

Personalized Safety Plan for Older Survivors of Abuse

Date: _____

Review dates: _____

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 the violent behavior of another, I do have a choice about how to respond and how to best get myself and my children, grandchildren, or other dependents (such as frail elderly or persons with disabilities who may be living with the survivor) to safety.

Step 1: Safety during a violent incident.

Survivors cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, survivors may use 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? Consider your physical stamina and abilities as well as the health status of anyone who may need to leave with you).

B. I can keep my purse and car keys ready and put them _____ (place) in order to leave quickly.

C. I can tell _____ about the violence and request that they call the law enforcement if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.

I can also tell _____ about the violence and request that they call law enforcement if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.

D. I can teach my children/grandchildren how to use the telephone to contact law enforcement and the fire department.

E. I will use _____ as my code word with my children/grandchildren or my 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/grandchildren.

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 _____. (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons, or in rooms without access to an outside door.)

I. I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give the abusive individual 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.

Survivors may decide to leave the residence they share with the abuser. Leaving must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. Abusers often strike back when they believe that a survivor 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. I will open a savings account by _____, to increase my independence.

D. If I have a payee for SSI/SSDI benefits and the payee is the abusive individual, I can contact the Social Security Administration at _____ to have my payee changed.

- E. The domestic violence program's hotline number or TTY number is _____ . I can seek shelter by calling this hotline. If I have a disability, I can contact my local domestic violence agency at _____ to ensure in advance that they would be able to provide emergency shelter for me if needed.
- F. I can get a disposable cell phone. A domestic violence program may be able to give me cell phone programmed to 911.
- 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/grandchildren.
- K. If I have a disability, I may need to set up an emergency care plan if the abusive individual is also my caregiver. I can contact _____ to make a plan for an emergency care provider.
- L. I will seek help with changing legal documents that include the abusive individual such as Power of Attorney or Guardianship papers by contacting _____ .

Step 3: Safety in my own residence.

There are many things that survivors can do to increase safety at home. 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. I can contact _____ to help with purchasing the locks and _____ to help with installing.

B. I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors. I can contact _____ to help with purchasing the doors and _____ to help with installing.

C. I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc. I can contact _____ to help with purchasing the items and _____ to help with installing.

D. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows if I am physically able. I can contact _____ to help with purchasing the ladders and _____ to help me learn how to use it.

E. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment. I can contact _____ to help with purchasing the items and _____ to help with installing.

F. I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house. I can contact _____ to help with purchasing the lighting system and _____ to help with installing.

G. I will teach my children/grandchildren how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to _____ (friend/faith leader/other) in the event that they are taken by the abusive individual.

H. I will teach my children/grandchildren how to not disclose our address and phone number to: _____ the abusive individual or his/her family/friends including _____, _____, _____, and others including _____, and _____.

I. I will tell people who take care of my children/grandchildren which people have permission to pick up my children/grandchildren and that the abusive individual is not permitted to do so. The people I will inform about pick-up permission include:

_____ (school),
_____ (day care staff),
_____ (babysitter),
_____ (teacher),
and _____ (others).

J. I can inform _____ (neighbor),
_____ (faith leader),
and _____ (friend) that the abusive individual no longer resides with me and they should call the police if he/she is observed near my residence.

K. I can contact local law enforcement and tell them about the abusive individual including his/her birthdate _____, physical description height _____, weight _____, hair color _____, facial hair _____, tattoos and/or scars _____, the type of vehicle he/she drives _____, and license plate number _____.

L. I can change my name or Social Security number. I can contact _____ and _____ to assist me with doing this.

M. I can take the abusive individuals name off of my financial accounts by calling _____.

N. I can take steps to assure the confidentiality of certain documents, possibly through using an alias, a PO Box or alternative address or setting up a password with certain institutions to assure only I can access my personal information. The documents I will change include: _____ bills,
_____ utilities, _____ car registration,
_____ taxes, _____ bank accounts.

O. I can request that my taxes and/or court records be placed in a confidential file.

Step 4: Safety with a protection order.

Many abusers obey protection orders, but some do not. I recognize that I may need to ask the police and the courts to enforce my protection order.

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

- A. I will keep my protection order _____
(location). (Always keep it on or near your person. If you change your purse, your protection order is the first thing that should go in.)
- B. I will give my protection order to police departments in the community where I work, in those communities where I usually visit family or friends, and in the community where I live. There should be a county registry of protection orders that all police departments can call to confirm a protection order. I can check to make sure that my order is in the registry.
- C. The telephone number for the county registry of protection orders is _____.
- D. For further safety, if I often visit other counties in _____, I might file my protection order with the court in those counties. I will register my protection order in the following counties: _____, _____, and _____.
- E. I can call the local domestic violence program if I am not sure about B., C., or D. above or if I have some problem with my protection order.
- F. I will inform my employer, my faith leader, my closest friend and _____ and _____ that I have a protection order in effect.
- G. If abusive individual destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the courthouse by going to the Office of the _____ located at _____.
- H. If the abusive individual violates the protection order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.

I. If the police do not help, I can contact my advocate or attorney to file a complaint with the chief of the police department.

J. I can also file a private criminal complaint with the _____ in the jurisdiction where the violation occurred or with the district attorney who can charge the abusive individual with a violation of the protection order and all the crimes that are committed in violating the order. I can call the domestic violence advocate to help me.

K. I will inform and provide a copy of my restraining order to people who have contact with my children/grandchildren. The people I will inform about my restraining order include:

- _____ (school),
- _____ (day care staff),
- _____ (babysitter)
- _____ (teacher),
- _____ (coach)
- _____ (others).

Step 5: Safety in public.

Survivors must decide if and when to tell others about their experience as a survivor of abuse and that they may be at continued risk. Friends, family, and co-workers can help to protect survivors. Survivors should consider carefully which people to invite to help secure 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. I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work.
- C. When leaving work/volunteer site, I can _____.
- D. When driving home if problems occur, I can _____.
- E. If I use public transit, I can _____.

F. I can use different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business and shop at hours that are different than those that I used when residing with the abusive individual.

G. I can use a different bank and take care of my banking at hours different from those I used when residing with the abusive individual.

H. I can also _____.

Step 6: Safety and my emotional health.

The experience of being battered and verbally degraded by others is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of rebuilding a life takes much courage and incredible energy.

To conserve 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 the abusive individual 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 _____ for support.

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 7: Items to take when leaving.

When survivors have to leave their residence for their safety, it is important to take certain items with them. These items might best be placed in one location, so they can be easily grabbed when leaving quickly. Consider giving extra copies of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case they are needed.

When I leave, I consider taking:

- Identification for myself
- Children's/grandchildren's birth certificates
- My birth certificate
- Social Security cards
- Social Security award letter (if appropriate)
- School and vaccination records
- Money
- Checkbook, ATM (Automatic Teller Machine) card
- Credit cards
- Keys - house/car/office
- Driver's license and registration
- Bus pass, mobility ID card or special transit ID card for persons with disabilities
- Medications
- Welfare identification
- Work permits
- Green card
- Passport(s)
- Divorce papers
- Medical records - for all family members
- Medications and prescriptions for you and others
- Assistive devices like glasses, dentures, walkers, canes, wheelchairs, hearing aids for you and others
- Lease/rental agreement, house deed, mortgage payment book
- Bank books
- Insurance papers
- Small saleable objects
- Address book
- Pictures
- Jewelry
- Children's /grandchildren'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 _____

Domestic Violence Victims' Services Program _____

County registry of protection orders _____

Work number _____

Supervisor's home number _____

Faith leader _____

Other _____

County or Tribal aging unit _____

Case worker _____

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

National Domestic Violence Hotline: (TTY) 1-800-787-3224

Adapted with permission by the NNEDV Steering Committee based on Safety Plan in LAV created by: Barbara Hart and Jane Stuehling, PCADV, 6400 Flank Drive, Suite 1300, Harrisburg, PA 17112, 1992. Adapted from "Personalized Safety Plan," Office of the City Attorney, San Diego, California, April, 1990. Adapted and used with permission. Revised by NCALL 2011.

Resources: Davies, J, Lyon, E and D. Monti-Catania (1998) Safety Planning with Battered Women: Complex Lives/Difficult Choices.