

Safety Plan

You do not have control over your partner's behavior, but you do have a choice about how to respond. It is very difficult to decide to leave a relationship and seek safety either with someone you know or in a domestic violence shelter. It might take several attempts before you can permanently leave. And once you decide that leaving is in your best interest, you still need to cope with the emotional, physical, and financial issues that arise. We strongly recommend that you make a safety plan. Your plan addresses you and your family's individual situation and helps to ensure that if you decide to leave you are as safe as you can be and have everything that you need.

A large part of being safe is to truly understand your situation. It is important that you know that the pattern of abuse often begins with behaviors like name-calling and threats and can escalate to physical violence and sexual assault, or even murder. If you are afraid of your partner, you need to trust your instincts about your safety and your children's safety. You are not alone. We are here to help you. The following guide can help you make a safety plan. Remember that if you write out your plan, you need to keep it in a place where your partner won't find it. We suggest that you work on a plan with one of our experienced domestic violence counselors. You can do this by calling the hotline or by visiting one of our community offices.

Communicate with someone who can help and decide where you and your children would go if you needed to leave:

This may be difficult especially if your partner has isolated you; however, it is important to confide in someone who can help you:

- A trusted friend or family member who can listen without judging and keep your confidentiality.
- An advocate or domestic violence hotline counselor can help you figure out which friends and relatives might be able to help you.
- An advocate or hotline counselor can help you figure out alternatives if you have to leave at a time when no one you know is available to help you.
- If you don't have a car, think of a safe place close to your home where your friend could pick you up. Also, know the routes to the subway, bus stop, and train station nearest to your home.
- You may want to plan a code word or phrase to use on the telephone with a friend if you need to access help when your abuser is present. Tell your friend that when you say that code word, it means you're in trouble and you need him/her to call 911 for you.
- If you feel comfortable, tell your neighbors about the violence and ask if they will call the police if suspicious noises are coming from your home.
- If you have an Order of Protection, keep it on you at all times and keep a copy of it somewhere safe.

You can dial 911 for free from most telephones. If you are in immediate danger, you should always call 911.

Decide how you and your children would get out of your home:

- Decide on a pathway if you have to leave at night. Think of public places you can access 24 hours a day. Know the route to police stations, hospitals, fire stations, and 24 hour convenience stores in your area.
- If you leave by car, make sure you lock the car doors immediately.
- Consider making a plan for each room in your home. What can you do to get out of the basement or upper floors of your home? • Know which doors lock in your home.
- If you live in an apartment building, think of all the ways to get out safely. Is there a fire escape that could get you safely to the ground? Is there a stairwell you could use?
- Keep your essential belongings (credit cards/ID) and keys in a safe place, in case you have to leave quickly.
- If you are afraid that your partner will harass you at work, make an escape route at work. Also, give a photo of him/her to a supervisor you trust and ask that s/he not be allowed inside. If you have an Order of Protection, give the security guard or receptionist a copy.

How to keep your children safe:

- Make sure your children know how to dial 911 in an emergency situation
- Instruct your children on where to go in an emergency

Things to bring:

Important: Keep important documents together in a safe place. A domestic violence hotline counselor or advocate can help you decide where. Items to consider are:

- Order of Protection
- ATM card
- Money/cab fare
- Check book
- Credit card
- Passport
- Green card
- Work permit
- Public Assistance ID
- Mobile phone/coins to use in a payphone
- Driver's license & registration
- Social security card
- Your partner's social security number
- Medical records
- Address book
- Insurance policies
- Important legal documents
- Police records
- Record of violence
- Baby's things (diapers, formula, medication)
- Children's school and immunization records
- Birth certificates
- Medications
- Clothing
- Eye glasses
- Lease
- Non-perishable snacks for children (e.g. juice and crackers)
- Important phone numbers including the OneEighty 24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline: **(330) 263-1020 or toll-free at 1-800-686-1122**

Prepare for the future:

- Keep a journal of all violent incidents, noting dates, events and threats made if possible.
- Advance your career and ability to work by completing school, taking courses, or learning a new skill.
- Try to set money aside or ask friends or family members to hold money for you.