

Why is a Safety Plan Necessary?

Once a violent act occurs in a relationship, the violence almost always reoccurs. In fact, the violence tends to occur more frequently and will most likely increase in severity. This happens even though the abuser is likely to apologize and will promise to change.

Therefore, it is extremely important that you have a plan and think ahead about what should be done in case of an attack, or repeated attacks from your abuser upon you or your children.

Although some abusers do not give any indications or signals prior to an abusive incident, you may be able to predict an attack by your abuser's behavior. For example, a certain look, a certain phrase that is said, certain times of the month or year, or when discussing various subjects which could provoke anger, are some things to look for.

In many cases, victims of domestic violence contemplate leaving their abusers several times before finally taking action. There are some practical steps which you can use to help keep you and your children safe.

Safety With a Protective Order

If you or your children have been threatened or assaulted you can request a protective order from your county District Court Clerk.

You may request a protective order 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. After business hours you will need to contact the Police Department to seek one.

Among, other things, you may request temporary custody, an order for no contact, and/or an order for the batterer to vacate the home.

Keep your protective order on you at all times.

Give a copy of the order to your child's school.

Call the police if your partner breaks the order.

Safety During an Explosive Incident

If an argument seems unavoidable, try to have it in a room or area where you have access to an exit. Try to stay away from the bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, or anywhere else where weapons might be available.

Practice how to get out of your home safely. Identify which doors, windows, elevator, or stairwell would be best. Practice these safety measures with your kids.

Identify one or more neighbors you can tell about the violence and ask that they call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.

Devise a code word to use with your children, family, friends, and neighbors when you need the police.

Decide and plan for where you will go if you have to leave home (even if you don't think you will need to.)

Use your instincts and judgments. If the situation is very dangerous, consider giving the abuser what he/she wants to calm them down. You have the right to protect yourself until you are out of danger.

Safety In Your Own Home

Change the locks on your door as soon as possible. Buy additional locks and safety devices to secure your windows.

Discuss a Safety Plan with your children.

Inform your children's school, daycare, etc. about who has permission to pick up your children.

Inform neighbors and landlord that your partner no longer lives with you and that they should call the police if they see him/her near your home.

Designate a "safe meeting place" with your children.

Safety when Preparing to Leave

Open a savings account and/or credit card in your own name to start to establish or increase your independence.

Get your own post office box or have information mailed to a safe address. You can privately receive checks and letters to begin your independence.

Leave money, an extra set of keys, copies of important documents, extra medicines, and clothes with someone you trust or in a safe place so you can leave quickly.

Determine who would be able to let you stay with them or lend you some money.

Keep the shelter or hotline phone number close at hand at all times for emergency phone calls, or memorize the number.

Review and update your safety plan as often as possible in order to plan the safest way to leave your batterer.

Think of other ways to increase independence

Remember: Leaving your abuser is the most dangerous time!

Safety On the Job and In Public

Decide who at work you will inform of your situation. This should include office or building security. Provide a picture of your batterer if possible.

Arrange to have an answering machine, Caller ID, or a trusted friend to screen your calls.

Devise a Safety Plan for when you leave work.

