

SAFETY PLANNING TOOL

Date: _____

Review dates: _____

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility for further violence. Although I do not have control over my abuser's violence, I can do some things about my response and how to best get myself and my children, grandchildren or other dependents (such as elderly persons or persons with disabilities who may be living with me, and my pets) to safety.

Step 1: Safety during a violent incident.

Survivors cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, survivors may use a variety of strategies. I can use some or all of the following strategies:

- A. If I decide to leave, I will _____. (Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes would you use? Consider your physical stamina and abilities as well as the health status of anyone who may need to leave with you.)
- B. I can keep my purse and car keys ready and put them (place) _____ so I can leave quickly.
- C. I can tell _____ about the violence and request that they call the law enforcement if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.

I can also tell _____ about the violence and request they call law enforcement if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.
- D. I can teach my children/grandchildren how to use the telephone to contact law enforcement and the fire department.
- E. I will use _____ as my code word with my children/grandchildren or my friends so they can call for help.
- F. If I have to leave my home, I will go _____. (Decide this even if you don't think there will be a next time.)
- G. I can also teach some of these strategies to my children/grandchildren.
- H. When I expect we are going to have an argument or that my abuser will become violent, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as _____. (Try to avoid rooms such as the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons or in rooms without access to an outside door.)
- I. I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my abuser what he wants to calm him down, if I believe that will increase my safety. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

Step 2: Safety when preparing to leave.

Survivors frequently leave the residence they share with the abuser. Leaving must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. Abusers may retaliate when they believe their victim is leaving the relationship. I can use some or all of the following safety strategies:

- A. I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____ so I can leave quickly.
- B. I will keep copies of important documents or keys at _____.
- C. I will open a savings account by _____, to increase my independence.
- D. If I have a payee for SSI/SSDI benefits and the payee is my abuser, I can contact the Social Security Administration at _____ to have my payee changed.
- E. The domestic violence program's hotline number or TTY number is _____. I can seek shelter by calling this hotline.
- F. I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times or I can purchase a telephone calling card or get a cell phone. I understand that if I use my telephone *credit* card, the following month the telephone bill will tell my batterer those numbers that I called after I left. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I must either use coins or a telephone *calling* card.

- G. I will check with _____ and _____ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- H. I can leave extra clothes with _____.
- I. If I have companion animals (pets) and/or farm animals, I will make the following arrangements for them _____.
- J. If I have a disability, I may need to set up an emergency care plan, especially if my abuser is also my caregiver. I can contact _____ to make a plan for an emergency care provider.
- K. I will sit down and review my safety plan every _____ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. _____ (domestic violence advocate or friend) has agreed to help me review this plan.
- L. I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.

Step 3: Safety in my own residence.

There are many things that survivors can do to increase safety at home. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step. Safety measures I can use include:

- A. I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible. I can contact _____ to help with purchasing locks and _____ to help with installing.
- B. I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors. I can contact _____ to help with purchasing the doors and _____ to help with installing.
- C. I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc. I can contact _____ to help with purchasing the items and _____ to help with installing.
- D. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows if I am physically able. I can contact _____ to help with purchasing the ladders.
- E. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment. I can contact _____ to help purchase the items and _____ to help with installing.
- F. I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house. I can contact _____ to help with purchasing the system and _____ to help with installing.
- G. I will teach my children/grandchildren how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to _____ (friend/clergy/other) in the event that my abuser takes the children/grandchildren.
- H. I will teach my children/grandchildren how to not disclose our address and phone number to: _____ abuser, and the abusers family/friends including _____, _____, and others including _____, _____.
- I. I will tell people who take care of my children/grandchildren who has permission to pick up my children/grandchildren and that my abuser is not permitted to do so. The people I will inform about pick-up permission include: _____(school), _____(day care staff), _____(babysitter), _____(religious school teacher), _____(teacher), _____ and _____(others).
- J. I can "red flag" my child's name with the US State Department to alert authorities if someone were to try and take my child out of the country. I know this is especially important if my child already has a passport. I can contact _____ for more information.
- K. I can have my child ID'ed and registered through a local child identification program.
- L. I can inform _____(neighbor), _____(clergy), and _____(friend) that my abuser no longer resides with me and they should call the police if my abuser is observed near my residence.
- M. I can contact local law enforcement and tell them about my abuser including the his birth date _____, physical description height _____, weight _____, hair color _____, facial hair _____, tattoos and/or scars _____, the type of vehicle he drives _____, and the license plate number _____.

- O. I can take steps to assure the confidentiality of certain documents, possibly through using an alias, a PO Box or alternative address or setting up a password with certain institutions to assure only I can access my personal information. The documents I will change include: _____ bills, _____ utilities, _____ car registration, _____ taxes, _____ bank accounts.
- P. I can request that my taxes and/or court records be placed in a confidential file.

Step 4: Safety with a protection order.

Many abusers obey protection orders, but some do not. I recognize that requesting a protection order may actually increase my risk for danger, depending on my abuser's tendencies. I may need to ask the police and the courts to enforce my protection order. The following are some steps that I can take to help the enforcement of my protection order:

- A. I will keep my protection order _____(location). (Always keep it on or near your person. If you change your purse, your protection order is the first thing that should go in.)
- B. I will give my protection order to police departments in the community where I work, in those communities where I usually visit family or friends, and in the community where I live. There should be a county registry of protection orders that all police departments can call to confirm a protection order. I can check to make sure that my order is in the registry.
- C. The telephone number for the county registry of protection orders is _____.
- D. For further safety, if I often visit other counties in _____, I might file my protection order with the court in those counties. I will register my protection order in the following counties: _____, _____, and _____.
- E. I can call the local domestic violence program if I am not sure about B., C., or D. above or if I have some problem with my protection order.
- F. I will inform my employer, my religious leader, my closest friend, my vet and _____ and _____ that I have a protection order in effect.
- G. If my abuser destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the courthouse by going to the _____ located at _____.
- H. If my abuser violates the protection order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.
- I. If the police do not help, I can contact my advocate or attorney and will file a complaint with the chief of the police department or local Sheriff.
- J. I can also file a private criminal complaint with the _____ in the jurisdiction where the violation occurred or with the district attorney. I can charge my abuser with a violation of the protection order and all the crimes that he commits in violating the order. I can call the domestic violence advocate to help me with this.
- K. I will inform and provide a copy of my protection order to people who have contact with my children/grandchildren and pets. The people I will inform about my restraining order include: _____(school), _____(day care staff), _____(babysitter), _____(religious school teacher), _____(teacher), _____(coach), _____(vet), _____(pet sitter/dog walker), _____(others).

Step 5: Safety on the job or volunteer setting and in public.

Survivors must decide if and when to tell others about their experience as a survivor of domestic violence and that they may be at continued risk. Friends, family, and co-workers can help to protect survivors. Survivors should consider carefully which people to invite to help secure safety. I might do any or all of the following:

- A. I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and _____ at work of my situation.
- B. I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work.
- C. When leaving work/volunteer site, I can _____.
- D. When driving home if problems occur, I can _____.
- E. If I use public transit, I can _____.

- F. I can use different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business and shop at hours that are different than those that I used when residing with my abuser.
- G. I can use a different bank and take care of my banking at hours different from those I used when residing with my abuser.
- H. I can also _____.

Step 6: Safety and my emotional health.

Being battered and verbally degraded is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life for me takes incredible courage and energy. To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to avoid hard emotional times, I can do some of the following:

- A. If I feel down, I can _____.
- B. If I feel lonely and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can _____.
- C. When I have to communicate with my abuser in person or by telephone, I can _____.
- D. I can try to use "I can . . ." statements with myself and to be assertive with others.
- E. I can tell myself - " _____ " - whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.
- F. I can read _____ to help me feel stronger.
- G. I can call _____, _____ and _____ as other resources to be support for me.
- H. Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are _____ and _____.
- I. I can attend workshops and support groups at the domestic violence program or _____, _____ or _____ to gain support and strengthen my relationships with other people.

Step 7: Items to take when leaving.

When survivors leave their abusers, it is important to take certain items with them. Beyond this, survivors sometimes give extra copies of papers and sets of clothing to a friend, in case they have to leave quickly.

These items are the most important to take. If there is time, other items might be taken, or stored outside the home. These items might best be placed in one location, so that if we have to leave in a hurry, I can grab them quickly.

When I leave, I should take:

- * Identification for myself
- * Birth certificates: mine, children's, grandchildren's, etc
- * Social Security cards
- * Social Security award letter (if appropriate)
- * School and vaccination records
- * Vet and other pet records (including proof of animal abuse by abuser, if applicable)
- * Money, Credit cards
- * Checkbook, ATM (Automatic Teller Machine) card
- * Keys - house/car/office
- * Driver's license and registration
- * Bus pass, mobility ID card or special transit ID card for persons with disabilities
- * Medications and prescriptions
- * Welfare identification
- * Work permits
- * Green card
- * Passport(s)
- * Divorce papers
- * Medical records - for all family members
- * Assistive devices like glasses, dentures, walkers, canes, wheelchairs, hearing aids
- * Pet medications and any special dietary supplements/food
- * Lease/rental agreement, house deed, mortgage payment book
- * Insurance papers
- * Small saleable objects (i.e. jewelry)
- * Address book
- * Items of special sentimental value (i.e. photos, jewelry, letters)
- * Children's favorite toys and/or blankets

TECHNOLOGY SAFETY PLANNING WITH SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Technology can be very helpful to survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking, however it is important to also consider how technology might be misused.

- 1. Trust your instincts.** As a survivor, if you suspect the abusive person knows too much, it is possible that your phone, computer, email, or other activities are being monitored. Abusers and stalkers can act in incredibly persistent and creative ways to maintain power and control.
- 2. Plan for safety.** Navigating violence, abuse, and stalking is very difficult and dangerous. Advocates at the National Domestic Violence Hotline have been trained on technology issues, and can discuss options and with safety planning. (*National DV Hotline: 800-799-7233 or TTY 800-787- 3224.*)
- 3. Take precautions if you are safety planning around a “techy” abuser.** If computers and technology are a profession or a hobby for the abuser/stalker, trust the survivor’s instincts. If the survivor believes the abusive person is monitoring or tracking her, consider talking to the police.
- 4. Use a safer computer.** If anyone abusive has access to the survivor’s computer, the abuser may be monitoring the survivor’s computer activities. Try to locate a safer computer when helping the survivor look for resources, housing, etc. It may be safest to use a computer at a public library, community center, or Internet café.
- 5. Create a new email account.** If, as a survivor, you suspect that anyone abusive can access your email, consider creating an additional email account on a safer computer. Do not create or check this new email from a computer your abuser could access, in case it is monitored. Use an anonymous name, and account: (example: bluecat@email.com, not YourRealName@email.com) Look for free web-based email accounts, and do not provide detailed information about yourself.
- 6. Check your cell phone settings.** If, as a survivor, you are using a cell phone provided by the abusive person, consider turning it off when not in use. Also many phones let you “lock” the keys so a phone cannot automatically answer or initiate a call if it is bumped. When on, check the phone settings; if your phone has an optional location service, you may want to switch the location feature off/on via phone settings or by turning your phone on and off.
- 7. Change passwords & pin numbers.** Some abusers use survivor’s email and other accounts to impersonate and cause harm. If anyone abusive knows or could guess the survivor’s passwords, they should be changed quickly and frequently. This is true for any password protected accounts such as for online banking, voicemail, etc.
- 8. Minimize use of cordless phones or baby monitors.** Baby monitors and cordless phones are susceptible to privacy breaches. To minimize others hearing conversations, turn baby monitors off when not in use and use a traditional corded phone for sensitive and confidential conversations.
- 9. Use a donated or new cell phone.** Cell phone billing records and phone log can alert others to survivor’s phone activities, and plans for escape. Survivors should avoid using a shared or family cell phone when making or receiving private calls. Local communities may have donation programs that provide new cell phones and/or prepaid phone cards to survivors of abuse and stalking.
- 10. Ask about records and data.** Many court systems and government agencies are publishing records to the Internet. Ask agencies how they protect or publish records and request that court, government, post office and others seal or restrict access to files to protect safety.
- 11. Get a private mailbox and don’t give out your real address.** As a survivor, when you are asked by businesses, doctors, and others for your address, have a private mailbox address or a safer address to give them. Try to keep your true residential address out of local and national databases.
- 12. Search for your name on the Internet.** Major search engines such as “Google” or “Yahoo” may have links to your contact information. Search for your name in quotation marks: “Full Name”. Check phone directory pages because unlisted numbers might be listed if you gave your number to anyone.