

# **Safety Planning Guide**

## **for**

### **Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse and/or Stalking**

This guide is designed to assist you in preparing a protection and/or escape plan for yourself. It can be adapted to include your children, other dependents and any pets you might have. You can select/adapt the sections of this guide that best suit your situation and create your own **Personal Safety Plan**.

Your plan will not in itself protect you from the abuser. Always follow your instincts and be prepared to adapt your actions to the situation you face.

It is very important to rehearse your plan regularly and revise it as your circumstances change.

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**If you require any assistance in completing this plan, contact  
your local Victim Crisis Assistance & Referral Service (VCARS)  
or your local Women’s Shelter.**

## Safety Planning Within a Relationship

**You cannot always avoid abusive incidents. In order to increase safety, consider the following:**

1. When I expect the abuser and I are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that has the lowest risk. I will remember to avoid the bathroom, kitchen, garage and other rooms or places containing items that can be used as weapons. I will try to choose rooms or places that have access to the outside. I will: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious I will consider doing what I know will calm the abuser down. I must remember that I have to protect myself until the danger has passed.
3. I will remember that certain dates/situations may trigger an episode. For me, examples are: \_\_\_\_\_
4. I can tell two trusted friends/relatives/neighbours about the violence and request they call the police if they cannot locate me or if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.

### **Names/Numbers:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. I will keep my cell phone/cordless phone charged at all times.
6. I will use \_\_\_\_\_ as my code word/phrase with my friends/relatives/neighbours so they can get help.
7. Even if I don't think there will be another violent incident I will arrange for a safe place to go if I must leave.

**If I have to leave, I will go to** \_\_\_\_\_.

**If I cannot go there, then I will go to** \_\_\_\_\_.

8. Considering the doors, windows, elevators, stairwells and/or fire escapes available to me, if I need to leave, I will: \_\_\_\_\_

9. I can keep my purse, wallet, identification, car keys and emergency cash ready at all times in order to leave quickly. I will put them: \_\_\_\_\_

10. I will practice regularly how to get out safely so that if the time comes when I must leave, I will be familiar with what I must do.

11. I will review this Personal Safety Plan regularly and revise it as my circumstances change.

12. I will keep this plan in a safe and private place.

**Other Ideas:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Safety Planning When Preparing to Leave

The risk of abuse can increase when you are planning to leave. Consider the following:

1. I can leave money and an extra set of keys with a trusted friend/relative/neighbour so that I can leave quickly. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I can leave important documents (or copies of them) with a trusted friend/relative/neighbour. \_\_\_\_\_

**(See pg.5 - Items to Take When You Leave)**

3. I can leave extra clothes with \_\_\_\_\_
4. I will open a savings account by this date, \_\_\_\_\_, to increase my independence.
5. I will keep change or a phone card with me at all times for phone calls. I understand that telephone calls can be tracked by the abuser so I will use a pay phone or call from the home of a trusted friend/relative/neighbour.
6. I will contact \_\_\_\_\_ for a temporary place to stay and \_\_\_\_\_ for emergency financial assistance.
7. I will keep this plan in a safe and private place.

**Other Ideas:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Items to Take When You Leave

**These items can be collected over a period of time. Some documents can be photocopied.**

- My personal identification (birth certificate, driver's licence, health card, passport, etc.)
- My Immigration papers
- My Social Insurance card and a copy of the abuser's Social Insurance card
- Work permits
- Divorce documentation
- Government of Ontario Seniors card
- Native Person Status card or documentation
- Employment/Pension documentation
- Medications, prescriptions, drug benefit card
- Keys (house, car, office, mail box, garage)
- Money
- Cheque book, ATM card, bank books
- Credit Cards
- Mortgage payment documents, bank loan and/or Line of Credit documents
- Lease/rental agreements, property deeds
- Investment statements
- Insurance papers (life, home, car)
- Vehicle ownership documents
- Income Tax documents including receipts
- Estate Planning documentation (Will, Power of Attorney for Personal Care and Power of Attorney for the Management of Property), Beneficiary Designation documentation (life insurance and investments)
- Address book
- Photographs
- Jewellery
- Items of special sentimental value

### **If you have children:**

- My children's passports, birth certificates, health cards adoption papers and custody orders
- School and vaccination records
- Children's favourite toys and blankets

**Small items, that won't be missed, can be taken to a trusted family member/friend/neighbour.**

## **Safety in Your Own Residence**

**There are many things that you can do to increase safety in your own residence. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step.**

### **Safety measures to consider:**

1. I can change the locks on my doors, windows, garage and mailbox as soon as possible.
2. I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors that include a peephole.
3. I can install additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors and an electronic system with a panic button.
4. I can trim trees and bushes to allow me a clear view from all windows.
5. I can make sure my house number is visible in case emergency services are required.
6. I can get a dog.
7. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escaping from second floor windows.
8. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house or apartment.
9. I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my home.
10. I can inform my trusted neighbours/religious leader/friends/family members that the abuser no longer resides with me and ask them to call the police if they observe the abuser at or near my residence.
11. I can obtain a cell phone and keep it charged at all times.
12. I can change my phone number to an unlisted number and use \*67 to block my number when I make calls. I can inform my telephone company that my number is to remain unlisted (not in the phone book or on 411 on line).
13. I can caution anyone who may need my real phone number such as my employer, employees at work, teachers, school staff, doctor, lawyer, family, friends and neighbours not to give my number to anyone without my authorization.
14. I can arrange to have call display and an answering machine to screen my calls.

15. I can contact the phone company to find out what other services I should use for my protection and what services I should be aware of that the abuser might use such as "last call return".
16. I can rent a post office box to receive mail at so that I am not using my street address.
17. I will always lock my door even if I am not going far.
18. If I live in an apartment building, I will check the hallways before getting off the elevator or stairs. I will look in mirrors and be aware of doorways. I can make arrangements with the landlord to have non-identifying information only, removing such things as my name on the mailbox or parking spot.
19. I will keep a copy of the Court Order with me at all times. I can inform my friends, relatives and neighbours that there is a Court Order in effect and ask them to call the police if they feel I may be in danger. If possible I can provide a picture of the abuser to them, as well as information about the type of vehicle he may be driving.
20. I will keep items with my personal information out of my regular garbage.
21. If I use e-mail or other computer online services, I will change my e-mail address and password. I will never disclose personal information in online directories such as MSN, Facebook, or My Space.

**Other Ideas:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Safety With a Court Order

**Not all abusers will obey the terms of a Court Order. Consider the following if that situation occurs:**

1. I will record any violence and/or breach of the Court Order.
2. I will report to the police when the abuser breaches any conditions of the Court Order.
3. I can call \_\_\_\_\_ (friend/relative/neighbour) for additional support.
4. I will get a copy of the Court Order from the Court Office located at \_\_\_\_\_ or from the Victim Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) Office located at \_\_\_\_\_ and keep it with me at all times.
5. If the abuser destroys my copy of the Court Order, I will get another one.
6. If I move or visit another area, I will notify the police services in that jurisdiction.
7. I will inform my employer, religious leader, friends and family that a Court Order has been issued against the abuser including all of the conditions the abuser is required to obey.
8. Understanding that the safety risk is increased during an abuser's release or trial period, I will review and rehearse my Personal Safety Plan and revise it as required during this period.



## Safety in the Work Place and in Public

**Friends, family, neighbours and co-workers can help to protect you. Carefully choose which people to ask for help as you consider the following:**

1. At work, I can inform \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ about my situation.
2. If possible I will provide a picture of the abuser, and information about the type of vehicle he may be driving to my co-workers.
3. At work, I can have \_\_\_\_\_ screen, log and document my calls. I can also use the voice-messaging feature to screen my calls.
4. When leaving work I will have my keys ready. Before I enter my car, I will walk around the outside and check for signs to ensure that my vehicle has not been tampered with. I will also check the back seat of my car before getting in and test my brakes before starting out.
5. I can walk from the building with \_\_\_\_\_. I can park in more populated well lit areas to ensure my safety.
6. When I am driving home from work I will always be aware of street names and landmarks. I will check my mirrors frequently and be aware of the vehicles around me.
7. If problems arise, I can use my cell phone to call for help, honk my horn continuously, drive to a well lit public place that is open and filled with people or drive directly to police services to ask for help.
8. I will also carry a "Call Police" sign in my car in the event I have vehicle problems en-route to my destination. I will remain in my vehicle with the doors locked.
9. If I use public transportation, I can sit close to the driver and arrange to have someone meet me at my bus stop to walk me home. Once I arrive safely at home, I will call \_\_\_\_\_ to let him/her know that I have arrived safely. If I walk to and from work, I will ask \_\_\_\_\_ to walk with me.

10. I will change my routes to familiar places and the times at which I attend those places, wherever possible. I will shop at different grocery stores and shopping malls at different hours.

11. I will use a different bank and bank at different hours.

12. Consuming alcohol and/or recreational drugs can cause delayed reactions. Keeping my safety in mind, I will choose only safe places to be, with people I can trust.

**Other Ideas:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Your Emotional Health

To conserve your emotional energy and resources consider the following:

1. I can call \_\_\_\_\_ for support.
2. If I have to communicate with the abuser, I will prepare myself emotionally by role playing, taking a warm bath or anything else that would help me to gain confidence and relax. I know that I can also arrange to have \_\_\_\_\_ present during these meetings or phone calls. I can also make arrangements for all communication to go through our lawyers.

I will: \_\_\_\_\_

3. I will use "I can" statements and I will be assertive with others.
4. I can tell myself, "I'm in charge of my life and confident in my ability to make decisions." I will practise telling myself the following: \_\_\_\_\_

5. When and if I feel others are trying to control or abuse me I will: \_\_\_\_\_

6. I can read things to help me feel stronger.
7. Other things I can do to make me feel stronger and strengthen my relationships with others are: \_\_\_\_\_

## Safety Planning with/for Children

When their home life is a battleground involving the adults who live there, it can be traumatic and dangerous for children.

Your plan can provide safeguards for your children and a way for them to get you immediate emergency help when necessary. The age of your children will determine their involvement in safety planning.

### Planning Within a Relationship

Consider the following:

1. I can tell my children that their only job is to stay safe themselves. They must never try to protect me. They must always run to safety, even without me. It is the very best way they can help.
2. I can teach my children to leave the room or not to come in the room where the danger is. They can go to the safe room \_\_\_\_\_ (bedroom on ground level with locks on the door and a cell phone/cordless phone inside) or to \_\_\_\_\_'s place. (a trusted friend/relative/neighbour).
3. I can practice and role-play safety plans with my children including what to do and where to go if something violent or scary happens. I can talk about all scenarios with them. I can make a game out of this if they are young.
4. I can tell my children that we might have to leave quickly in order to protect ourselves.
5. I can practice my (code word/phrase or signal) \_\_\_\_\_ and escape plan \_\_\_\_\_ with them. I can call this our fire escape plan.

## Safety in Your Own Residence

### Consider the following:

6. I can talk to my children about exactly what to do if the abuser shows up or calls. I will tell them to\_\_\_\_\_.
7. I can instruct my children never to answer the door or answer the phone.
8. I can advise my children's school\_\_\_\_\_,doctor \_\_\_\_\_and child care provider\_\_\_\_\_ of my situation and give them a copy of any Court Order that I have. I can advise these same people about who is allowed to pick the children up or who is to have contact with them. I can request that they report any suspicious persons or activity to me and the police.
9. I can ensure that my children are accompanied to and from school and any other places they may go.
10. If the abuser has legal access to my child or children, I can talk to a lawyer about the possibility of getting supervised access or having access denied.
11. If the abuser has access to the children, I can develop individual and group safety plans for these visits. These plans can include cues that they are in danger, escape plans from the location of the visit and who/where they can go for help. The plan will be:\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
12. I can make arrangements for transporting my children to and from visits so that I don't have to have contact with the abuser. I can ask\_\_\_\_\_to drop them off and pick them up. If I don't have anyone I can trust to drop off the children and pick them up, I can arrange for the children to be picked up and dropped off at a public location\_\_\_\_\_(a restaurant, etc.).
13. I can make sure that my children know how to use the phone, always have money for the phone, know how to call 911 and how to make collect calls to me.
14. I can keep emergency numbers by all phones.

15. I can develop a visual code \_\_\_\_\_ (leave the outside light on) or other code \_\_\_\_\_ (light on or off) for my children to know that there is danger so that they will not enter the house or the room if they see it. If there is danger and my children cannot enter the house, they can go to \_\_\_\_\_'s house (neighbour) and call for help.

16. I can contact the local Women's Shelter \_\_\_\_\_ to find out where programs for child witnesses of violence are located. These programs are very helpful in teaching children and women, in detail, about safety.

17. I will review the attached "Child Safety Plan" with my child or children in a safe place at a safe time and if I have any questions or concerns, I will contact the local Women's Shelter.

**Other Ideas:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## CHILD SAFETY PLAN

### A SAFETY PLAN TO HELP KIDS STAY SAFE FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

#### 1. DON'T TRY TO GET IN THE MIDDLE OF A FIGHT.

Even though you may want to help, it is not a good idea to get in the middle of a fight when one of your parents is hurting the other. If one of your parents is yelling or hurting the other, the best thing to do is go to another room.

#### 2. IF YOU CAN GET TO A PHONE SAFELY, CALL 911 FOR HELP AND STAY ON THE PHONE.

Find a phone that is away from the fight and tell the 911 helper what is going on in your house. The 911 helper will ask some questions because they are trying to help you and will send the police right away.

#### 3. TRY NOT TO GET TRAPPED IN A SMALL ROOM, CLOSET OR THE KITCHEN.

You may be afraid that you could get hurt too. If you are afraid, move towards a door, window, or room where you can safely exit the house.

#### 4. GO TO A SAFE PLACE. FIND A SAFE RELATIVE OR NEIGHBOUR AND ASK FOR HELP.

It is ok to ask for help. The most important thing is to get in a safe place with an adult you trust. Some people that can help that you can trust are friends, neighbours, teachers, police officers, doctors & nurses, and lawyers & judges.

Every family has trouble getting along every now and then. It is ok for people in a family to get upset with each other. But, it is **NEVER** ok for people in a family to abuse each other. When grownups in your family hit, slap, kick, push, or throw objects at someone else in your family it is abuse. Abuse can also happen when family members are put down or touched in wrong ways. Families should not have to live with abuse and violence. If your family has trouble like this, you are not alone. Please tell a safe adult about what is going on. It is also a good idea to have a safety plan to help you know what to do next time someone in your family is being hurt.

#### Remember: It's not your fault!

It's okay to love both of your parents, even if one parent is hurting the other. But, it's not okay for that parent to hurt you, your other parent, or anyone else.

### SAFE PLACES YOU CAN CALL

Emergency: 911

#### KIDS' RIGHTS

- To feel safe
- To feel accepted
- To say no
- To live free from violence
- To be loved and cared for
- To laugh
- To play
- To feel important and valued
- To have a voice and be heard
- To be a kid!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

## Important Contact Numbers

Police, Fire, Ambulance: 911 or:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Local Shelter for women and their children:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Local Victim Crisis Assistance & Referral Services Office:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Local Victim Witness Assistance Program Office:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Local Court Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Kid's Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868  
Nationwide, 24 hours, both French and  
English; not just a crisis-line but to answer  
any question at anytime.

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Lawyer: \_\_\_\_\_

Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Supervisor's Home \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Children's School \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Social Worker/Counsellor \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Landlord: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Important Numbers \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Police Officer Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### NOTES/OTHER PHONE NUMBERS

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_