

Personal Security Measures

A safety plan is a proactive, personal, and practical plan that helps victims consider and prepare for options that can enhance their safety and protection while *in or preparing to leave* an abusive relationship. While a safety plan cannot *prevent* further abuse, it can help victims to reduce the risk of harm to their loved ones and themselves and to raise their level of personal protection.

The creation of a safety plan – in conjunction with victim assistance – can also empower victims and give them a sense of control over their decisions, and their lives. Considerations for safety planning include the type of victimization, crime victims' rights within a state, services available to victims, and personal choices based upon a survivor's prior experiences.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline has developed an [Interactive Guide to Safety Planning](#).

Safety Plan Suggestions

Below are suggestions that apply to safety regarding women's residence, children and family, employment, transportation, public, online, and other common day-to-day situations.

Safety in my Residence

- I can change the locks on my doors and windows.
- I can replace wooden doors with steel or other metal doors.
- I can install burglar bars on my doors and windows.
- I can install a security system in my home.
- I can have a pet dog who will bark when a stranger is near.
- I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from windows above the first floor.
- If my residence has multiple floors, I can keep a broom in my bedroom to bang on the ceiling to alert neighbors living above me.
- I can install smoke detectors on every floor of my home.
- I can purchase a fire extinguisher for every floor of my home.
- I can install an outside lighting system that is motion sensitive.
- I can put glass or other fragile objects in front of windows that will loudly break upon any intrusion.
- I can reduce sight obstructions in my yard(s).
- I can get an answering machine or voice mail service and save any recordings of intimidation or harassment.
- I can get an unlisted telephone number for both landline and cell phones.
- I can keep my cell phone on and near me when I am sleeping at night.
- I can request that my local law enforcement agency conduct a safety check of my home.
- I can provide a current photograph of the designated individual and description of their vehicle to my local law enforcement agency and ask that they notify me if they are observed in close proximity to my home.

- I can request that my local law enforcement agency drive by my house on regular patrols and check in with me periodically.
- I can keep my purse/wallet and car keys ready and put them _____ in order to leave quickly.
- I can make extra copies of my home and car keys and leave them with _____.
- I can always have \$_____ cash on hand in a safe place in case of emergency.
- I can ask neighbors, family members, and friends to call the police if they hear or see suspicious noises, persons, or other activities in or near my home.
- I can develop a signal to alert my neighbors to any potentially dangerous situations (pulling down window shades, blinking a porch light).
- I can use _____ as my “code phrase” with my children, neighbors, or friends and ask that they call for help when they hear me say the code phrase.
- If I have to leave my home, I can go _____.
- If I decide to leave, I can _____ (list activities that can facilitate a safe departure, i.e. doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, fire escapes, etc.)
- I can keep important documents, cards, and other items in a safe place:
 - Any order of protection or no-contact order
 - Individuals previous law enforcement records
 - Cell phone number
 - Driver’s license and registration
 - Birth certificates for self and children
 - Social security cards for self and children
 - Insurance papers for home/auto/life
 - Leases, rental agreements, or mortgage information
 - Medical/dental/health/immunization records for self and children
 - Prescriptions and medications
 - Eyeglasses
 - My pet’s license(s), proof of vaccinations, etc.
 - Checkbook
 - Credit and ATM cards
 - Proof of income (check stubs, W-2 forms) and income tax returns
 - Credit card information
 - Bank account(s) information
 - Personal will or documentation of estate planning
 - Children’s school records
 - Address book
 - List of important telephone numbers

Victims’ Rights Relevant to Safety

- I have received information about victim services that can assist me in the community.
- I have requested and received measures of protection, and I understand the parameters of these measures:

- No-contact order
 - Order of protection
 - Civil restraining order
 - Harassment restraining order
 - Victim wrap-around services
- I have memorized emergency telephone numbers.

Safety Considerations for Children and Family

- I can teach my children to never get in the middle of an argument or fight.
- I can teach my children how to use the telephone to call 911.
- I can inform people who take care of/teach my children *specifically* who has permission to pick up or visit my children, and *who does not*. The people I can inform about pick-up and visits are:
- School: _____
 - Day care: _____
 - Faith community: _____
 - Children’s extracurricular activities’ sponsors: _____
 - Babysitter(s): _____
 - Specific friends: _____
- I can teach my children a “code word” to ask before going *anywhere* with *anyone*. The “code word” is: _____.
- I can rehearse relevant elements of my safety plan with my children/family.

Safety for Mail and Deliveries

- Avoid any visual documentation for the identity of the person(s) who occupy the home.
- Place a temporary “mail stop” with the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) when the victim will be absent from the home for any length of time.
- Place a temporary “stop delivery” request for newspapers or other local deliveries when the victim will be absent from the home for any length of time.
- Never leave mail to be delivered in the victim’s home mailbox or delivery slot. Take it to the Post Office or an official USPS mailbox for delivery.

Safety for Transportation

- When I am driving, I can:
- Check the back seat of, trunk of, and underneath/around my car prior to entering it
 - Lock all doors upon entering the car
 - Alternate my routes to work, shopping, schools, etc.
 - Always park in places that are well lit
- I can keep my gas tank full at all times.
- I can request an escort to my vehicle at work/school/home from _____ (co-workers, security personnel, campus police, etc.)

- When I utilize public transportation, I can use different mass transit stations/stops and vary my routes to my destination.

Safety at Work

- I can keep a copy of any court orders at work.
- I can inform my supervisor/specific co-workers/security personnel at work of my situation. I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work.
- I can eat lunch in my workplace and avoid going to lunch alone.
- If telephone calls come directly to me, I can request Caller ID for my work telephone.

Safety in Public

- I can go to different venues for grocery shopping, banking, shopping, and I can vary my schedule for each errand.
- I can vary my daily schedule and driving/public transportation routes to work, school, and other locations that I regularly visit in order to avoid establishing a pattern.
- I can avoid wearing headphones or ear buds, so I am more aware of my surroundings.

Safety in Unwanted Contact Situations

The following suggestions are for preparing for and responding to attempted unwanted contact by the designated individual, their family, or their friends:

- I can review my personal safety plan every (week/month) in order to be familiar with the most effective safety strategies.
- I can use _____ as a signal for unwanted contact for my children/family/neighbors/ coworkers so they can call for help.
- During the incident, I can try to move to a space in my house that has the lowest risk, such as _____.

Online Privacy and Safety

Browsing the web safely and privately is a concern for many people. A good general rule to remember is nothing online is private. Another general rule to remember is that you can't be completely anonymous online. However, you can take steps to prevent sensitive and personal information from making its rounds on the Web.

Email

- I can have more than one email account and use them for different purposes.
- I can create email addresses that don't contain my full name (since that can be very identifying).
- I can create Internet/email passwords that contain letters, numbers, and symbols, and that avoid words that are in a dictionary and important dates in my life.
- I can create different, unique passwords for every account, and I can develop a system that is easy to remember but will enable me to do that.
- I can provide a copy of my various passwords to trusted friends or family members, including _____.

Social Networks

- I can educate myself about privacy settings and create settings that enhance my personal safety (keep in mind that even if you set your social network page to “private”, it doesn’t guarantee that your information is completely private).
- I will be thoughtful about who is on my “friends” list when I post or link to certain things.
- I will not post anything that identifies my location in advance of its occurrence (i.e. vacations, family gatherings, children’s activities, etc.).

Online Accounts

- I have read the privacy policy for all online accounts and I am aware of how my information is used and who it is shared with for each account.
- When creating an account, I will seek opportunities to opt out of sharing personal information beyond what is necessary to create an account.
- I will check “no” when the account offers to check my email address book to find my “friends”. (Some illegitimate sites use this option to send spam and viruses to everyone in your address book.)
- I will not use my name or a combination of my name as my “username”.
- I will not choose to have my computer “remember my password” for any account.
- I will remember to log off when I am not using an account.

Friends and Family Posts

- I will talk to my family, friends, and co-workers about what they can and cannot post online about me.
- I will provide clear guidelines to my employer, faith community, family, friends, and others about limiting information they can share about me online.

Safe Web Browsing

- I have and will periodically run anti-virus and anti-spyware software on my computer(s).
- I will periodically delete my browsing history, cookies, temporary internet files, and saved forms and passwords from my computer(s) web browsers.

Electronic Communications

- If possible, have access to both a landline telephone *and* a cell phone.
- If possible, obtain Caller ID technology that indicates the source of telephone calls made to the victim’s home.
- Never leave a message that indicates the victim’s location or possible absence, either through a telephone answering machine or email technology.
- Record a message that says, "We are not available at the moment," even if the victim lives alone.
- If the victim has a dog, have it bark in the background while recording the victim’s message.
- If possible, have a male family member/friend/colleague record the victim’s answering machine message (for female victims).

Social Habits

Social habits are just as important as securing personal safety and security. Victims of domestic violence need to vary their patterns and places for both themselves and their children. Some considerations for changing social habits can include:

- Alter daily routines.
- Join a new congregation.
- Shop at different stores.
- Decide who at work to inform of the situation, include building security.
- Provide a photo of the designated individual to security for quick identification.
- Devise a safety plan for leaving work, such as exiting through the back door.
- Have someone escort the victim when leaving and wait with the victim until safely enroute.
- Use a variety of routes to go home.
- Rehearse what the victim would do if something happened while going home, such as picking a safe destination.
- Create a safety routine when the victim arrives home: checking the house and property, checking in with someone to let them know the victim is safe, etc.
- Frequent different restaurants and places for social activities (movie theater, bowling alleys, etc.)
- Change banks.
- Find a new hairdresser.

Designated Individual Under Supervision

If the designated individual for which the safety plan is being devised is on some form of community supervision, the following suggestions are important to enhance victim safety:

- The agency responsible for supervising the designated individual is: _____.
 - The main contact telephone number for the agency supervising the designated individual in the community is: _____.
 - The name of the professional who is supervising the designated individual is: _____.
 - His/her cell telephone number is: _____.
 - His/her email address is: _____.
- If there is an incident involving the designated individual, contact the supervising officer.

Useful Information for the Designated Individual's Supervising Officer

- I had a “no-contact” order in past.
- I have received unwanted contact from the designated individual in the past. (*check all that apply*):
 - Letters that:
 - Caused me to be fearful
 - Threatened me (and/or my loved ones) with personal harm or death
 - Personally harassed me

- Direct telephone calls that:
 - Caused me to be fearful
 - Threatened me (and/or my loved ones) with personal harm or death
 - Personally harassed me
- Telephone calls, letters, emails, or text messages from third parties on behalf of the offender that:
 - Caused me to be fearful
 - Threatened me (and/or my loved ones) with personal harm or death
 - Personally harassed me
- Facebook postings or use of other social media sites that:
 - Caused me to be fearful
 - Threatened me (and/or my loved ones) with personal harm or death
 - Personally harassed me
- If I change my telephone number, I will notify a victim advocate, the designated individual’s supervising officer, and any automated systems that provide me with information about the status of the designated individual.
- I can input 911 and the cell phone number of the designated individual’s supervising officer into speed dial on my cell phone, home landline, and work phones.
- I can provide a current photograph of the designated individual to (neighbors/family members/friends) and a description of his/her vehicle and ask that they notify me if s/he is observed in close proximity to my home.
- I have requested a meeting with the designated individual’s supervising officer to develop a safety plan.
- I am registered with the victim notification program to receive information about the status of the designated individual.
- I have received written documentation of the designated individuals’ conditions of supervision.
- I have concerns about where the designated individual will live and have expressed my concerns to the supervising officer/agency.
- I have concerns about where the designated individual will be employed and have expressed my concerns to the supervising officer/agency.
- If the designated individual is following me when I am driving, I know the location of and can drive to the nearest police station.
- I can provide a current photograph of the designated and a description of his/her vehicle to persons at work who are aware of my situation
- I can ask a victim advocate, friend, and/or the designated individuals’ supervising officer to help me review my plan.
- I can place 911 and the cell phone number of the designated individual’s supervising officer on speed dial on all home/work/cell phones.
- If I receive unwanted contact by:
 - **Telephone:** I can document the date/time/nature of call and, if possible, audiotape the call; and provide this documentation to the designated individuals’ supervising officer.

- **Email:** I can retain a paper copy of the email and forward the email to the designated individuals' supervising officer.
- **Mail:** I can keep the original letter and contents and provide copies to the designated individual's supervising officer.

References:

Anne Seymour. National Crime Victim/Survivor Advocate, Washington DC: 2017 (adapted 5.13.20).

National Domestic Violence Hotline, "Interactive Guide to Safety Planning" [[website](#)]: 2020