

Safety Plan for Victims of Domestic Violence

This safety plan is for domestic violence victims of any age who may be abused by, or afraid of their spouse or partner, boyfriend or girlfriend, adult child or their family member. Safety planning helps develop tools in advance of potentially dangerous situations. Choose only the suggestions listed here that make sense for your set of circumstances.

SAFETY DURING AN EXPLOSIVE INCIDENT

Go to an area that has an exit.

Not a bathroom (near hard surfaces), kitchen (knives), or near weapons.

Stay in a room with a phone.

Call 911, a friend or a neighbor, if possible. Inform them if there are weapons in the home.

Know your escape route.

Practice how to get out of your home safely. Visualize your escape route.

Have a packed bag ready.

Keep it hidden in a handy place in order to leave quickly, or leave the bag elsewhere if your abuser searches your home.

Devise a code word or signal.

Tell your children, grandchildren or neighbors so you can communicate to them that you need the police.

Know where you're going.

Plan where you will go if you have to leave home, even if you don't think you'll need to.

Trust your judgment.

Consider anything that you feel will keep you safe and give you time to figure out what to do next. Sometimes it is best to flee, sometimes to placate the abuser - anything that works to protect yourself and the children.

SAFETY WHEN PREPARING TO LEAVE

LEAVING CAN BE THE MOST DANGEROUS TIME!

Have a safe place to stay.

Make sure it is a place that can protect you and your children or grandchildren.

Call a domestic violence victim service program.

Find out which services and shelters are available as options if you need them. Keep their address and phone number close at hand at all times.

Find someone you trust.

Leave money, extra keys, copies of important documents and clothing with them in advance, so you can leave quickly, if necessary.

Open a savings account.

Put it in your name only, to increase your independence. Consider direct deposit from your paycheck or benefit check.

Contact your county aging unit.

If you are 60 or older, learn about eligibility for public and private benefits and services such as Social Security, pensions, housing, transportation and medical insurance.

Review your safety plan.

Study and check your plans as often as possible in order to know the safest way to leave your abuser.

Concerns about immigration status.

You may qualify under a law called the Violence Against Women Act. Talk to an immigration expert (not INS) or your local domestic violence victim services program for more information.

IF YOU NEED TO LEAVE, TAKE WITH YOU...

- Marriage and Driver's licenses
- Birth certificates - yours and family's
- Money, checkbooks, credit cards, ATM cards, mortgage payment book, car title
- Social Security card, work permit, green card, passport
- Divorce, custody papers and restraining order
- Insurance papers and medical records
- Lease, rental agreement and/or house deed
- School and health records
- Keys - house, car, office, friend's
- Medications, glasses, hearing aids, etc. needed by you and your family
- Personal items - address book, pictures, toys

SAFETY IN YOUR OWN HOME

(If your abuser does not live with you)

Upgrade your security system.

Change the locks on doors and windows as soon as possible. Consider a security service, window bars, better lighting, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.

Have a safety plan.

Teach your children or grandchildren how to call the police or someone they can trust. Have a secret code word that you and your children agree on - to communicate trouble and for the people who are allowed to pick the children up.

Change your phone number.

Screen your calls if you have an answering machine or caller ID. Save all messages with threats or that violate any orders. Contact your local phone company about getting an unpublished number.

Talk to neighbors and landlord.

Inform them that your abuser no longer lives with you and that they should call the police if they see the abuser near your home.

Get legal advice.

Find a lawyer knowledgeable about domestic violence to explore custody, visitation and divorce provisions that protect you and the children. Discuss getting a restraining order as an option. Your abuser may be mandated to a batterers' intervention program. Talk with the program to find out more about potential risks to you while your abuser participates. Additionally, contact your local domestic violence victim services program.

SAFETY AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Think positive. You don't deserve to be hit or threatened. Have positive thoughts about yourself and be assertive with others about your needs.

Read! Ask your local domestic violence victim services program and public library for materials that deal with domestic violence.

Get support. Call a domestic violence crisis help-line and/or attend a women's or victims support group for at least two weeks to gain support from others and learn more about yourself and the relationship with your abuser.

Do what is safe for you. If you have to communicate with your abuser, arrange to do so in the way that makes you feel safe whether by phone, mail or in the company of another person.

SAFETY AND YOUR CHILDREN

Tell schools and childcare. Let them know who has permission to pick up the child/ren and give them your code word. Discuss with them other special provisions to protect you and your child/ren. Provide a picture of the abuser if possible.

Exchange child/ren in a safe place. Find a safe place to exchange the child/ren for visitation. Some communities have specific locations just for this purpose. Contact your local domestic violence victim services program for more information.

SAFETY ON THE JOB

Tell somebody. Decide whom at work you will inform of your situation, especially if you have a Protection From Abuse Order (PFA). This may include office security if available. Provide a picture of the abuser if possible. It is your right to request and expect confidentiality from those you disclose to.

Screen your calls. Arrange to have someone screen and log your telephone calls if possible.

Make a safety plan. Create a safety plan for when you enter and leave your work place. Have someone escort you to your vehicle or other transportation.

If you and your abuser work at the same place, discuss with your supervisor your options regarding scheduling, safety precautions, employee/family benefits.

Contact your local domestic violence victim services program to receive additional information about workplace safety.

IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 911.

YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN DESERVE TO BE SAFE!