

Safety Plan

What is a safety plan? If you are in an abusive relationship, you should have a safety plan. A safety plan is a personalized plan that you create to help you deal with dangerous situations before you actually need to use it. Even if you are not ready to leave the relationship, it makes good sense to have a safety plan in place. When developing your personal safety plan, think of it in stages:

EMERGENCY PLAN	SAFETY PLAN	AFTER LEAVING
<p>Plan your escape: If there is verbal abuse or threats, try to leave before the situation gets out of hand. Move away from rooms with just one entrance (bathroom), where weapons are kept (bedrooms, closets), or near objects that could be used to hurt you (kitchen, garage). Test doors, windows, elevators, and stairwells ahead of time to plan quick exits.</p> <p>Call the police if you are threatened or assaulted. It is a crime to make a death threat or to interfere with a 911 call. Get medical attention. If you do not have insurance, funds may be available if you press charges. Photograph injuries over several days (bruises may appear later).</p> <p>Plan where to go ahead of time. Call the 24 hour hotline at 1.800.799.7233 to locate the nearest emergency shelter. Shelter workers can tell you how to get a protective order. Alert neighbors to call 911 if violence is suspected. Have a signal or code word for "help."</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Safety planning with children: Teach them that they need to stay safe, not protect you. Use a code word or phrase as a signal to leave, hide, or get help. Have them memorize your address, phone number, and how to dial 911. Show them safe places inside the home (locked bedroom or under beds) and outside (friend, neighbor, relative).</p> </div>	<p>Get a safe address to receive mail away from where you live. Make an extra set of keys. Copy important papers and store at a friend or family member's home. Keep a journal of violent incidents or threats, with date, time, and details to help you remember later. Make sure you keep the journal in a place the abuser cannot it.. Photograph your injuries. Keep an emergency fund where you can easily get access to the money.</p> <p>Social media, computer, smart phone: <u>Social media</u>—check <i>privacy settings</i> on social media like Facebook. Adjust privacy settings to hide your current status, mobile uploads, and photos from specific people. <i>Disable</i> location settings. Assume that <i>anything</i> you put on-line can be found. <u>Computer and smart phone</u> - <i>Lock</i> your computer and smart phone with passwords for screen lock, your email, and your voice mailbox. <i>Change</i> passwords frequently. <i>Turn off</i> location settings on your smart phone. Buy a prepaid mobile phone (about \$15) and keep it in a safe place. <i>Save</i> important documents, messages, and pictures from your computer to a portable USB flash drive (about \$10). SAVE threatening emails, text messages, voice messages, photos— anything that would help document abuse if you need proof – to a portable USB flash drive (about \$10).</p> <p>What to take with you: <u>Most Important</u>—Driver's license; ID cards; green card; passport(s); birth certificates, Social Security cards (or verification); work permit(s); regular medication; health insurance/Medicaid cards; cash, credit and debit cards, and keys. <u>Also Important</u>—Pay stubs, recent tax returns, property titles and deeds; immunization records, proof of car insurance; court papers (divorce, child support orders).</p> <p>If you have a protective order, keep a certified copy with you at all times. Give copies to your employer and children's schools. Include a photo of the offender. Report violations to the police.</p>	<p>Check the district clerk records in the county where the abuser lives. If the other person files a court case, you want to make sure you know about it. Contact a shelter for the nearest legal aid agency to get legal advice.</p> <p>Secure your residence: <i>Renters-Landlords</i> must install security devices like window latches, deadbolts, and viewers (peep-holes) on doors and sliding door locks. For recent violence or break-ins, landlords must re-key the locks within 3 days notification. <i>Owners</i>—Re-key the locks. Test window latches. Install a security system or buy a portable motion detector (about \$25). Check locks on garage doors and carport entries. Check exterior lighting.</p> <p>You may be able to terminate your lease: Consult a lawyer about your options to get out of a lease or transfer your public housing.</p> <p>Change your travel routes and travel routine to work and children's schools. Use a PO box or a safe address. Shred or destroy papers before putting them in the trash. Change your cell provider and your cell phone number.</p> <p>If you must meet your abuser in person (to exchange children, for example), meet in a neutral and public location (Wal-Mart, McDonald's, a busy park). Avoid meeting at either residence. Take a friend.</p>

More information: Texas Council on Family Violence, www.tcfv.org