

Safety Plan – Domestic Violence

▲ Name: _____
Case #: _____

▼ Name: _____
Initial Plan Date: _____

Specific Areas of Safety Planning:

Emergency:

- Have an escape plan and a back up. Rehearse getting out: in the dark and with your children. Keep spare keys and important documents where you can get to them readily.
- Identify cues and warning signs that your abuser may exhibit prior to becoming violent.
- Stay away from the kitchen (the abuser can find weapons, like knives, there).
- Stay away from bathrooms, closets or small spaces where the abuser can trap you.
- Get to a room with a door or window to escape.
- Get to a room with a phone to call for help; lock the abuser outside if you can.
- Learn defensive tactics. Learn how to position your body to reduce the damage of someone striking you.
- Create signals and/or code words that will let your children know to get out and go to a pre-arranged place of safety, or that will let your neighbors/family members know to come over and create a supportive or defusing presence, or to call for help (examples of signals are a turned-on porch light or a drawn shade, or an "I can't come over on Thursday after all" phone call to a friend or family member).
- Do whatever it is you need to do to buy time and/or space, to defuse the situation, or to protect yourself and your children.
- Call 911 (or your local emergency number) right away for help.
- If a police officer comes, tell him/her what happened; get his/her name & badge number.
- Get medical help if you are hurt.
- Take pictures of bruises or injuries.
- Call a domestic violence program or shelter (some are listed here); ask them to help you make a safety plan.

At Home:

- Learn where to get help; memorize emergency phone numbers.
- Think about a neighbor or friend you can run to for help. Talk to them about your situation.
- Pre-arrange a check-in system (i.e., phone call) with a neighbor/friend/family member.
- Decide on a pathway if you have to leave at night. Think of public places you can access 24 hours a day. Know the route to police stations, hospitals, fire stations, and 24-hour convenience stores in your area.
- If you leave by car, make sure you lock the car doors immediately and back in to park so that you might easily escape.
- Consider making a plan for each room in your home. What can you do to get out of the basement or upper floors?
- Know which doors & windows lock in your home.
- Keep a phone in a room you can lock from the inside; if you can, get a cellular phone that you keep with you at all times and pre-program 911 into the phone's directory.
- If you are still living with the abuser, reduce isolation wherever it can be done without "rocking the boat" - find neutral opportunities to build and maintain social supports. That is, ways you can connect with people that your partner is less likely to find threatening or provoking (i.e., through children: playgroups and child-care "co-ops"; Head start home-and-school programs; PTA or Home-School Associations; sports; scouting; attending to children's health needs; through church or spiritual communities; by having friends and family drop by, particularly people in whose presence the abuser is likely to keep things in check. - Over the long term, develop better options.
- Learn to protect the privacy of communications: how to "foil" Caller ID and automatic recall functions; using someone else's credit card to make calls; adding (if you can do it safely) a "password voice mail" feature to your existing service.
- Avoiding "little ears". Children in these situations can have conflicting emotions and are too easily "pumped" for information by the abusive partner or allies. It's important to protect children from things they don't need to hear or might be overwhelmed by.

- Pay attention to the fact that cellular and cordless phones, baby monitors, household intercoms and even some hearing aids can be picked up on a scanner.
- Figure out safe places to hide things. Under the silverware divider? In a coffee can in the freezer? Between the mattress and the box spring? Behind a drawer? Use your best judgment.
- If the abuser has moved out, change the locks on your door, add/change dead bolts; get locks on the windows.
- If you live in an apartment, do not get a unit on the ground floor.
- Plan an escape route out of your home; teach it to your children.
- Teach your children not to let the batterer in (unless the batterer has a legal right to be there).
- Prepare the children on how to respond to a batterer who comes to their school or childcare facility.
- Ask your neighbors to call the police if they see the abuser at your house; make a signal for them to call the police.
- Pack a bag with important things you'd need if you had to leave quickly; put it in a safe place, or give it to a friend or relative you trust (see "Emergency Bag").
- Keep doors, windows, basement access and the garage locked.
- Replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- Install peepholes, window bars, and/or poles to wedge sliding doors.
- Put fire extinguishers near your doors and learn to use them as "intruder repellents".
- If you can afford it or negotiate with your landlord for it; install outdoor (motion sensitive) lighting, timed indoor lights, and/or electronic security systems and alarms.
- Take a good self-defense course to learn how to protect yourself as much as possible.

Protect the confidentiality of your new location:

- Notify the local postal service that they are not to release the change of address information.
- Change your mailing address to a private box; using a private mailing service, or renting a P.O. Box in a different location.
- Use your P.O. Box address on personal checks, letterheads and business cards.
- Get dropped from commercial mailing lists that get rented or sold (especially w/ companies sending catalogs/publications).
- Advise the phone company, utilities, banks and creditors of the change and asking them to put a "code word" on your file to restrict inquiries or changes to your account.
- Register your vehicle and have your driver's license list your P.O. Box address.
- Place property or other assets in trust so that your address cannot be obtained through a title records search.
- As far as is legally possible, (in the state where you live or from the state that you've fled) protect the new address in transfers of school records and in any legally required release of educational information.
- Teach children to keep address and phone numbers confidential.
- Change the phone number, getting an unlisted number and radically restricting whom you give it to, and/or use an answering service or voice-mail number with "password" access, if needed.
- If you can afford it, consider using one number to call-forward your calls to yet-another phone somewhere else.
- Make sure your address isn't listed in the phone book or "reverse" directories.
- If you are routinely harassed over the telephone, you might want to get a new unlisted line while continuing to use an answering machine to monitor calls to the "old" number. The tapes may be useful in building a "stalking/criminal" case.
- Use caller ID and call tracing services defensively: know who's calling you before you answer, but learn how to keep your calls from being identified, or call from public telephones.

At Work:

- Keep a copy of your court order at work.
- If you have security in your building, give them a photograph of the abuser, vehicle description, and a copy of TPO.
- Inform your supervisor, EAP program and/or the security office about the situation. Some companies have developed protocols for handling these cases. Tell your supervisors – see if they can make it harder for the abuser to find you.
- Don't go to lunch alone.
- Ask a security guard to walk you to your car or to the bus.

- If the abuser calls you at work, save voice and save e-mails.
- Work-site security may also involve changing your workspace or shift; screening calls, mail, packages and visitors; arranging for special or different parking spaces and/or accompaniment to and from your car or bus stop. In larger organizations, it may be possible to arrange a transfer to a different office, or another branch.
- Similarly, if you are in college or a vocational educational program, you can notify your adviser and the security office, and get their help in keeping safe.

Public Areas:

- Change your regular travel habits.
- Try to get rides with different people.
- Shop and bank in a different place.
- Cancel any bank accounts or credit cards you shared; open new accounts at a different bank.
- Keep your court order and emergency numbers with you at all times.
- Keep a cell phone & program it to 911 (or other emergency number).

Children:

- Teach them not to get in the middle of a fight, even if they want to help.
- Teach them how to get to safety, to call 911, to give your address & phone number to the police.
- Teach them who to call for help.
- Tell them to stay out of the kitchen.
- Give the principal at school/daycare center a copy of your court order; tell them not to release your children to anyone without talking to you first; use a password so they can be sure it is you on the phone; give them a photo of the abuser.
- Make sure the children know whom to tell at school if they see the abuser.
- Make sure that the school knows not to give your address or phone number to ANYONE.
- Get the clearest possible terms in orders for visitation. These may include supervised visitation programs, pick-ups and drop-offs that are at a neutral site or monitored by a trustworthy third party, protective orders that limit contact to written and emergency communications about the children.

Friends/Family/New Relationship:

- Family/friends/new relationship can be a substitute target if the abuser cannot get to you (physically and/or emotionally). Make sure they are aware of the abusive situation/history and the abusers violent & manipulative capabilities.
- Give description of the abuser.
- Make sure family/friends/new relationships are aware of your safety plan and the things you are doing to make your environment safer. They will take it more serious if they see that you are taking it serious.
- Review suggestions from other categories (emergency, at home, at work, public areas) as they apply.

Stalking:

- Moving won't help if you can be found at familiar places. As much as you possibly can, vary your patterns places: join a new congregation; shop at different stores; go to a new dry cleaners; frequent different restaurants and theaters; change banks; work out at a different gym; find a new hairdresser.
- Change the route you take to get to work or school and try to vary the times you leave. Get a different bus/train; get off of the bus one stop earlier and walk the extra distance. Change your routes to work, school, and shopping. Let others know where you are going and when you expect to arrive.
- Learn to spot someone following you. If you're in the car, make four right turns in succession, or get off and then immediately back onto the highway (then check to see if the car/s you're concerned about is/are still there. If you're on foot, go into a large building through one entrance and out a door on another side. If you're **being** followed, go immediately to a police or fire station.
- Car safety is also important. Always check the front and rear passenger areas before entering the car whether it is day or night and then lock the car doors as soon as you are in the car.
- If possible, do not walk alone and only park in well-lit areas. Be alert for vehicles following you.

In the Courthouse:

- Sit as far away from the abuser as you can; you don't have to look at or talk to the abuser; you don't have to talk to the abuser's family or friends if they are there.
- Bring a friend or relative with you to wait until your case is heard.
- Tell a bailiff or sheriff that you are afraid of the abuser and ask him/her to look out for you.
- Make sure you have your court order before you leave.
- Ask the judge or the sheriff to keep the abuser there for a while when court is over; leave quickly.
- If you think the abuser is following you when you leave, call the police immediately.
- If you have to travel to another State, take your protection order with you; it is valid everywhere.
- Show the prosecutor your court orders.
- Show the prosecutor medical records about your injuries or pictures if you have them.
- Tell the prosecutor the name of anyone who is helping you (a victim advocate or a lawyer).
- Tell the prosecutor about any witnesses to injuries or abuse.

Emergency Bag (keep hidden or with a neighbor/friend):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Order of Protection | <input type="checkbox"/> Address book |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ATM card | <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance policies/papers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Money | <input type="checkbox"/> Important legal documents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check book/bank records | <input type="checkbox"/> Police records |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Credit card | <input type="checkbox"/> Record of violence/diary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Passport | <input type="checkbox"/> Baby's things (diapers, formula, medication) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Green card | <input type="checkbox"/> Children's school and immunization records |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work permit | <input type="checkbox"/> Birth (including yourself)/marriage certificates, divorce, adoption papers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Assistance ID | <input type="checkbox"/> Medications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile phone/coins to use in a payphone | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Driver's license & registration | <input type="checkbox"/> Eye glasses /contacts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social security card | <input type="checkbox"/> Lease /mortgage papers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your partner's social security number | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-perishable snacks for children (e.g. juice and crackers) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical records | <input type="checkbox"/> Important phone numbers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keys (car, home, safety deposit, P.O. box, etc.) | |

Tips/Documenting Activity:

- Keep a diary.
 - List all abusive incidents; include the date and time, a description of the incident.
 - List any threats made before, during or after the incident and any injuries suffered.
 - If the police were called include the name and badge number of the officers and their response.
 - If medical treatment was received include the name of the doctor and hospital or facility, the treatment given and whether photographs were taken of the injuries.
 - Write the phone number of your local DV hotline or program on your emergency phone list.
 - Create a time line of the abuse so that others may get a complete and concise picture of your experiences.
 - Take initial and follow-up photographs of injuries; document the photographs as to what it is and to what incident it is related.
 - Take photographs of all property damage.
 - Keep copies of all reports made to law enforcement, security, etc.
 - Keep copies of protection orders (TPO, bond conditions, etc.).
 - Other: _____
-