

HOW TO GET HELP

There are many places that offer help 24-hour support, emergency shelters, legal services, and information about safe options for yourself or your friends. For more information and assistance, please call:

**National Domestic Violence
Hotline**
1-800-799-7233
1-800-787-3224 TTY

Locally call:

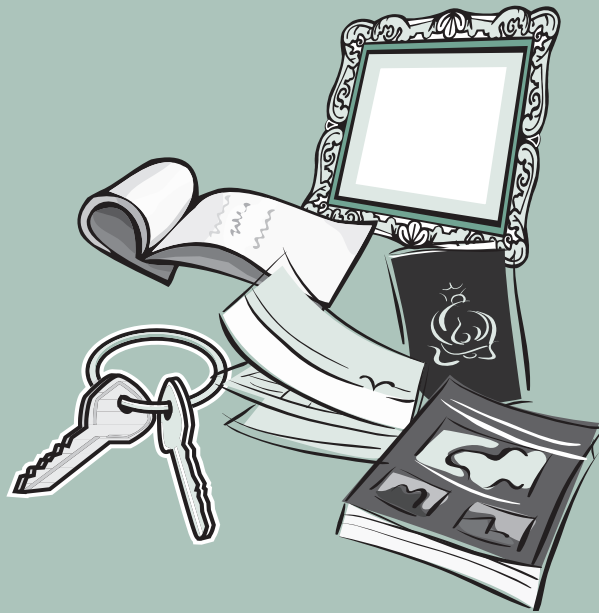
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Safety Plan for Abused Women



Domestic violence is a social problem that has serious consequences for women and their children. It can happen in heterosexual, as well as same-sex relationships. Domestic violence takes many forms:

- ◆ **Verbal or emotional abuse** — insults, name calling, shouting, criticisms of how you dress, talk, or look
- ◆ **Threats with words or gestures** —against you, your children, family members or pets
- ◆ **Physical abuse** — hitting, pushing, slapping, kicking, choking, burning, stabbing, shooting, or other harmful acts
- ◆ **Sexual abuse** — forcing you to have sex or engage in sex acts against your will
- ◆ **Destruction of objects in the home** — furniture, clothes, and other property
- ◆ **Financial control** — denying you access to money or bank accounts, car, or requiring you to account for every cent you spend
- ◆ **Isolation** — does not let you see your family or friends, controls the phone or reads your mail.

WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU ARE BEING ABUSED?

If you feel abused, violated or threatened by your partner, there are several steps you can take to protect yourself and your children. If you are at risk, do not wait. Keep in mind that violence tends to get worse with time.

- ◆ Speak to someone you trust. It could be a relative, a friend, or a neighbor.
- ◆ Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline or any local domestic violence program. These programs provide free services.

- ◆ Look for legal assistance or call the police. You have the right to feel safe in your own home. Domestic violence is a crime.
- ◆ Prepare a safety plan for the home.
- ◆ Prepare a safety plan for work.

WHAT IS A SAFETY PLAN?

A safety plan can help prepare you and reduce the risk of physical harm if you plan to leave your relationship. It helps you to know the options that are available to you and to know what to do in case of an emergency. Having a plan can also help to avoid or reduce the impact of the violence, even if you decide to remain in the home. Some steps you can take are the following:

- ◆ Memorize or make a list of telephone numbers—friends, relatives, colleagues, or of a local program that can help.
- ◆ Prepare a suitcase with clothes, important documents and things you and your children may need. Leave it with someone you trust, a neighbor, a friend, or a relative. If the children are still young, don't forget to include toys.
- ◆ Talk about your safety plan with your children. You should have a signal that only you and your children know. They must understand that once the signal is given, they have to leave the house QUICKLY and that they must call the police or ask a neighbor to call the police.
- ◆ You can ask a trusted neighbor to call the police when they see or hear the signal. For example: when you turn the lights on and off several times, or when you say a specific word out loud, etc.
- ◆ Keep copies of important documents that you may need. These should be kept in another safe place, not in your home.

Some important documents that you should keep:

- ◆ Birth certificates for yourself, your children and your partner/spouse
- ◆ Social security cards — yours and your children's
- ◆ Immigration related documents — visa, green card, employment authorization, naturalization or citizenship certificate, and any other documents related to your immigration status related or attempts to obtain legal residence
- ◆ Your husband's immigration documents, visa card & citizenship papers
- ◆ Passports — yours, your children's, or any identification documents you may have
- ◆ Driver's license
- ◆ Marriage certificate and divorce papers
- ◆ Bank account number(s), check book
- ◆ Pay-stubs, income tax returns — for you and your husband
- ◆ Copies of leases, rental agreements, mortgage, deeds, property titles
- ◆ Any court orders — custody, protective orders, visitation, child support
- ◆ School records
- ◆ Immunization records for the children

Other objects you should keep:

- ◆ Loose change to make phone calls, and money to move about.
- ◆ Medicine and prescriptions
- ◆ Car and house keys
- ◆ A list of important phone numbers (family, friends, school, domestic violence hotline(s), doctors)
- ◆ Pictures or jewelry with sentimental value

WHERE CAN YOU GO?

You can go to a friend or a relative's home, preferably to a place where the abuser will not dare to look for you, or to the home of someone he doesn't know.

If you don't have anybody you can trust, then call the domestic violence program near you.

There, they will help you and tell you where there is a shelter for abused women. They can also tell you what options and rights you have available if you want to remove the abuser from your home or if you want to get out of the relationship where there is abuse.

Many women believe that if they leave their homes they lose their rights. This is not the case in the United States.



WHAT CAN YOU DO WHEN THE VIOLENCE ESCALATES?

If you are home and an argument becomes dangerous:

- ◆ Do everything possible to move close to the door, or where you can leave without danger.
- ◆ Do not go to the bedrooms, bathrooms, or kitchen (unless there are exits that you can use to escape).
- ◆ If your abuser has lost control, you are the only one who can decide the best time to leave the home. Without getting into greater danger, wait for an opportunity when you can leave with the least difficulty.
- ◆ You should know if there are weapons in the house, and where they are located.
- ◆ If the situation becomes dangerous and you realize there's no way to get out immediately, do what the abuser wants, for that moment, until the abuser calms down. You must protect yourself until you are out of danger.
- ◆ If you have been injured, seek medical help and try to take pictures of your injuries.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AT HOME

If you're home and the abuser had to leave the home either willingly or by a court order, you can take steps to protect yourself and your children.

- ◆ Find out if you can put new locks in the doors.
- ◆ Put locks on the windows to prevent the abuser from opening them or forcing them open.
- ◆ Tell the school or the day care center who has permission to pick up your children and who should NOT be allowed to pick up your children.
- ◆ If you have a protection order against your partner/spouse, you should call the police immediately upon violation of that order.
- ◆ If you have a protection order against your partner/spouse that covers the children, give a copy to the appropriate school or day care personnel.
- ◆ Change your phone number and do not call the abuser from your home.
- ◆ Consider taking a self-defense class.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF OUTSIDE THE HOME

- ◆ Change your travel routes often.
- ◆ Shop in different locations.
- ◆ Cancel all joint bank accounts and credit cards and open new accounts.
- ◆ Keep your protection order and emergency telephone numbers with you at all times.