

Children's Safety Plan

Children require a safe environment in which to live. When their home life is a battleground involving adults who live there, it can be traumatic and possibly dangerous. As the non-violent caregiver, you need to develop a safety and escape plan with your children.

This plan provides safeguards for your children and a way for them to get you immediate emergency help when necessary. The children need to understand the violence is not their fault nor is it their responsibility to intervene in an attempt to protect you from your abuser.

I will provide the following for my children:

1. I will set up a safe room in our home for the children to go to in the event that my partner becomes abusive. This room will be, if possible, on ground level so the children can leave through a window if it becomes necessary.
2. The safe room will have a lock on the door and a cellular/cordless phone in a location, known to only the children and myself, with the police emergency number pre-programmed on a speed dial.
3. The children will become familiar with the telephone and the location of the emergency speed dial key. We will practice saying, "Someone is hurting my mommy/daddy/son/stepmom/stepdad/etc." just in case one of the children has to call the police.
4. I will teach the children to take the telephone inside the closet in the safe room when they call the police. The children will not hang up the phone after they call. I will teach them to stay on the line with the police operator until the police arrive at our house.
5. I will teach my children our home phone number and complete address including directions:

6. The children and I will have a predetermined code word: _____ to alert the children to go immediately to the safe room. I will have an additional code word _____ to alert the children to immediately leave our home and run to _____ (our pre-arranged "emergency friend" such as our neighbor, the corner store, or a Block-Parent house) and ask an adult to call the police.

Personal Safety Plan

Domestic Violence means an incident of violence or threat of violence occurring anywhere between:

- Husband and wife
- Same gender partners
- Common-law partners
- Any partnership involving intimacy, such as dating relationship or an extramarital affair, and Includes persons previously involved together in any of the above relationships.

The Criminal Code of Canada explains that criminal harassment occurs when a person, not having authority to do so;

- Repeatedly follows, communicates, and/or watches an individual or anyone known to the individual, and/or
- Watches the home, and/or workplace of the individual, or
- Engages in threatening conduct directed at the individual or their family

The person suspected of any of these activities must know that

- The individual is being harassed and
- The activity is causing the individual to reasonably fear for their safety or the safety of anyone known to them

The term “victim” will be used throughout the Personal Safety Plan and includes anyone who is or perceives themselves to be a victim of domestic violence and/or criminal harassment. The steps represent a plan for increasing the personal safety of a victim of domestic violence and/or criminal harassment. This plan is designed to help victims prepare for the possibility of further violence. Victims have a choice about how to respond to a known offender, and how to best get themselves and their children to safety.

Step 1: Safety During A Violent Incident

Victims cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, abuse victims may develop a variety of plans.

Some or all of the following plans are to be considered:

A. If I decide to leave I will _____

(Practice how to get out safely. For example, what doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, or fire escape will you use?)

B. I can keep my purse/wallet/identification, car keys, and emergency cash ready and put them in (place) _____ in order to leave quickly.

C. I can tell (list two trusted friends/neighbors and their phone numbers.) _____ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house or if they cannot locate me.

D. I will use _____ as my code word with my friends/relatives so they can get help.

E. If I have to leave my home, I will go to _____ (Decide this even if you don't think there will be another violent incident.) If I cannot go to the above location, then I can go to _____.

F. I can also teach some of these plans to my children.

G. When I expect my partner and I are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk such as _____. (Remember to avoid the bathroom, kitchen, garage, rooms containing items that can be used as weapons and rooms without access to the outside.)

H. I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I should consider doing what I know would calm my partner down. I must remember that I have to protect the children and myself.

Step 2: Safety When Preparing To Leave

Abuse victims sometimes do leave the residence they share with the abuser. Leaving must be well planned in order to increase safety. Abusers often strike back when they believe that the abused partner is leaving the relationship.

I can use some or all of the following plans.

A. I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____ so I can leave quickly.

B. I will keep copies of important papers at _____.

C. I will open a savings account by _____ (date) in order to increase my independence.

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

E. The local Family Resource Centre telephone number is: _____

F. The local crisis number is: _____

G. I can keep change or a phone card with me at all times for phone calls. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, the following month the telephone bill will tell my abuser those numbers that I called after I left. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I must either use coins or the quick change phone card, or I will get a friend to permit me to use a telephone credit card for a limited time when I first leave.

H. I will contact _____ and _____ for a temporary place to stay and for emergency financial assistance.

I. I can leave extra clothes with _____.

J. I will sit down and review my safety plan every _____ (week, two weeks, month?) in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. My caseworker/friend agrees to help me review this plan.

K. I will rehearse my escape plan as appropriate and practice it with my children.

Step 3: Safety In My Own Residence

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

Safety measures I use can include:

- A. Changing the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
- B. Replacing wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- C. Installing security systems such as additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system with “panic button”.
- D. Purchasing rope ladders to be used for escape from second-floor windows.
- E. Installing smoke detectors and purchasing fire extinguishers for each floor in my house or apartment.
- F. Installing an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my home.
- G. Teaching my children how to use the telephone (including area code) to make a collect call to me and to my trusted friend/neighbor or relative in the event my partner abducts the children.
- H. Teaching my children a code word that grants them permission to leave with a person other than myself only when the person uses that code word in direct communication with my children.
- I. Remembering to give my code word to the person(s) instructed to collect my children in an emergency or any other unusual situation AND changing the code word with my children once it has been used.
- J. Telling those 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 _____
 - Daycare _____
 - Babysitter _____
 - Others _____
- K. Informing (neighbor/friend) _____ that my partner no longer resides with me and they should call the police if they observe my partner at or near my residence.

Step 4: Safety with a Court Order

Some abusers obey court orders such as peace bonds, where they promise the court that they will obey all terms and conditions of such an order. Unfortunately, no one can be sure which abuser will obey and which will go against a court order.

The following are steps that I can take to help enforce my partner's court order.

A. Recognize that I will have to report to the police when my partner disobeys any conditions of the court order. I also understand that I must not contribute in any way that may cause my partner to breach the court order. If the police do not assist me, I will report the breach of the court order to the Detachment Commander of the local OPP detachment or to the Officer in Charge or to the Police Chief of the Police Service in the jurisdiction where the court order was violated.

B. Get a copy of my partner's court order from the court office located at _____.

And keep it with me at all times.

C. If my partner destroys my copy of the court order, I will get another copy from the court located at _____.

D. If I relocate to another city/town or if I work in a city/town other than where I reside, I will notify the Police Service or OPP Detachment in that city/town of my new address/work location AND tell them about my partner's violent behavior including the details of any court order.

E. For further safety, if I often visit other cities, towns or countries, I will notify the police service in the jurisdiction I am visiting of my partner's violent behavior and the details of any court order.

F. I will inform my employer _____, closest friend _____, and my worker _____, that a court order has been issued against my partner, including all of the conditions that affect my children and myself.

Step 5: Safety on the Job and in Public

Each victim must decide if and when they will tell others that their partner can become violent and that they may be at continued risk. Friends, family and co-workers can help to protect the victim. Each victim should consider carefully which people to invite to secure the victim's safety.

I might do any or all of the following...

A. Inform my boss, the security supervisor and _____ (secretary, co-workers, etc.) of my situation.

B. Ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work. I can also make use of telephone voice messaging to screen my calls.

C. When leaving work, I can walk from the building _____ (accompanied by co-workers, friends, etc) to ensure my safety.

D. If problems occur while I am driving home, I can _____ (use my cellular phone, personal sound alarm, honk my horn continuously, drive directly to a well lit public place that is open and filled with people, drive to a local Police Service when open for help).

E. If I use public transit, I can _____ (sit close to the driver, arrange to have someone meet me at the bus stop and walk me home; once I arrive home call a friend or relative to let them know I arrived safely).

F. I can shop at different grocery stores and shopping malls, and shop at different hours than those I used when living with my partner.

G. I can also _____

Step 6: Safety and Drug/Alcohol Consumption

Most people in our culture consume alcohol. Some use mood-altering drugs. Much of this activity is legal and some is not.

The legal outcomes of using illegal drugs can be very hard on a victim of abuse, may hurt relationships with the victim's children and put the victim at a disadvantage in other legal actions with the abuser. Therefore, victims should carefully consider the potential risks associated with the use of illegal drugs. But beyond this, use of alcohol and/or drugs can reduce a victim's awareness and the ability to act quickly to protect both the victim and the victim's children from the abuser. Furthermore, the use of alcohol or drugs by the abuser may give the abuser an excuse to use violence. Therefore, in the context of drug or alcohol use, a victim needs to make specific plans.

If drug or alcohol consumption has occurred in my relationship with my partner, I can improve my safety by some or all of the following.

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

B. I can also (call a friend, AA sponsor, etc) _____.

C. If my partner is using alcohol or drugs, I can (leave with the children, call a friend)

D. To safeguard my children, I can (remove them from the scene where my partner is using alcohol or drugs) _____.

E. I can carry extra money for taxi/public transit.

Step 7: Safety and My Emotional Health

The experience of being abused and/or verbally degraded by partners is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life for yourself takes much courage and incredible 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 and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can (call a friend, relative or crisis line) for support _____.

B. When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I will state that I am recording our conversation and then do just that. I will also arrange to have a trusted friend or close adult relative present during those meetings/telephone calls, or make arrangements for all communications to go through a lawyer or other third party _____.

C. I will use "I can" statements with myself and with others.

D. I can tell myself, "I'm in charge of my life and confident in my ability to make decisions" when I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.

E. I can read (poetry, self-help resources) to help me feel stronger.

F. I can call (friends, family, other support people) _____ to support me.

G. Other things I can do to help me feel stronger in both body and mind are (continuing education, self defense courses, etc) _____.

H. I can attend workshops and support groups offered through community resource centers, shelters for abused victims or the local health unit _____ to gain support and strengthen my relationships with people.

Step 8: Items to Take When I Leave

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

Items with an asterisk (*) on the following checklist are the most important to take. If there is time, the 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 shall take...

- * My personal identification (birth certificate, driver's license, passport, etc)
- * Immigration papers
- * Children's passport
- * Children's birth certificates, adoption papers, custody orders
- * Social insurance cards
- * My partner's social insurance number
- * Keys
- * Money
- * Checkbook, ATM card
- * Bankbooks
- * Welfare, mother's allowance identification
- * Mortgage payment documents
- * Divorce documentation
- * Medical records for all family members
- * My health card
- * My children's health card
- * Med./prescriptions, drug benefit card
- * School and vaccination records
- Work permits
- Lease/rental agreements, property deeds

Step 9: Important Telephone Numbers

Police, Ambulance, Fire 911

OPP 1-888-310-1122

Shelter _____

Crisis Line _____

Rape Crisis Line _____

Kids Help Line 1-800-668-6868

Doctor _____

Lawyer _____

Work _____

Work Supervisor Home _____

Children's School _____

Children's Daycare _____

Social Worker _____

Police Officer Contact _____

Other Important Numbers
