant shall surrender the firearms, ammunitions, and permits to the sheriff within 24 hours of service at a time and place specified by the sheriff. The sheriff shall store the firearms or contract with a licensed firearms dealer to provide storage.

- (1) If the court orders the defendant to surrender firearms, ammunition, and permits, the court shall inform the plaintiff and the defendant of the terms of the protective order and include these terms on the face of the order, including that

the defendant is prohibited from possessing, purchasing, or receiving or attempting to possess, purchase, or receive a firearm for so long as the protective order or any successive protective order is in effect. The terms of the order shall include instructions as to how the defendant may request retrieval of any firearms, ammunition, and permits surrendered to the sheriff when the protective order is no longer in effect. The terms shall also include notice of the penalty for violation of G.S. 14-269.8.

- (2) The sheriff may charge the defendant a reasonable fee for the storage of any firearms and ammunition taken pursuant to a protective order. The fees are payable to the sheriff. The sheriff shall transmit the proceeds of these fees to the county finance officer. The fees shall be used by the sheriff to pay the costs of administering this section and for other law enforcement purposes. The county shall expend the restricted funds for these purposes only. The sheriff shall not release firearms, ammunition, or permits without a court order granting the release, unless release without a court order is authorized pursuant to subsection (e) of this section. The defendant must remit all fees owed prior to the authorized return of any firearms, ammunition, or permits. The sheriff shall not incur any civil or criminal liability for alleged damage or deterioration due to storage or transportation of any firearms or ammunition held pursuant to this section.

(e) Retrieval. – Unless the court finds that the defendant is precluded from owning or possessing a firearm pursuant to State or federal law or final disposition of any pending criminal charges committed against the person that is the subject of the current protective order, the defendant may retrieve any weapons surrendered to the sheriff without additional order of the court upon the occurrence of one of the following conditions:

- (1) The court does not enter a protective order when the ex parte or emergency order expires.
- (2) The protective order is denied by the court following a hearing.

Prior to release of any firearms to the defendant pursuant to this subsection, the sheriff shall verify through a criminal history check conducted through the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) that the defendant is not prohibited from possessing or receiving a firearm pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 922 or any State law and the defendant does not have any pending criminal charges committed against the person that is the subject of the current protective order or pending charges that, if convicted, would prohibit the defendant from possessing a firearm.

(f) Motion for Return by Defendant. – The defendant may request the return of any firearms, ammunition, or permits surrendered by filing a motion with the court at the expiration of the current order or final disposition of any pending criminal charges committed against the person that is the subject of the current protective order and not later than 90 days after the expiration of the current order or final disposition of any pending criminal charges committed against the person that is the subject of the current protective order. Upon receipt of the motion, the court shall schedule a hearing and provide written notice to the plaintiff who shall have the right to appear and be heard and to the sheriff who has control of the firearms, ammunition, or permits. The court shall determine whether the defendant is subject to any State or federal law or court order that precludes the defendant from owning or possessing a firearm. The inquiry shall include:

- (1) Whether the protective order has been renewed.

- (2) Whether the defendant is subject to any other protective orders.
- (3) Whether the defendant is disqualified from owning or possessing a firearm pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 922 or any State law.
- (4) Whether the defendant has any pending criminal charges, in either State or federal court, committed against the person that is the subject of the current protective order.

The court shall deny the return of firearms, ammunition, or permits if the court finds that the defendant is precluded from owning or possessing a firearm pursuant to State or federal law or if the defendant has any pending criminal charges, in either State or federal court, committed against the person that is the subject of the current protective order until the final disposition of those charges.

(g) Motion for Return by Third-Party Owner. – A third-party owner of firearms, ammunition, or permits who is otherwise eligible to possess such items may file a motion requesting the return to said third party of any such items in the possession of the sheriff seized as a result of the entry of a domestic violence protective order. The motion may be filed at any time following the seizure of the items by the sheriff prior to their disposal pursuant to subsection (h) of this section. Upon receipt of the third party's motion, the court shall schedule a hearing and provide written notice to all parties and the sheriff. The court shall order return of the items to the third party unless the court determines that the third party is disqualified from owning or possessing said items pursuant to State or federal law. If the court denies the return of said items to the third party, the items shall be disposed of by the sheriff as provided in subsection (h) of this section.

(h) Disposal of Firearms. – After notice to the defendant and all parties known or believed to have an ownership or possessory interest in the firearm, including any third-party owner, the sheriff who has control of the firearms, ammunition, or permits may apply to the court for an order of disposition of the firearms, ammunition, or permits under any of the following circumstances:

- (1) Both of the following criteria are met:
  - a. The defendant or third-party owner has not filed a motion requesting the return of any firearms, ammunition, or permits surrendered within 90 days after the expiration of the current order or final disposition of any pending criminal charges committed against the person that is the subject of the current protective order.
  - b. The defendant has not retrieved the firearms pursuant to subsection (e) of this section within 90 days after the expiration of the current order or final disposition of any pending criminal charges committed against the person that is the subject of the current protective order.
- (2) The court has determined that the defendant or third-party owner is precluded from regaining possession of any firearms, ammunition, or permits surrendered.
- (3) The defendant or third-party owner fails to remit all fees owed for the storage of the firearms or ammunition within 30 days of either (i) the entry of the order granting the return of the firearms, ammunition, or permits, or (ii) a request to retrieve the firearms, ammunition, or permits pursuant to subsection (e) of this section.

The judge, after a hearing, may order the disposition of the firearms, ammunition, or permits in one or more of the ways authorized by law, including subdivision (4), (4b), (5), or (6) of G.S. 14-269.1. If a sale by the sheriff does occur, any proceeds from the sale after deducting any costs associated with the

sale, and in accordance with all applicable State and federal law, shall be provided to the defendant or any known third-party owner if requested by the defendant or any known third-party owner by motion made before the hearing or at the hearing and if ordered by the judge.

(i) It is unlawful for any person subject to a protective order prohibiting the possession or purchase of firearms to:

- (1) Fail to surrender all firearms, ammunition, permits to purchase firearms, and permits to carry concealed firearms to the sheriff as ordered by the court;
- (2) Fail to disclose all information pertaining to the possession of firearms, ammunition, and permits to purchase and permits to carry concealed firearms as requested by the court; or
- (3) Provide false information to the court pertaining to any of these items.

(j) **Violations.** – In accordance with G.S. 14-269.8, it is unlawful for any person to possess, purchase, or receive or attempt to possess, purchase, or receive a firearm, as defined in G.S. 14-409.39(2), machine gun, ammunition, or permits to purchase or carry concealed firearms if ordered by the court for so long as that protective order or any successive protective order entered against that person pursuant to this Chapter is in effect. Any defendant violating the provisions of this section shall be guilty of a Class H felony.

(k) **Official Use Exemption.** – This section shall not prohibit law enforcement officers and members of any branch of the Armed Forces of the United States, not otherwise prohibited under federal law, from possessing or using firearms for official use only.

(l) Nothing in this section is intended to limit the discretion of the court in granting additional relief as provided in other sections of this Chapter. (2003-410, s. 1; 2004-203, s. 34(a); 2005-287, s. 4; 2005-423, ss. 2, 3; 2011-183, s. 40; 2011-268, ss. 23, 24; 2025-70, s. 20(a).)

#### **§ 50B-4. Enforcement of orders.**

(a) A party may file a motion for contempt for violation of any order entered pursuant to this Chapter. This party may file and proceed with that motion pro se, using forms provided by the clerk of superior court or a magistrate authorized under G.S. 50B-2(c1). Upon the filing pro se of a motion for contempt under this subsection, the clerk, or the authorized magistrate, if the facts show clearly that there is danger of acts of domestic violence against the aggrieved party or a minor child and the motion is made at a time when the clerk is not available, shall schedule and issue notice of a show cause hearing with the district court division of the General Court of Justice at the earliest possible date pursuant to G.S. 5A-23. The Clerk, or the magistrate in the case of notice issued by the magistrate pursuant to this subsection, shall effect service of the motion, notice, and other papers through the appropriate law enforcement agency where the defendant is to be served, if that agency is in North Carolina.

(b) Repealed by Session Laws 1999-23, s. 2, effective February 1, 2000.

(c) A valid protective order entered pursuant to this Chapter shall be enforced by all North Carolina law enforcement agencies without further order of the court.

(d) A valid protective order entered by the courts of another state or the courts of an Indian tribe shall be accorded full faith and credit by the courts of North Carolina whether or not the order has been registered and shall be enforced by the courts and the law enforcement agencies of North Carolina as if it were an order issued by a North Carolina court. In determining the validity of an out-of-state order for purposes of enforcement, a law enforcement officer may rely upon a copy of the protective order issued by another state or the courts of an Indian tribe that is provided to the

officer and on the statement of a person protected by the order that the order remains in effect. Even though registration is not required, a copy of a protective order may be registered in North Carolina by filing with the clerk of superior court in any county a copy of the order and an affidavit by a person protected by the order that to the best of that person's knowledge the order is presently in effect as written. Notice of the registration shall not be given to the defendant. Upon registration of the order, the clerk shall promptly forward a copy to the sheriff of that county. Unless the issuing state has already entered the order, the sheriff shall provide for prompt entry of the order into the National Crime Information Center registry pursuant to G.S. 50B-3(d).

(e) Upon application or motion by a party to the court, the court shall determine whether an out-of-state order remains in full force and effect.

(f) The term "valid protective order," as used in subsections (c) and (d) of this section, shall include an emergency or ex parte order entered under this Chapter.

(g) Notwithstanding the provisions of G.S. 1-294, a valid protective order entered pursuant to this Chapter which has been appealed to the appellate division is enforceable in the trial court during the pendency of the appeal. Upon motion by the aggrieved party, the court of the appellate division in which the appeal is pending may stay an order of the trial court until the appeal is decided, if justice so requires. (1979, c. 561, s. 1; 1985, c. 113, s. 4; 1987, c. 739, s. 6; 1989, c. 461, s. 2; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 4, s. 3; 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 591, s. 3; 1999-23, s. 2; 2002-126, s. 29A.6(c); 2003-107, s. 3; 2009-342, s. 4; 2017-92, s. 1; 2025-54, s. 9(b).)

#### **§ 50B-4.1. Violation of valid protective order.**

(a) Except as otherwise provided by law, a person who knowingly violates a valid protective order entered pursuant to this Chapter or who knowingly violates a valid protective order entered by the courts of another state or the courts of an Indian tribe shall be guilty of a Class A1 misdemeanor.

(b) A law enforcement officer shall arrest and take a person into custody, with or without a warrant or other process, if the officer has probable cause to believe that the person knowingly has violated a valid protective order excluding the person from the residence or household occupied by a victim of domestic violence or directing the person to refrain from doing any or all of the acts specified in G.S. 50B-3(a)(9).

(c) When a law enforcement officer makes an arrest under this section without a warrant, and the party arrested contests that the out-of-state order or the order issued by an Indian court remains in full force and effect, the party arrested shall be promptly provided with a copy of the information applicable to the party which appears on the National Crime Information Center registry by the sheriff of the county in which the arrest occurs.

(d) Unless covered under some other provision of law providing greater punishment, a person who commits a felony at a time when the person knows the behavior is prohibited by a valid protective order as provided in subsection (a) of this section shall be guilty of a felony one class higher than the principal felony described in the charging document. This subsection shall not apply to convictions of a Class A or B1 felony or to convictions of the offenses set forth in subsection (f) or subsection (g) of this section.

(e) An indictment or information that charges a person with committing felonious conduct as described in subsection (d) of this section shall also allege that the person knowingly violated a valid protective order as described in subsection (a) of this section in the course of the conduct constituting the underlying felony. In order for a person to be punished as described in subsection

(d) of this section, a finding shall be made that the person knowingly violated the protective order in the course of conduct constituting the underlying felony.

(f) Unless covered under some other provision of law providing greater punishment, any person who knowingly violates a valid protective order as provided in subsection (a) of this section, after having been previously convicted of two offenses under this Chapter, shall be guilty of a Class H felony.

(g) Unless covered under some other provision of law providing greater punishment, any person who, while in possession of a deadly weapon on or about his or her person or within close proximity to his or her person, knowingly violates a valid protective order as provided in subsection (a) of this section by failing to stay away from a place, or a person, as so directed under the terms of the order, shall be guilty of a Class H felony.

(g1) Unless covered under some other provision of law providing greater punishment, any person who is subject to a valid protective order, as provided in subsection (a) of this section, who enters property operated as a safe house or haven for victims of domestic violence, where a person protected under the order is residing, shall be guilty of a Class H felony. A person violates this subsection regardless of whether the person protected under the order is present on the property.

(h) For the purposes of this section, the term "valid protective order" shall include an emergency or ex parte order entered under this Chapter. (1997-471, s. 3; 1997-456, s. 27; 1999-23, s. 4; 2001-518, s. 5; 2007-190, s. 1; 2008-93, s. 1; 2009-342, s. 5; 2009-389, s. 2; 2010-5, s. 1; 2015-91, s. 3.)

#### **§ 50B-4.2. False statement regarding protective order a misdemeanor.**

A person who knowingly makes a false statement to a law enforcement agency or officer that a protective order entered pursuant to this Chapter or by the courts of another state or Indian tribe remains in effect shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor. (1999-23, s. 5.)

#### **§ 50B-5. Emergency assistance.**

(a) A person who alleges that he or she or a minor child has been the victim of domestic violence may request the assistance of a local law enforcement agency. The local law enforcement agency shall respond to the request for assistance as soon as practicable. The local law enforcement officer responding to the request for assistance may take whatever steps are reasonably necessary to protect the complainant from harm and may advise the complainant of sources of shelter, medical care, counseling and other services. Upon request by the complainant and where feasible, the law enforcement officer may transport the complainant to appropriate facilities such as hospitals, magistrates' offices, or public or private facilities for shelter and accompany the complainant to his or her residence, within the jurisdiction in which the request for assistance was made, so that the complainant may remove food, clothing, medication and such other personal property as is reasonably necessary to enable the complainant and any minor children who are presently in the care of the complainant to remain elsewhere pending further proceedings.

(b) In providing the assistance authorized by subsection (a), no officer may be held criminally or civilly liable on account of reasonable measures taken under authority of subsection (a). (1979, c. 561, s. 1; 1985, c. 113, s. 5; 1999-23, s. 6.)

#### **§ 50B-5.5. Employment discrimination unlawful.**

(a) No employer shall discharge, demote, deny a promotion, or discipline an employee because the employee took reasonable time off from work to obtain or attempt to obtain relief

under this Chapter. An employee who is absent from the workplace shall follow the employer's usual time-off policy or procedure, including advance notice to the employer, when required by the employer's usual procedures, unless an emergency prevents the employee from doing so. An employer may require documentation of any emergency that prevented the employee from complying in advance with the employer's usual time-off policy or procedure, or any other information available to the employee which supports the employee's reason for being absent from the workplace.

(b) The Commissioner of Labor shall enforce the provisions of this section according to Article 21 of Chapter 95 of the General Statutes, including the rules and regulations issued pursuant to the Article. (2004-186, s. 18.1.)

#### **§ 50B-6. Construction of Chapter.**

This Chapter shall not be construed as granting a status to any person for any purpose other than those expressly stated herein. This Chapter shall not be construed as relieving any person or institution of the duty to report to the department of social services, as required by G.S. 7B-301, if the person or institution has cause to suspect that a juvenile is abused or neglected. (1979, c. 561, s. 1; 1985, c. 113, s. 6; 1998-202, s. 13(r).)

#### **§ 50B-7. Remedies not exclusive.**

(a) The remedies provided by this Chapter are not exclusive but are additional to remedies provided under Chapter 50 and elsewhere in the General Statutes.

(b) Any subsequent court order entered supersedes similar provisions in protective orders issued pursuant to this Chapter. (1979, c. 561, s. 1; 2019-168, s. 2(a).)

#### **§ 50B-8. Effect upon prosecution for violation of § 14-184 or other offense against public morals.**

The granting of a protective order, prosecution for violation of this Chapter, or the granting of any other relief or the institution of any other enforcement proceedings under this Chapter shall not be construed to afford a defense to any person or persons charged with fornication and adultery under G.S. 14-184 or charged with any other offense against the public morals; and prosecution, conviction, or prosecution and conviction for violation of any provision of this Chapter shall not be a bar to prosecution for violation of G.S. 14-184 or of any other statute defining an offense or offenses against the public morals. (1979, c. 561, s. 1; 2003-107, s. 4.)

#### **§ 50B-9. Domestic Violence Center Fund.**

(a) The Domestic Violence Center Fund is established within the State Treasury. The fund shall be administered by the Department of Administration, North Carolina Council for Women and Youth Involvement, and shall be used to make grants to centers for victims of domestic violence and to The North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Incorporated. This fund shall be administered in accordance with the provisions of the State Budget Act. The Department of Administration shall make quarterly grants to each eligible domestic violence center and to The North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Incorporated. The Department of Administration shall send the contracts to grantees within 10 business days of the date the Current Operations Appropriations Act, as defined in G.S. 143C-1-1, is certified for that fiscal year.

(b) Each grant recipient shall receive the same amount. To be eligible to receive funds under this section, a domestic violence center must meet the following requirements:

- (1) It shall have been in operation on the preceding July 1 and shall continue to be in operation.
  - (2) It shall offer all of the following services: a hotline, transportation services, community education programs, daytime services, and call forwarding during the night and it shall fulfill other criteria established by the Department of Administration.
  - (3) It shall be a nonprofit corporation or a local governmental entity.
- (c) On or before September 1, the North Carolina Council for Women and Youth Involvement shall report on the quarterly distributions of grants from the Domestic Violence Center Fund for the current fiscal year and the prior fiscal year to the chairs of the House Appropriations Committee on General Government and the Senate Appropriations Committee on General Government and Information Technology and to the Fiscal Research Division. The report shall include the following:
- (1) Date, amount, and recipients of the fund disbursements.
  - (2) Eligible programs which are ineligible to receive funding during the relative reporting cycle as well as the reason of the ineligibility for that relative reporting cycle. (1991, c. 693, s. 3; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 988, s. 1; 2017-57, s. 31.2(a); 2021-180, s. 20.6(a); 2022-74, s. 20.1; 2023-134, s. 20.2(a).)