

Planning for Your Safety

Safety Before and During an Assault...

- When an attack has begun, escape if you can. When you believe that you are in danger, leave your home and take your children, no matter the time of day or night. Go to a friend or relative's house or a domestic violence shelter.
- Defend and protect yourself. Later, take photos of your injuries.
- Call for help. Scream loudly and continuously. You have nothing to be ashamed of – the batterer does.
- During an argument, stay close to an exit and avoid the bathroom, kitchen, or any place near weapons.
- Practice getting out of your home safely. Identify which doors, windows, elevator, or stairwell would be best.
- Have a packed bag ready, and keep it in a secret but accessible place so you can leave quickly.
- Identify neighbors you can tell about the violence and ask them to 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.
- Plan where you will go if you have to leave home, even if you don't think you will.
- Be cautious about visiting domestic violence websites. Internet activity can be monitored.
- Trust your own instincts and judgment. Whatever you need to do to survive is the right choice. You have the right to protect yourself.

Safety When Preparing to Leave...

- Open a savings account in your own name to establish your independence. Give the bank a safe address, such as a post office box or a work address. Think of other ways to increase your independence.
- Leave money, an extra set of keys, copies of important documents, and extra clothes with someone you trust so you can leave quickly.
- Decide who you could stay with and who might loan you some money.
- Keep the shelter's phone number close at hand and keep some change or a calling card on you at all times for emergencies.
- Review your safety plan as often as possible in order to plan the safest way to leave your batterer. Leaving your batterer is the most dangerous time. If you must leave your children, recover them as soon as possible. Courts tend to give custody to a parent who physically has the children. Seek legal advice or call a domestic violence agency if there are no current child custody orders.

Safety When Living on Your Own...

- Change the locks on your doors as soon as possible. Buy additional locks and safety devices to secure your windows.
- Call your local phone company to ask for an unlisted phone number. This service may be free of charge.
- Create a safety plan with your children for times when you are not with them.
- Inform your children's school, day care, 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 or her near your home.

Safety With a Protective Order...

- Keep your protective order on you at all times.
- Call police if your partner breaks the protective order.
- Keep a diary detailing any contact, threats, messages, or letters. Save phone message tapes.
- Think of alternative ways to stay safe if the police do not respond right away.
- Give copies of your Protective Order and Proof of Service to everyone listed on the order along with family, friends, and neighbors who are willing to help you.

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 someone screen your telephone calls if possible.
- Devise a safety plan for when you leave work. Have someone escort you to your car, bus, or train. Use a variety of routes to go home if possible. Think about what you would do if something happened while you were on your way home.

Your Safety and Emotional Health...

- If you are thinking of returning to a potentially abusive situation, discuss an alternative plan with someone you trust.
- If you have to communicate with your partner, determine the safest way to do so.
- Have positive thoughts about yourself and be assertive with others about your needs.
- Read books, articles, and poems to help you feel stronger.
- Decide who you can call to talk freely and openly to give you the support you need.
- Plan to attend a women's or victim's support group to gain support from others and learn more about yourself, domestic violence, and relationships.

CHECKLIST: What You Need to Take With You When You Leave...

<input type="checkbox"/>	Identification, driver's license, car registration
<input type="checkbox"/>	Court orders, restraining orders
<input type="checkbox"/>	Birth certificates for you and your children
<input type="checkbox"/>	Police reports / documentation of previous abuse
<input type="checkbox"/>	Money
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bank books and / or bank account numbers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Checkbooks, credit cards, ATM card
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lease / rental agreement, house deed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Medical, life, and auto insurance papers
<input type="checkbox"/>	House and car keys
<input type="checkbox"/>	Medications
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small saleable objects
<input type="checkbox"/>	Address book
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pictures
<input type="checkbox"/>	Medical records for all family members
<input type="checkbox"/>	Social Security card
<input type="checkbox"/>	Welfare identification
<input type="checkbox"/>	School and immunization records
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work permits / identification
<input type="checkbox"/>	Passport or "Green Card"
<input type="checkbox"/>	Divorce papers / marriage license
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jewelry
<input type="checkbox"/>	Children's clothing and small toys
<input type="checkbox"/>	Spare eyeglasses or contact lenses
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

REMEMBER: These *things* are not as important as the lives of you and your children!