

# Personalized Safety Plan

*This is plan can be used for increasing safety and preparing in advance for the possibility of further violence. Although victims' and survivors' do not have control over their partner's violence, thinking through how to best stay safe and get their children to safety may be helpful.*

It may not always be safe for victims and survivors to keep a written safety plan with them. Victims and survivors have several options around creating a safety plan, including writing one and keeping it in a safe place (at home, with a friend, at a domestic violence program, etc.), writing one and destroying it, and discussing one with someone they trust and not writing it down at all. We recommend working with an advocate at a domestic violence/sexual assault program who is trained to assist victims and survivors of interpersonal violence in creating their own, individualized safety plan.

We believe victims and survivors know best what may work for them. The plan below includes some ideas that we've found often work for victims and survivors, but they may not work for everyone. Generally, this safety plan has the women's partner as the abuser and plans around abuse in that relationship. However, interpersonal violence can happen in a variety of relationships. Please adapt the plan to fit your situation and feel free to call an advocate to help you create your own personal safety plan.

## MY IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Law Enforcement: 911 or \_\_\_\_\_ (Emergency number in my community) and \_\_\_\_\_ (non-Emergency).

Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Program/Safe Home: \_\_\_\_\_.

District Attorney's/Prosecutor's Office \_\_\_\_\_.

## SAFETY DURING AN ASSAULT

People cannot always avoid violent incidents from others, but they can do a number of things to increase their safety during violent incidents.

I can do some or all of the following:

1. If I decide to leave, I can get out of the house by \_\_\_\_\_.

(Practice how to get out safely. What doors or windows will you use?)

2. I can go to \_\_\_\_\_.

(Decide this even if you don't think there will be a next time.)

3. In order to be able to leave quickly, I can keep my purse/bag and vehicle key ready by putting them \_\_\_\_\_.

4. I can tell \_\_\_\_\_ (neighbors) about the violence and ask them to call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from the house.

5. I can teach my children how to use the phone or radio to contact the police and to get help in an emergency.

6. I can use \_\_\_\_\_ as my code word with my children and/or friends when I am in danger, so they will call for help.
7. When I expect an argument, I can try to move to \_\_\_\_\_, a space near an outside door that has no guns, knives, or other weapons (usually bathrooms, garages and kitchen areas are dangerous places).
8. I can use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my partner what he/she wants to calm him down. I can do what I can to protect myself until I am out of danger.
9. I can call the police when it is safe, and I can apply for a protective order from the court.

### **SAFETY WHEN PREPARING TO LEAVE**

Leaving must be done with a careful plan to increase safety. Abusers often strike back when they believe their partner is leaving the relationship.

I can do some or all of the following:

1. So I can leave quickly, I can leave money, an extra set of keys, extra clothing and important documents with \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I can open a savings account to increase my independence.
3. I can check with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
4. The National Domestic Violence hotline number is **1-800-478-2316**. By calling this free hotline, I can get the number of a shelter near me. The domestic violence shelter that is closest to me is: \_\_\_\_\_ and their number is \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I can rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.
6. Other things I can do to increase my independence: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Checklist – What you may want to take with you, if it is safe to do so:

- Form(s) of Identification (State ID, Driver’s License, Passport, etc.)
- Driver’s license/vehicle registration
- Social Security Cards (for self and children)
- Birth and marriage certificates (for self and children)
- Keys (house/car/work)
- Address book or list of contact information
- Money
- Credit cards
- Checkbook, ATM card, and other bank books
- Medications (for self and children)

- Welfare identification
- Work permit
- School and vaccination records
- Divorce papers
- Copy of protective order
- Pets (if you can)
- Jewelry
- Photo Album
- Children’s special blanket, doll, or stuffed animal

**SAFETY IN MY HOME**

There are many things that a person can do to increase safety in her/his home. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step.

1. I can inform \_\_\_\_\_ that my partner no longer resides with me and they should call the police if he/she is seen at my residence.
2. I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
3. I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
4. I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.
5. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
6. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for my home.
7. I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.
8. I can teach my children how to use the telephone, in case my partner takes them, to call me and: \_\_\_\_\_ . (friend/advocate/minister/other)
9. I can tell people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick up my children and that my partner does not have permission. The people I will inform about this are:  
\_\_\_\_\_ (school)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (day care)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (babysitter)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (teacher)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (others)

**SAFETY WITH A PROTECTIVE ORDER**

Protective orders are available from the court. An advocate is available at the nearest domestic violence/sexual assault program to help you apply for one. Some abusive partners obey protective orders, some do not. Sometimes protective orders escalate the violence the abusive partner uses when they learn that an order has been granted. You know your situation best and can make decisions about protective

orders in a way that will be meaningful for you and your children. You can always talk to an advocate about your concerns with applying for a protective order.

If I obtain a protective order, I understand that I may need to ask the police and the courts to enforce my protective order. I can do some or all of the following to increase my safety:

1. I can keep a copy of my protective order with me at all times.
2. I can check with my local police department to make sure my protective order is on record with them. If not, I will give a copy of my protective order to them. I will also give a copy of my protective order to police departments in the community where I work and in those communities where I usually visit family or friends.
3. I can tell my employer, my domestic violence program advocate, my minister, my closest friend, and \_\_\_\_\_ that I have a protective order in effect.
4. If my partner destroys my protective order, I can get another copy from the courthouse by calling \_\_\_\_\_ (local courthouse).
5. If my partner violates the protective order, I can call the police and report a violation. I can also call an attorney, call an advocate at a domestic violence program, and/or advise the court of the violation.

**SAFETY ON THE JOB AND IN PUBLIC**

Each victim and survivor must decide for herself/himself if and when to tell others about the violence. Friends, family and co-workers can help to protect her/him, and s/he needs to consider carefully who to ask for help.

I can do any or all of the following:

1. I can tell my boss, the security supervisor, and \_\_\_\_\_ at work of my situation.
2. I can ask \_\_\_\_\_ to help screen my telephone calls at work.
3. When I leave work, I can walk with \_\_\_\_\_ to my car or the bus stop. I can park my car where I will feel safest getting in and out of the car.
4. When traveling home if problems occur, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I can use different grocery stores, shopping malls, and banks to shop and do business at hours that are different from those I used when residing with my partner.
6. I can also \_\_\_\_\_.

**SAFETY AND DRUG OR ALCOHOL USE**

Many people use alcohol and drugs. Using illegal drugs and abusing alcohol can be very hard on a victim or survivor physically and emotionally. It may hurt their relationship with their children and put them at a

disadvantage in court. Beyond this, the use of alcohol or other drugs can reduce a person's awareness and ability to act quickly to protect herself/himself from their abusive partner. Therefore, in the context of drug or alcohol use, a person needs to make specific plans.

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

1. If I am going to use alcohol and/or drugs, I can do so in a safe place and with people who understand the risk of violence and are committed to my safety.
2. If my partner is using, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
3. To safeguard my children, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
4. I can call a substance abuse professional about my concerns at: \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I can also  
\_\_\_\_\_.

### **SAFETY AND MY EMOTIONAL HEALTH**

The experience of being abused and verbally degraded by partners is exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life takes great courage and energy.

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

1. If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
2. When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
3. I can use, "I can" statements with myself and be assertive with others.
4. I can tell myself \_\_\_\_\_ whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.
5. I can read \_\_\_\_\_ to help me feel stronger.
6. I can call \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ as other resources to be of support to me.
7. I can attend workshops and support groups at the domestic violence program or \_\_\_\_\_ to gain support and strengthen my relationships with other people.
8. Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

### **SAFETY AND TECHNOLOGY**

Technology can assist me in achieving help and safety. However, it is also important to consider how technology might be misused. I trust my instincts. If I suspect that my phone, computer, email or other

activities are being monitored, I can do some or all of the following:

1. If I suspect my partner is monitoring me, I can contact an advocate or law enforcement at \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Computers keep records of users' actions. If I need to use a computer or the internet to look for help or make plans to leave, I can use a safer computer that my partner does not have access to. It may be at a friend's house, library, or café. A safer computer I can use is: \_\_\_\_\_.
3. If I suspect my email is being monitored, I can open an account through a free web based company such as yahoo or gmail that I do not read on a computer my partner has access to. I can create a safer account name that is anonymous and does not include my real name.
4. I can change my passwords and pin numbers frequently.
5. Cordless phones use radio waves to transmit sounds, and therefore conversations can be intercepted by other cordless devices, radios, and radio scanners. Phones with wires are generally safer, but they may also be tapped. A safe phone for me to use when discussing my escape plans, safety plans, or speaking with an advocate is \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Digital cell phone calls may be intercepted by law enforcement. If my abuser has access to these tools, or if he/she has access to my cell phone records, a safe phone I can use is \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Cell phones may be programmed to track someone's location through Global Positioning System (GPS) Chips. If I think I am being tracked, I can call law enforcement. I can also turn off my cell phone or leave it behind when this is safe.
8. Often domestic violence programs have donated cell phones for emergency calls. A place where I can get a used or donated cell phone is \_\_\_\_\_.

This section was adapted from safety planning materials prepared by Jody Lown, former Victim-Witness Program Coordinator with the State of Alaska, Department of Law.

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**OTHER IMPORTANT NUMBERS**

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