

Personalized Safety Plan

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility of further violence. Although I do not have control over my partner's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to him/her and how to best get myself and my children to safety.

Step 1: Safety during a violent incident.

Women cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, battered women 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?)

B. I can keep my purse and car keys ready and put them (place) _____ in order to leave quickly.

C. I can tell _____ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.

D. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and the fire department.

E. I will use _____ as my code word with my children 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 some/all of my children.

H. When I expect we are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as _____

(Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage and kitchens, 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 partner what he/she wants to calm him/her down. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

Step 2: Safety when preparing to leave.

Battered women frequently leave the residence they share with the battering partner. Leaving must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. Batterers often strike back when they believe that a battered woman is leaving a relationship. I can use some or all of the following 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 leave money and an extra set of keys with _____

D. Other things I can do to increase independence include:

E. The domestic violence program's hotline number is _____
I can seek shelter by calling the hotline.

F. I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use my cell phone or 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 communication confidential, I must either use coins or I might get a friend to permit me to use their telephone credit card or cell phone for a limited time when I first leave.

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. I will sit down and review my safety plan on a regular basis in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence.

(A domestic violence advocate or friend can help me review this plan.)

J. 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 a woman can do to increase her safety in her own residence. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but the 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.
- B. I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- C. I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.
- D. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- E. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.
- F. I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.
- G. I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to _____ (friend/other) in the event that my partner takes the children.
- H. I will tell people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick up my children and that my partner is not permitted to do so.

The people I will inform about pick-up permission include:

- _____ (school)
- _____ (day care staff)
- _____ (babysitter)
- _____ (Sunday school teacher)
- _____ (teacher)
- _____ (and others)

I. I can inform _____ (neighbors)
and _____ (friend)
that my partner no longer resides with me and they should call the police if he is observed near my residence.

Step 4. Safety with a protection order.

Many batterers obey protection orders, but one can never be sure which violent partner will obey and which will violate protection orders. I recognize that 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 a purse, that's the first thing that should go in.)

B. If my partner destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the courthouse by going to _____ (the office) located at _____.

C. If my partner 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.

Step 5: Safety on the job and in public.

Each battered woman must decide if and when she will tell others that her partner has battered her and that she may be at continued risk. Friends, family and co-workers can help to protect women.

Each woman should consider carefully which people to invite to help her 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 telephones calls at work.

C. When I leave work, 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 when residing with my battering partner.

G. I can use a different bank and take care of my banking at hours different from those I used when residing with my battering partner.

H. I can also _____.

Step 6: Safety and drug or alcohol use.

The use of any alcohol or other drugs can reduce a woman's awareness and ability to act quickly to protect herself from her battering partner. Furthermore, the use of alcohol or other drugs by the batterer may give him/her an excuse to use violence. Therefore, in the context of drug or alcohol use, a woman needs to make specific safety plans.

If drug or alcohol use has occurred in my relationship with the battering partner, I can enhance my safety by some or all of the following:

A. If I am going to use, I can do so in a safe-place and with people who understand the risk of violence and are committed to my safety.

B. If my partner is using, I can

_____.

C. To safeguard my children, I might _____

_____ and _____.

Step 7: Items to take when leaving.

When women leave partners, it is important to take certain items with them. Beyond this, women sometimes give an extra copy of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case they have to leave quickly.

The following items might best be placed in one location, so that if I have to leave in a hurry, I can grab them quickly.

- Identification for myself
- Children's birth certificates
- My birth certificate
- Social Security cards
- Welfare identification
- School vacation records
- Money
- Checkbook, ATM (Automatic Teller Machine) Card
- Credit cards
- Bank books and insurance papers
- Keys (house, car, office)\
- Drivers license and registration
- Medications and medical records for all family members
- Work permits, Green Card or Passport(s)
- Divorce papers
- Lease/rental agreement, house deed, mortgage payment book
- Telephone numbers I need to know: Police department, school/work, Turning Point, McHenry County Crisis Line, friend or relative.
- Insurance papers
- Address book
- Pictures
- Children's favorite toys and/or blankets
- Items of special sentimental value