

Personalized Safety Plan

We have compiled this personalized safety plan for your use. This safety plan was created using various sources. Please go through your plan and update when needed. You and your family deserve to be safe, and we hope this tool will help you plan a safety plan that works for you and your family.

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility of further violence. Although I do not have control over my partner's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to them and how to best to get myself, children and pets to safety.

This safety plan is designed for:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Who helped me fill out my safety plan?

Name/Title: _____

Who to call:

You may be able to call friends and/or family; make sure these contacts are safe and will not pass on information about your plan and/or whereabouts. Sometimes the safest people may be those who do not know you or your abuser.

Counselor/support group contact: _____ Phone: _____

Advocate: _____ Phone: _____

Shelter/crisis support: _____ Phone: _____

Doctor/health care provider: _____ Phone: _____

Other: _____ Phone: _____

_____ Phone: _____

_____ Phone: _____

Where to go to be safe:

Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, or what fire escapes would you use? Practice how you are going to get to the safe places that are listed below.

Safe place #1: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Contact: _____

Safe place #2: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Contact: _____

Safe place #3: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Contact: _____

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

- A. I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____ so that I can leave quickly.
- B. I will keep copies of important documents or an extra set of keys at _____.
- C. I can leave extra clothes with _____.
- D. I will open a savings account by _____, to increase my independence.
- E. I can tell _____ about the violence and request that they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my home.
- F. I can keep my phone charged and on me at all times. I understand that if I use my telephone/cell phone, the following month the telephone bill will let my abuser know which calls I have made. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I must use an alternate telephone, or I can get a friend to let me use their telephone for a limited time when I first leave.
- G. I will check with _____ and _____ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money in case of an emergency.
- H. I will sit down and review my safety plan every _____ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence.
- I. I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice this with my children.
- J. I will use _____ as my code with my children or my friends so they can call for help.
- K. I can also teach some of these strategies to some or all of my children.
- L. If I decide to leave, I will: _____

(Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons, or in rooms without access to an outside door).

- M. I will use my judgment and intuition. I must protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

NOTE: IF YOU NEED HELP FILLING OUT THIS PLAN YOU MAY ASK COUNSELORS, DETECTIVES, SHELTER WORKERS, OR ANYONE CLOSE TO YOU THAT YOU TRUST.

Safety at home

Develop a safety plan and discuss it with your children. Review the plan as often as possible. Change the locks and install devices to secure your windows.

Make sure your children's school, day-care center, after-school program(s) or camp know who is authorized to pick up your children. Tell your neighbors and landlord that your abuser no longer lives there and ask them to call the police if they see him/her/they near your home.

Before you resume a potentially abusive relationship, discuss alternatives with someone you trust. You can always call us on our helpline at **1-800-494-8100**. Please be assured that we are here to assist you. We are here to help ensure your safety. We are not here to judge your decisions.

Safety in public or at work:

If you have an order of protection, keep it with you at ALL TIMES. Make copies of your order and place one in your purse/bag, in your car or anywhere you may stay. Inform building security and coworkers you trust in your situation.

If possible, provide a picture of your abuser to building security. Vary your routes to and from work and arrange for someone to escort you to your car, bus, or train. Plan what to do in various situations if your abuser confronts you. Change store locations you frequently shop at (instead of going to the food store you usually go to, go to another).

Safety during volatile domestic violence incidents:

If an argument seems unavoidable, move to a room or area with easy access to an exit, NOT a bathroom, kitchen, or anywhere near weapons. Identify which door, window, stairwell or elevator offers the quickest way out of the home and practice your route. Have a bag packed and ready. Keep it in an undisclosed but accessible place where you can retrieve it quickly. Find neighbors you can talk about the violence with and ask that they call the police if they hear a disturbance.

Devise a code word to use with your children, family, and friends when you need the police. Decide where you will go if you must leave, even if you do not think it will come to that. Use your instincts and judgment. Consider giving the abuser what they want to defuse a dangerous situation. You have a right to protect yourself when you are in danger. You do not deserve to be battered or threatened.

- Avoid rooms without an easy escape.
- Avoid areas where weapons are easily accessible. (Kitchens are dangerous because of access to knives and bathrooms are dangerous because of the risk of having your head hit against the tub or sink).
- Mentally plan how you might escape from each room in advance.
- Consider safe places you might go after escaping.

- Choose a code word or signal that would let your children or neighbors know they should call 911.
- Hide spare keys and money in a safe place or ask a safe person to hold onto them for you in case you need to flee unexpectedly.

Technology and Safety:

- Abusers often use technology to keep track of and control survivors. Use this information to create a plan around technology usage.
- Computers can store a lot of private information about websites, emails, instant messages, calls you make, etc. Be very cautious about your computer usage and use a computer your abuser does not have access to when searching or reaching out for assistance, such as the public library, if possible. It is impossible to completely clear all the sites you have visited.
- Be cautious about for what/when you use a computer. Computer monitoring software can easily be placed on a computer, allowing the abuser to view all your computer activity. Be cautious when accessing bank and email accounts on any computer that you fear may be monitored.
- Text messages and cell phone calls may be logged into your cell phone bill. Avoid using personal phones for safety planning, if possible.
- GPS, a location tracking device, is now installed in many cell phones and in cars. Contact your cell phone carrier to see if the GPS in your phone has been activated and can be located.
- If you think your activities are being monitored or you are being followed, you probably are. Trust your instincts and talk to the Helpline to create a plan.

Safety Plan with Your Children:

(<http://www.thehelpline.org/2013/04/safety-planning-with-children/>)

Being in an abusive situation can feel incredibly scary and isolating, and if children are involved – even indirectly witnessing the abuse – it can become a lot more complicated and dangerous. A parent’s instinct is to make sure their child is safe – but how can you do this best if your abusive partner is unpredictable, or manipulative?

All of our advocates at The Helpline are equipped to help you safety plan for you and your children during any stage in your relationship. Based on what you’re going through, we can help assess the best plans of action and brainstorm different options with you – even when you’re feeling out of options.

Planning for Violence in the Home:

If you are in an abusive relationship, a safety plan should include ways that your children can stay

safe when violence is happening in your home. It's key to remember that if the violence is escalating, you should avoid running to the children because your partner may hurt them as well.

- Teach your children when and how to call 911.
- Instruct them to leave the home if possible when things begin to escalate, and where they can go.
- Come up with a code word that you can say when they need to leave home in case of an emergency — make sure that they know not to tell others what the secret word means.
- In the house: Identify a room they can go to when they're afraid and something they can think about when they're scared.
- Instruct them to stay out of the kitchen, bathroom and other areas where there are items that could be used as weapons.
- Teach them that although they want to protect their parent, they should never intervene.
- Help them to make a list of people that they are comfortable talking and expressing themselves to.
- Considering pursuing a specialized counseling program.

Planning for Unsupervised Visits:

If you have separated from an abusive partner and are concerned for your children's safety when they visit your former partner, developing a safety plan for while they are in that home can be beneficial.

- Brainstorm with your children (if they are old enough) to come up with ways that they can stay safe using the same model as you would for your own home. Have them identify where they can get to a phone, how they can leave the house, and who they can go to.
- If it's safe to do, send a cell phone with the children to be used in emergency situations — this can be used to call 911, a neighbor or you if they need aid.

Planning for Safe Custody Exchanges:

- Avoid exchanging custody at your home or your former partner's home.
- Meet in a safe, public place such as a restaurant, a bank/other area with lots of cameras, the safest choice is near a police station.
- Bring a friend or relative with you to the exchanges or have them make the exchange.
- Perhaps plan to have your former partner pick the children up from school at the end of the day after you drop them off in the morning – this eliminates the chances of seeing each other.

- Plan for emotional safety as well – figure out something to do *before* the exchange to calm any nervous feelings, and something *after* to focus on yourself or the kids, such as going to a park or doing a fun activity.

Planning for After You Leave:

- Alert anyone you can about the situation: school authorities like the counselor, receptionist, teachers and principal, sports instructors, and other caretakers
- Talk to these people about what's going on. If you have a protective order or restraining order, who is allowed to pick up your children, etc.

How to Have These Conversations:

Let your child know that what's happening is not their fault and that they didn't cause it. Let them know how much you love them and that you support them no matter what. Tell them that you want to protect them and that you want everyone to be safe, so you have come up with a plan *in case of emergencies*.

It's important to remember that when you're safety planning with a child, they might tell this information to the abusive person, which could make the situation more dangerous (ex. "Mom said to do this if you get angry.") When talking about these plans with your child, use phrases such as "We're practicing what to do in an emergency," instead of "We're planning what you can do when this person becomes violent"

If you have any questions about safety planning or want an advocate's help in developing a personalized safety plan for your child, give us a call at 1-800-494-8100 Or call your local DV Agency.

Safety Planning for Pets:

If you're creating a safety plan of your own to leave an abusive relationship, safety planning for your pets is important as well. Bring extra provisions for them, copies of their medical records and important phone numbers.

If possible, don't leave pets alone with an abusive person. If you're planning on leaving, look for domestic violence shelters that accept pets, or foster care programs at animal shelters. You can also talk to friends, family or your veterinarian about temporary care for your animal.

If you've had to leave your pet behind with an abusive partner, try to ask for assistance from law enforcement officials or animal control to see if they can intervene.

Take steps to prove ownership of your pet: have them vaccinated and license them with your town, ensuring that these registrations are made in your name (change them if they aren't).

If you're thinking about getting a protective order, know that [some states](#) allow pets to be a part of the order.

If you've left your partner, ensure the safety of your pet by changing veterinarians and avoid leaving pets outside alone.

- The Animal Welfare Institute and [The Humane Society](#) have the [Safe Havens Mapping Project for Pets of Domestic Violence Victims](#), which maps shelters that allow you to bring pets. If there is no listing for your area, call a local shelter and ask about temporary assistance for pets in domestic violence situations.
- If you're thinking of placing your pet at a shelter, the Humane Society has a [database of local locations](#) 401-846-8276.

Safety After Leaving:

- If possible, change your locks, get a security system, or motion-detector lights.
- Changing your name and social security number are options. If you change your name, you may want to change it to something common that will make it difficult to locate you (such as "Mary Smith").
- If your neighbors are safe, let them know about your situation and ask that they call the police if necessary.
- Inform your employer of the situation and ask for workplace accommodation and support to ensure your safety. Ask them not to disclose any of your personal information. Vary your work schedule if possible.
- Don't hesitate to call 911 if you are in danger.
- Consider safe transportation options.
- You may want to vary your daily routines so that your abuser can't easily find you.
- If you need to communicate with your abuser, consider the safest way of doing it (through a third party, Attorney, Etc.).
- - **RI Free Legal Services** can offer free or low-cost legal help, contact them at **401-274-2652**. Let them know we referred you. Also visit their website for a lot more info at: <https://www.rils.org/>
- Consider getting a post office box to keep your address confidential.

Safety After Leaving Continued:

- ☐ You can also talk to one of our Protective Order Advocates about applying for the free **Address Confidentiality Program**.
- ☐ RI has this program to help victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking keep a new home address confidential (If registered to vote). You can apply **calling Election Division Secretary Of States at (401) 222-2340**
- ☐ Impress upon friends and family your need for confidentiality.
- ☐ Lock your car doors and park in well-lit areas.
- ☐ Put important documents in a safe deposit box at a bank, if you can.
- ☐ Screen incoming calls and save threatening messages if you want to report violations or threats to police.
 - ☐ You can call the **local police department or your local LEA** for any questions regarding reporting violations.
 - ☐ **CALL 911** if your abuser violates your protective order and make sure you have a copy on you at ALL times.
- ☐ Consider all possible ways to protect your privacy. Examples of places that may have personal information about you include: utility companies, creditors, banks, schools, daycare centers, fitness centers, churches, tax records, insurance companies, and online social media sites.
- ☐ Change passwords to computers and personal accounts. Use passwords that your abuser won't be able to guess (for instance, don't use the names of pets or children).
- ☐ If possible, get a cell phone for 911 purposes. Ask one of our advocates for one, we occasionally receive donated cell phones for this purpose.
- ☐ **Abuser incarcerated? Sign up with Victim Information & Notification Everyday (VINE):**
 - ☐ VINE is an automated service that lets you track the custody status of offenders in jail or prison. By calling the toll-free number or visiting www.vinelink.com, you can find out the custody status of an offender. You can also register to be notified by phone and email if the custody status of an offender changes.

- ☐ Call **1-877-674-8463** or visit **www.vinelink.com** and follow the instructions to access custody information.
- ☐ Please remember, do not solely rely on VINE for your safety. If you feel you may be at risk, take precautions as if the offender has been released.

Preparing to Leave

Because violence could escalate when someone tries to leave, here are some things to keep in mind before you leave:

- ☐ Keep any evidence of physical abuse, such as pictures of injuries.
- ☐ Keep a journal of all violent incidents, noting dates, events and threats made, if possible. Keep your journal in a safe place.
- ☐ Know where you can go to get help. Tell someone what is happening to you.
- ☐ If you are injured, go to a doctor or an emergency room and report what happened to you. Ask that they document your visit.
- ☐ Plan with your children and identify a safe place for them, like a room with a lock or a friend's house where they can go for help. Reassure them that their job is to stay safe, not to protect you.
- ☐ Contact your local shelter and find out about laws and other resources available to you before you have to use them during a crisis. WomensLaw.org has state by state legal information.
- ☐ Acquire job skills or take courses at a community college as you can.
- ☐ Try to set money aside or ask friends or family members to hold money for you.

Things you may want to take with you:

If you can, make copies of important documents, such as the ones listed below and place them somewhere safe in your “ready-to-go” prepped bag of clothes. You can pack all of this in advance and leave them with someone safe you know in case you need to leave immediately.

- ☐ Driver's license and registration
- ☐ Birth certificates for you and your children
- ☐ Social security cards for you and your children
- ☐ School and medical records
- ☐ Money, bank cards (keep in mind that use of credit cards may enable someone to trace you)
- ☐ Keys (office, car, home)
- ☐ Medications
- ☐ Photos/jewelry/sentimental items
- Welfare identification

- ☐ Passport/greencard/work permit
- ☐ Divorce papers
- ☐ Copies of protective orders (restraining/stalking)
- ☐ Lease/rental agreements
- ☐ House deed/mortgage payment book
- ☐ Current unpaid bills
- ☐ Insurance papers
- ☐ Address book
- ☐ Safe numbers (crisis lines, shelters, etc.)
- ☐ Children's favorite toys/blankets
- ☐ Change of clothes
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____

NOTES: _____
