

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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