§ 154-b. Order of protection; answer and counter-claims; confidentiality of address. 1. In every proceeding under articles four, five, six and eight of this act in which an order of protection is requested, the respondent may file with the court an answer to the petition and a counter-claim. A counter-claim shall be heard in the same manner as a petition and may be heard on the return date of the petition, provided that the counter-claim is served on the petitioner no later than five days prior to the return date and said counter-claim and proof of service is filed with the court. The petitioner may file and serve a reply to the counter-claim. A denial of the allegations of the counter-claim shall be presumed if the petitioner does not file and serve a reply.

2. (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, in any proceeding under article four, five, five-b, six, eight or ten of this act, whether or not an order of protection or temporary order of protection is sought or has been sought in the past, the court may, upon its own motion or upon the motion of any party or the child's attorney, authorize any party or the child to keep his or her address confidential from any adverse party or the child, as appropriate, in any pleadings or other papers submitted to the court, where the court finds that disclosure of such address or other identifying information would pose an unreasonable risk to the health or safety of a party or the child. Pending such a finding, any address or other identifying information of the child or party seeking confidentiality shall be safeguarded and sealed in order to prevent its inadvertent or unauthorized use or disclosure.

(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, if a party and a child has resided or resides in a residential program for victims of domestic violence as defined in section four hundred fifty-nine-a of the social services law, the present address of such party and of the child and the address of the residential program for victims of domestic violence shall not be revealed.

(c) Upon such authorization, the court shall designate the clerk of the court or such other disinterested person as it deems appropriate, with consent of such disinterested person, as the agent for service of process for the party whose address is to remain confidential and shall notify the adverse party of such designation in writing. The clerk or

disinterested person designated by the court shall, when served with process on behalf of the party whose address is to remain confidential, promptly notify such party whose address is to remain confidential and forward such process to him or her.

(d) In any case in which such confidentiality authorization is made, the party whose address is to remain confidential shall inform the clerk of the court or disinterested person designated by the court of any change in address for purposes of receipt of service of process or any papers.