

# Creating a Safety Plan

## What is a Safety Plan?

A safety plan helps you reduce the risks of harm to you, your children or older people in your family might face as a result of family violence.

There is no right or wrong way to create a safety plan. Check off and fill in the things that work best for you. It is your safety plan and only you know what will make you safe. Review it often and make changes as you need to.

There is help for you to develop a safety plan if you need it. You can ask a social worker, victim services worker, family violence worker or some other person in the community you trust to work with you on this.

**Safety Plans will help you be as safe as you can be from future abuse. They are used by people who:**

- Want to leave, but it is not safe
- Are not sure about leaving, but need help in case there is violence
- Have left and the threat of violence is still there
- Want to be prepared uncase violence does occur

**Safety plans can help you:**

- Get help in an emergency
- Get away safely
- Keep children, older people and persons with disabilities safe
- Safely get your clothes, pets or other personal items

## **Personalized Safety Plan**

*I plan to take the following steps to increase my safety, the safety of my children and other people in my home in case there is a threat of violence. Although I don't have control over my (ex)partner's violence I do have a choice about how I respond and how to get myself, my children and other people in my family to safety.*

### **Step 1: Safety During a Violent Incident**

It isn't always possible to avoid violent incidents. In order to increase your safety, you may use a variety of strategies.

**I can use some or all of the following strategies:**

- If I decided to leave, I will \_\_\_\_\_. (Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes would you use?)
- I can keep my purse/wallet and car keys ready and put them \_\_\_\_\_ (An easy place to reach them in order to leave more quickly).
- I can tell \_\_\_\_\_ about the violence and ask that they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my home.
- I can tell \_\_\_\_\_ about the violence and ask that they call the police if they see \_\_\_\_\_ in the window (Have a knocked over plant or a piece of ribbon that only you and the people you trust know what it means).
- I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and fire department.
- I will use \_\_\_\_\_ as my code word with my children or my friends so they can call for help.
- If I have to leave my home, I will go to \_\_\_\_\_ (Decide this even if you don't think there will be a next time.)
- If I cannot go to the place above, then I can go to \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
- When I expect we are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as \_\_\_\_\_. (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, by the telephone, garage, kitchens, near weapons or in rooms without access to an outside door.)
- I will use my judgement, experience and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my partner whatever is necessary to maintain my own and my children's safety.
- I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

## **Step 2: Safety When Preparing to Leave.**

Leaving your home must be done carefully in order to increase safety. People who are violent often strike back when they believe that their partner is leaving a relationship.

### **I can use some or all of the following safety strategies:**

- I will leave money and an extra set of keys with \_\_\_\_\_ so I can leave quickly.
- I will keep copies of important documents and/or keys at \_\_\_\_\_.
- I will keep a small bag with a change of clothes, important medications, photos, toiletries, etc. at \_\_\_\_\_.
- I arranged with \_\_\_\_\_ to make a phone call from their house.
- I will open a savings account by \_\_\_\_\_, to increase my independence.
- I can get legal advice from a lawyer or a court worker who understands how to support people experiencing violence and abuse.

### **Other things I can do to increase my independence are:**

- The local shelter number is \_\_\_\_\_. I can seek shelter and support by calling this help line.
- The number for the victim service worker is \_\_\_\_\_.
- I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, the following month the telephone bill could tell the person who assaulted me the numbers I called after I left. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I must either use coins or I might get a friend to let me use her telephone credit card for a while when I first leave.
- I will check with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- I can leave extra cloths with \_\_\_\_\_.
- I will sit down and review my safety plan every \_\_\_\_\_ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. \_\_\_\_\_ (women's advocate, victim service worker or friend) has agreed to help me review this plan).
- I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children and other people in my home who may be at risk.
- I can arrange for direct deposit into my account.
- I can prepare a will.

### **Step 3: Safety in my Own Home.**

There are many things I can do to increase my safety in my own residence. It may not be possible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step.

#### **Safety measures I can use include:**

- I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
- I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic alarm system, etc.
- I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.
- I can teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to (friend/helper/other) in the event that my (ex)partner abducts them.
- I can install the “call blocking” option on my telephone. This will allow me to make telephone calls, even to the person who is violent, without my number being identified on another telephone’s display mechanism.
- I will tell all the people who provide childcare for my children about who has permission to pick up my children and who does not. The people I will inform about pick-up permission include:
  - School \_\_\_\_\_
  - Daycare Staff \_\_\_\_\_
  - Babysitters \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
  - Sunday School \_\_\_\_\_
  - Teachers \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- I can tell \_\_\_\_\_ (neighbour), \_\_\_\_\_ (clergy), and \_\_\_\_\_ (friend) that I am separated and they should call the police if my (ex)partner is seen near my residence.

#### **Step 4: Safety with a Protection Order**

Protection orders are court papers that limit the movement and actions of people who threaten or are violent to their partners or other family members. Court orders come in different forms: peace bonds, restraining orders, bail conditions, parole conditions, child custody/access orders, etc. Many people who are violent do obey protection orders, but you can never be sure if they will. It is often necessary to ask the police and the courts to enforce a protection order.

**The following are some steps that I can take to help the enforcement of my protection order.**

- I will keep my protection order documents(s) (original if possible) in \_\_\_\_\_ (location). (Always keep it on or near you. If you change purses, it's the first thing you should check).
- I will inform my employer, my clergy support, my friends and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that I have a protection order in effect.
- If my partner destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the courthouse, my lawyer, or \_\_\_\_\_.
- If my (ex)partner doesn't abide by the protection order, I can call the police and report them, contact my (ex)partner's parole officer, contact my lawyer and/or my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation. (Report every violation of the order.)
- If the police do not help, I can contact my support worker, the victims service worker, my (ex)partner's parole officer, my lawyer as well as filing a complaint with the RCMP.
- I can also file a private criminal complaint with the Justice of the Peace in the jurisdiction where the violation occurred. I can charge the abusive person with a violation of the protection order and all the crimes committed in violation of that order. I can call the local shelter to help me with this.
- I can prepare a will or revoke a power of attorney

## **Step 5: Safety on the Job and in Public**

Each woman must decide if and when she will tell others that her partner is violent and that she may be at risk of being hurt. Friends, family and co-workers can help to protect women. Each woman should think carefully about who to ask for help.

**I might do any or all of the following:**

- I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and \_\_\_\_\_ at work of my situation.
- I can ask \_\_\_\_\_ to help screen my calls at work.
- When leaving work, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- When going home if problems occur, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- If I use the bus/taxi, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- I can do activities like going to the store at different times to reduce the risk of contact with my (ex)partner.
- I can avoid putting personal information such as where I will be, who I will be with, or what time I will be home on Facebook, twitter or other social media.
- I can also set my privacy settings for social media so that my (ex)partner cannot view my information.
- I can also

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## **Step 6: Safety and Drug or Alcohol Consumption**

Many people living in violent situations drink alcohol and some take mood-altering drugs. Some drugs are legal and some are not. The legal consequences of using illegal drugs can be very hard on a woman, may hurt her relationship with her children and put her at a disadvantage in other legal actions with her abusive partner. Therefore, women should think carefully about the potential cost of using illegal drugs. Beyond this, the use of any alcohol or other drugs can reduce a woman's awareness and ability to act quickly to protect herself from her abusive partner. Furthermore the use of alcohol or other drugs by the person who is violent is often used as an excuse for the behaviour. A woman needs to make specific safety plans for when she drinks or takes drugs.

If drug or alcohol consumption has occurred in my relationship with my partner, I can increase my safety by some or all of the following:

If I am going to use alcohol or drugs, I can do it in a safe place and with people who understand the risk of violence and care about my safety.

- I can also \_\_\_\_\_
- If my partner is consuming, I can \_\_\_\_\_
- To safeguard my children, I might \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

## **Step 7: Safety and my Emotional Health**

The experience of being assaulted and verbally degraded by partners is exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life requires courage, determination and incredible energy.

**To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to avoid hard emotional times, I can do some of the following:**

- If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can

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- When I have to talk with my partner in person or by telephone, I can

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- I will try to use “I can...” statements with myself and to be assertive with others.

- I can tell myself “\_\_\_\_\_” whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.

- I can call \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
and \_\_\_\_\_ as other resources to support me.

- I can find out about and attend workshops and support groups in the community by calling the local shelter or victims services for information.

## **Step 8: Items to Take When Leaving**

When women leave abusive partners, it is important to take certain items with them. Beyond this, women can sometimes give extra copies of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case they have to leave quickly.

Keeping items all together in one location makes it easier if a woman needs to leave in a hurry.

### **When I leave, I should take:**

Identification for myself	Children's birth certificates
Protection Order papers/documents	My birth certificate
Social Insurance cards	Immigration papers
School and vaccination records	Money
Bankcards, credit cards	Will
Keys – house/car/office	Driver's license and ownership
Medications	Passport
Divorce/separation papers	Medical records, medical alert jewellery
Lease/rental agreement, deed, mortgage	Bank books
Insurance papers	Small saleable objects
Address book	Pictures/photos
Items of special sentimental value	Jewellery
Children's favourite toys, blankets and/or clothes	Cell phone

### **Telephone numbers I need to know:**

RCMP \_\_\_\_\_

Counsellor \_\_\_\_\_

Victims Service Worker \_\_\_\_\_

Battered Women's Programs \_\_\_\_\_

Family Violence Help Line (24 hours) \_\_\_\_\_

Lawyer \_\_\_\_\_

Work Number \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's home number \_\_\_\_\_

Minister/ Priest/Elder \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

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