MAKING A SAFETY PLAN

A safety plan identifies the steps you can take to increase your safety and helps prepare you, minor children, and any other affected family members to act quickly to protect yourselves in the event of future violence.

You can use the guide below to create your own safety plan.

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Unfortunately, there is no way that a safety plan can absolutely guarantee your safety or that of your loved ones. However, following this plan will reduce the chance that your abuser will have the opportunity to hurt you, or himself. Remember that you do not have control over your abuser’s actions, but you do have control over your own.

This plan should be used as a guide and reminder of ways all of you can increase your safety. This plan should be hidden in a safe place where the abuser is unlikely to find it. It should also be reviewed and updated on a regular basis if the situation or living environment changes.

1. WHILE THE ENVIRONMENT IS STILL CALM

Prepare an Escape Bag (or box or suitcase or any other portable container). Put in it essential articles or papers you will need if the abuser becomes violent and you need to leave in a hurry. It may be necessary to keep the container in a friend or relative’s home, your workplace, your spiritual community home, or any other place where the abuser will not have access to it. Here is a checklist of some items to consider placing in it:

_____ Identification
_____ Birth certificates
_____ Social Security cards
_____ Medicare or Medicaid cards
_____ Extra cash or traveler’s checks
_____ Lease, rental agreement, house deed
_____ Bankbooks
_____ Checkbooks
_____ Insurance papers
_____ Extra house and car keys
_____ Medical records for all family members
_____ Medications
_____ Extra eyeglasses
_____ Photographs of family members (including the abuser)
_____ Welfare identification papers
_____ School and college records, including diplomas
_____ Immigration papers
_____ Immunization records
_____ Work permits
_____ Passports
_____ Divorce papers
_____ Copy of Injunction for Protection
_____ Military discharge papers
_____ Jewelry and other small saleable objects
_____ Other (identify)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Open a separate bank account in your own name and have the statements sent to a
post office box or a friend or relative’s address so the abuser will not see them. Keep
account and PIN (Personal Identification Number) secret.

Identify people who would be able to let you stay with them temporarily or lend you
some money in an emergency:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
If other family members at risk and living with you are able to walk and talk, complete the following:

Prepare a plan of escape for yourself and other vulnerable family members, such as children and disabled or elderly adults. For example, tell them: “If we are talking on the phone and you hear me say the word ‘___________’, don’t come home. Instead go to ________________________ (place) and call 911. If ________________________ isn’t home, then go to ________________________ (place) and call 911. If you are in another room and you hear the sounds of fighting, leave the house/apartment by ________________ (window, another door), go to ________________________ (place) and call 911 from there. I want you to keep yourself safe and that will be the best way to help me. Don’t try to help me by fighting with _____________ because you might get hurt.”

If you are still living with the abuser, fill this information out now. If you move, revise it for your new residence immediately after the move.

Look over every room in the house and figure out the best way to escape during a violent incident. Discuss this with vulnerable family members.
If you are in your bedroom, the best way to escape is:
_______________________________.

If you are in the living room, the best way to escape is:
_______________________________.

If you are in the kitchen, the best way to escape is:
_______________________________.

If you hear sounds of fighting, you should not go in the ________________ (room) because there is no way to escape.

You know there are knives, guns, or other things that can be used to hurt you in these rooms: ________________________ so you will avoid being in them or leading the abuser into them during a violent incident.
If it is not possible to use any entryways to the house/apartment because of the location of the abuser, pick a safe room that has a lock and access to a telephone (this can be a 911 cell phone, which must be kept charged at all times.) Teach vulnerable family members to call for help by dialing 911. An operator will answer “911 – What is your emergency?” The caller will say “Someone at my house is being hurt. Send the police. My name is ______________; the address here is _______________; the phone number here is ______________. Leave the phone line open. After giving this information, answer any questions the 911 operator may ask.

2. DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT

There are weapons in these rooms: _______________________________. I will stay out of those rooms and will try to lead the abuser away from them. Avoid being backed into a corner or into a room with no exits.

If possible, dial 911 from the home phone and hang up or leave the phone off the hook. The address of the home phone will be displayed to the 911 operator. This will not work from a mobile phone!

If the abuser already has a weapon or the situation appears very dangerous, take whatever action you believe may calm him/her down. Protect yourself in any way you can. If you’re being beaten or kicked, curl up on the floor and protect your head with your arms.

3. AFTER THE ABUSER IS NO LONGER IN THE HOME

Change the locks on the doors and install safety devices on all windows. This is not necessary if you have moved to a new location and you are sure the abuser has never had keys to the residence. If you are in the same or a new residence, check with the police department about the best way to secure doors and windows.

If you have minor children list below the people who have permission to pick up your children from school or daycare. Copy this list to a separate piece of paper and give it to your children’s school administrators, teachers, after school caregivers, etc. and ask that they get identification from anyone who attempts to pick up your children from school.

_________________________________________
List your landlord and neighbors listed below. Tell them that the abuser no longer lives with you and ask them to call 911 if they see him/her near your home.

If you have an Injunction for Protection against the abuser, make several copies, keep one with you at all times and keep copies in the following places:

If you are employed, list trusted coworkers and/or supervisors to whom you can disclose your situation. Tell them the abuser’s name so that they will not put phone calls through from him. Provide a picture of the abuser so they will know what he looks like.

If you are employed, list trusted coworkers, supervisors, or security personnel whom you can ask to escort you to your car or bus when you leave work. Remember to vary the time you leave and the route you take to and from work.

If the abuser is entitled to visitation with the children, list the ways in which you’ll keep yourself and your children safe before, during and after visitation.
To increase safety, provide your workplace, church, school, etc. with the following description of the abuser and a recent photograph, if available:

Height ____________ Weight ____________ Age ____________
Race__________
Hair Color ____________ Eye color ________________ Glasses ____________

Scars, tattoos, other distinguishing characteristics

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

Description of abuser’s vehicle:

Year_______ Make_______________________
Model____________________________
Color_____________ Plate #_______________

Distinguishing marks/damages:

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

**EMOTIONAL HEALING**

List below the people whom you trust and can turn to for emotional support:

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

Go to the library and find books, articles and poems that can help you identify your feelings about your situation and feel stronger about your ability to cope.

Find out where there are support groups and list them below:

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

List the places and people who can provide emotional support for your children.