

# Domestic Violence Safety Planning

## Introduction

The following steps represent ideas for increasing safety and preparing in advance for further violence that may occur. Taking the following steps can provide you with a guide in how to respond to situations and how to best get yourself and your children to safety. This guide does not constitute a comprehensive plan. Developing a personalized plan for yourself and your family ahead of time will help you in making decisions if the need arises or if your physical safety demands it.

*Remember, you have the right to live without fear and violence.*

### Plans for Responding to a Violent Incident

- Practice how to get out safely (through doors, windows, elevator, stairwells) if needed. Practice this with your children as well.
- Avoid rooms with no exits (bathrooms) or rooms with weapons (kitchen).
- Keep your cell phone, purse and car keys ready, keep them in a certain place. Hide a key at work, with a trusted neighbor.
- Make a list of safe people to contact and memorize important phone numbers.
- Tell a trusted neighbor about the situation.
- Establish a "code word" or "sign" so that family, friends, co-workers and your children know when to call for help.
- Have a plan for where you might go in case of emergency.
- Think about what you might say to your partner if he/she becomes violent.

*Trust your judgment.*

### Safety at Work and in Public

- Inform your boss or trusted co-worker.
- Change your routines (routes to daycare/school and/or work. Change hours of work.)
- Leave work with other people
- If problems occur out in public, drive to local hospital or some other public place. Get the attention of a law enforcement or public safety official.
- If using public transportation, take a different route.
- Go to different stores than normal & at different hours.

### Safety Planning with Children

Develop a safety plan that will keep you and your family safe. Make sure your plan includes the items listed below. Go over the plan with your children; practice and prepare them for what to do if the need arises.

- o How to recognize when you feel unsafe?
- o Where can you go for help if you feel unsafe at home?
- o Who can you call for help (phone number and address?)
- o What is your phone number and address
- o If violence starts in the home, where can you go and how do you get there?
- o Develop a code word or password. The password should indicate that they should go to a certain place in the house to call 9-1-1 or go to neighbors.

Let your children's school and/or day care know who has permission to pick up the children. Inform them of your code word. Provide them a picture of the abuser, if possible.

*If you need to exchange the children for visitation, find a safe place for this to occur.*

### Safety in Your Own Residence

- Change locks on doors and windows. Install a security system, if possible.
- Change phone numbers.
- Install outside lighting systems that are motion-activated.
- Alert your work and your children's school of the situation.
- Talk to trusted people about the violence.
- Consider getting a post office box.

### Safety When Preparing to Leave

Preparing to leave can be the most dangerous time!

- Have a place to stay.
- Call a domestic violence victim service program or shelter.  
*Keep this information available at all times.*

• Keep originals, copies or photocopies of important documents that you may need to apply for assistance such as:

- Identification
- Birth certificates (self & children)
- Social Security Cards (self & children)
- School & Vaccination Records
- Money
- Checks, ATM card, Credit Cards, (open up your own checking/savings account, if able)
- Keys (house, car, work)
- Drivers License & Registration
- Welfare identification, work permits, green card
- Passport (self & children)
- Medical Records
- Divorce Papers
- Insurance Papers
- Lease/Mortgage Papers
- Passwords for accounts
- Address book

• Obtain calling cards  
• Have clothing, personal items and medications for yourself and your children ready to go.

• Have some of your children's favorite toys or blankets if possible.

• Take pictures or items of sentimental value, only if it safe to do so.

• If you need to go back to your residence after leaving, do so with a police escort.



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