

Personalized Safety Plan

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility for 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 employ 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 and house 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.

I can also 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 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.) If I cannot go to the location above, then I can go to _____ or _____.
- 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 _____.
- 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 strategically 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 safety 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. If possible, I will open a savings account by _____, to increase my independence.
- D. Other things I can do to increase my independence include: _____

_____.
- E. The domestic violence program's hotline number is (919) 545-0224. I can seek shelter by calling this number anytime (24 hours a day.)
- F. I can keep change for phone calls at all times. I should not use my telephone credit card because the following month, the telephone bill will tell my batterer those numbers that I called after I left. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I must either use coins, I might use a prepaid phone card that can be bought at grocery and department stores or I might get a friend to permit me to use their telephone credit card 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 every _____ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. _____ (domestic violence advocate or friend) has agreed to 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 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, especially if my partner has a set of keys.
- B. I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to _____ (friend/minister/other) in the event that my partner abducts the children.
- C. I can move/hide weapons and sharp knives in the residence.
- D. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment, making sure they operate correctly.
- E. I will make sure that entrances are well lit and that all lightbulbs are in working order. If possible, I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.
- F. If possible, I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.

If possible I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.

If possible, I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.

- G. 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)
_____ (baby-sitter)
_____ (Sunday school)
_____ (teacher)
_____ (others)

- H. I can inform _____ (neighbor), _____ (pastor), 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/restraining orders, but one can never be sure which will violate protection/restraining orders. I recognize that I may need to ask the police and the courts to enforce my protection/restraining order.

The following are some steps that I can take to help enforcement of my protection/restraining order:

- A. I will keep my protection/restraining order _____ (location). (Always keep it on or near your person. If you change purses, that's the first thing that should go in.)
- B. I will give my protection/restraining order to the police/sheriff's departments in the community where I work, in those communities where I usually visit family or friends, and in the community where I live.
- C. For further safety, if I visit other counties in North Carolina or other states, I might file my protection/restraining order with the court in those counties. I will register my protection/restraining order in the following counties/states: _____, _____ and _____.
- D. I can call the local domestic violence program if I am not sure about B or C above, or if I have some problem with my protection/restraining order.
- E. I will inform my employer, my minister, my closest friend and _____ and _____ that I have a protection/restraining order in effect.
- F. If my partner destroys my protection/restraining order, I can get another copy from the courthouse located at _____.
- G. If my partner violates the protection/restraining order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.
- H. If the police do not help, I can contact my advocate or attorney and they will file a complaint with the chief of the police department or the sheriff.
- I. I can also file a motion to show cause with the district attorney. I can charge my battering partner with a violation of the protection/restraining order and all the crimes that he commits in violating the order. I can call the domestic violence advocate to help me with this.

Step 5: Safety on the job and in public. Each battered woman must consider 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 her 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. When leaving work, I can _____.
- C. When driving home, if problems occur, I can _____.
- D. I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work.
- E. If I use public transit, I can _____.
- F. I can use different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct business and shop hours that are different than those when residing with my battering partner.
- G. I can also _____.

Step 6: Safety and drug or alcohol consumption. Most people in this culture consume alcohol. Many consume mood-altering drugs. Much of this consumption is legal and some is not. The legal outcomes of using illegal drugs can be very hard on a battered woman, may hurt her relationship with her children and put her at a disadvantage in other legal actions with her battering partner. Therefore, women should carefully consider the potential cost of the use of illegal drugs. But beyond this, 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 consumption, a woman needs to make specific plans.

If drug or alcohol consumption 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 consume, I can do so in a safe place and with people who understand the risk of violence and are committed to my safety. (Not applicable to women recovering from alcohol and/or drug addiction.)
- B. I can also _____.
- C. If my partner is consuming, I can _____.
- D. I might also _____.
- E. To safeguard my children, I might _____ and _____.

Step 7: Safety and my emotional health. The experience of being battered and verbally degraded by partners is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life for myself 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 _____.
- B. When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can _____.
- C. I can try to use “I can . . .” statements with myself and to be assertive with others.
- D. I can tell myself – “_____” whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.
- E. I can read _____ to help me feel stronger.
- F. I can call _____, _____ and _____ as other resources to be of support to me.
- G. Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are _____ and _____.
- H. I can attend workshops and support groups at the domestic violence program or _____, or _____.

_____ to gain support and strengthen
my relationships with other people.

Step 8: *Items to take when leaving.* When women are leaving partners, it is important to take certain items with them. However, keep in mind that while these things are important, no piece of paper is worth your life. If danger is immediate, just leave and deal with the reconstruction of your documents when you are safe. Because it is sometimes impossible to take anything with you from the residence at the actual time you are leaving, you may want to consider giving an extra copy of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case you have to leave quickly.

Items with asterisks (*) on the following list are the most important to take. If there is time, the other items might be taken or stored outside the home.

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

When I leave, I should take:

- *Identification for myself
- *Children's birth certificates
- *My birth certificate
- *Passport(s)
- *Green card
- *Work permits
- * Social Security cards
- *School and vaccination records
- *Money
- *Checkbook, ATM card
- *Credit cards
- *Keys – house/car/office
- *Drivers license and registration
- *Medications
- Welfare identification
- Divorce papers
- Medical records – for all family members
- Lease/rental agreement, house deed, mortgage payment book
- Bank books
- Insurance papers
- Small salable objects
- Address book
- Pictures
- Jewelry
- Children's favorite toys and/or blankets
- Items of special sentimental value

Telephone numbers I need to know:

Police department – home _____
Police department – school _____
Police department – work _____
Battered women’s program _____
Clerk of Court (protection orders) _____
Work number _____
Supervisor’s home number _____
Priest/Minister _____
Other _____
