

Safety Planning in Situations of Woman Abuse

During an Explosive Incident

- **Go to an area that has an exit.**
Not a bathroom (near hard surfaces), kitchen (knives), or near weapons.
- **Stay in a room with a phone.**
Call 911, a friend or a neighbour, if possible. Inform them if there are weapons in the home.
- **Know your escape route.**
Practice how to get out of your home safely. Visualize your escape route.
- **Have a packed bag ready.**
Keep it hidden in a handy place in order to leave quickly, or leave the bag elsewhere if the abuser searches your home.
- **Devise a code word or signal.**
Tell your children, grandchildren or neighbors so you can communicate to them that you need the police.
- **Know where you're going.**
Plan where you will go if you have to leave home, even if you don't think you'll need to.
- **Trust your judgment.**
Consider anything that you feel will keep you safe and give you time to figure out what to do next. Sometimes it is best to flee and sometimes it is best to placate the abuser – anything that works to protect yourself and the children.

Preparing to Leave

Leaving can be the most dangerous time!

- **Have a safe place to stay.**
Make sure it is a place that can protect you and your children or grandchildren.
- **Call a domestic violence victim service program.**
Find out which services and shelters are available as options if you need them. Keep their address and phone number close at hand at all times.
- **Find someone you trust.**
Leave money, extra keys, copies of important documents and clothing with them in advance, so you can leave quickly, if necessary.
- **Open a savings account.**
Put it in your name only, to increase your independence. Consider direct deposit from your paycheck or benefit check.
- **Review your safety plan.**
Study and check your plans as often as possible in order to know the safest way to leave the abuser.

In Your Home

- **Upgrade your security system.**
Change the locks on doors and windows as soon as possible. Consider a security service, window bars, better lighting, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.
- **Have a safety plan.**
Teach your children or grandchildren how to call the police or someone they can trust. Have a secret code word that you and your children agree on – to communicate trouble and for the people who are allowed to pick the children up.
- **Change your phone number.**
Screen your calls if you have an answering machine or caller ID. Save all messages with threats or that violate any orders. Contact your local phone company about getting an unpublished number.
- **Talk to neighbours and landlord.**
Inform them that the abuser no longer lives with you and that they should call the police if they see the abuser near your home.
- **Get legal advice.**
Find a lawyer knowledgeable about domestic violence to explore custody, visitation and divorce provisions that protect you and the children. Discuss getting a restraining order as an option.

At Your Job

- **Tell somebody.**
Decide whom at work you will inform of your situation. This may include office security if available. Provide a picture of the abuser if possible.
 - **Screen your calls.**
Arrange to have someone screen and log your telephone calls if possible.
 - **Make a safety plan.**
Create a safety plan for when you enter and leave your work place. Have someone escort you to your vehicle or other transportation.
- If you and the abuser work at the same place, discuss with your supervisor your options regarding scheduling, safety precautions, employee/family benefits.
- Contact your local domestic violence victim services program to receive additional information about workplace safety.

For your Mental Health

- **Get support.**
Call a domestic violence crisis help-line and/or attend a women's or victims' support group for at least two weeks to gain support from others and learn more about yourself and the relationship with the abuser.
- **Do what is safe for you.**
If you have to communicate with the abuser, arrange to do so in the way that makes you feel safe – whether by phone, mail or in the company of another person.

For Your Children

- **Tell schools and childcare.**
Let them know who has permission to pick up the children and give them your code word. Discuss with them other special provisions to protect you and your children. Provide a picture of the abuser if possible.
- **Exchange children in a safe place.**
Find a safe place to exchange the children for visitation. Some communities have specific locations just for this purpose. Contact your local domestic violence victim services program for more information.

Checklist - What You Want to Take When You Leave

- Identification
- Drivers License, car title and registration
- Children's Birth Certificates
- Money
- Restraining Order
- Lease, rental agreement, house deed
- Bank books/ cheque books
- Insurance papers
- House and car keys
- Medications
- Address books, pictures
- Medical records for all family members
- Social Security card
- Welfare identification
- School Records
- Work permits
- Immigration papers, passport
- Divorce papers
- Jewellery, children's small toys
- Pets (if you can)