



# Personalized Safety Objectives

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 my partner's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to him/her and how to best get my children and myself to safety. By having a detailed plan in place, I can be better prepared during a crisis situation.

## Table of Contents

Safety During a Violent Incident	Page 1
Safety in the Home	Page 1 –2
Safety on the Job and in Public	Page 2

### *Additional Resources if Needed:*

- Rural Areas and Safety
- Going to Court and Safety
- Financial Safety and Independence
- Internet Use and Safety
- Technology Use and Safety
- Drug/Alcohol Use and Safety

## SAFETY DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT

- *Go to an area of the house that has an exit*
  - Once gone I know where I can go

**\*\*It is NOT recommend that you go directly to the local police station!** Police officers are usually on patrol in their vehicles and many police stations are NOT manned 24 hours a day. It may be better to go to the closest public place and have the police meet you. Think: CLOSEST PUBLIC PHONE WITH OTHER PEOPLE AROUND!

- *Have a phone close by*

**\*\* Using a cell phone is NOT always safe.** If an abuser knows my cell number, my name, and the last four digits of my social security number then he/she can probably access my account. He/she could then have the number/phone changed or reported stolen, which means the phone could be turned OFF! If necessary I can call the phone company and establish a PIN number. Most cell phones, even if service is suspended, will still call 911 (police) or 611 (customer service). I may want to test my phones ahead of time.

- *Know my escape route (doors and windows)*
- *Know where my purse/wallet is located:*
  - If safe I could hide extra keys and money in a safe location
- *Make a code word*
  - I might be in danger and can't talk safely; I can devise a code for my children, family, and friends.
  - Additionally, I could set up signals with my trusted neighbors or friends in case of emergencies.
    - For example, having a specific light on/off in the home.
- *Trust my judgment*
  - Consider anything that will keep me safe and give me time to figure out what to do next. Sometimes it is best to flee, sometimes to pacify my abuser - anything that works to protect me and my children.

## SAFETY IN THE HOME

To increase safety in my home I can consider the following options:

- *These are ways I can upgrade my home security*

Change locks on doors/windows	Have good lighting	Put broomstick in sliding doors/windows	Home security stickers or system	If possible get a dog
Sleep with a phone nearby	Hang bells on doors/windows	Do not answer door to unexpected guests	Have an unobstructed view (no bushes or trees)	Leave the lights on inside
Have a rope ladder in second story rooms	Do not leave hidden keys outside			

- *Changing my phone number*
  - Screen my calls if I have an answering machine or caller ID. Save all messages with threats or that violate any orders. Contact my local phone company about getting an unpublished number.
  - If my abuser calls, I can preserve the messages by saving them to a tape recorder or other device.
    - I can leave copies of these messages with trusted friends/family
- *Talking to my neighbors/landlord*
  - Inform them that the abuser no longer lives with me and that they should call the police if they see my abuser near my home.
- *Having copies of important papers*
  - Identification (driver's license, state id)
  - Child's birth certificate
  - Birth certificates
  - Social security cards
  - Medicines and Medical Records
  - Insurance Card/Welfare Identification/ DHS Cards and Papers

### **SAFETY ON THE JOB AND IN PUBLIC**

It might be important for me to try and continue working during this situation, however, I might be at a continued risk of violence from my abuser. It is important that I decide if and when I will tell others that my partner has battered me. **There are NO legal protections that allow for victims to be a protected class.** If possible, I can speak with my employer about make up hours or alternative solutions so I do not lose my job. Friends, family, and co-workers may be able to assist in protecting me. I can consider carefully which people I invite to help secure my safety. I can consider the following options:

- If safe I can inform my boss, secretary, security supervisor, or police department nearest my job
- If possible, I can make arrangement to have my calls screened at work
- Ask if it is possible to change my email
- When leaving work:
  - Leave with a group or ask security to walk me out
  - If I leave late, make sure to park my car close to the entrance or near a lighted area
  - If I use public transportation take a different stop than usual
- Public Places
  - Carry a cell phone with me
  - Use different grocery stores/malls than I normally would
  - Use a different bank and change the time when I would go to the bank
    - Direct Deposit
      - I should consider if this will tip my abuser off that I am leaving
    - If safe I could open a new account with a new bank
  - If possible, I can avoid places that my abuser frequents

## RURAL AREAS AND SAFETY

If I live in a rural area or small town, there are some additional things I may want to keep in mind when making my safety plan.

- It may take the police a long time to get to me
  - If I call the police, I can go to a safe place to wait for them
- My abuser may have weapons
  - I can be aware of what my abuser can use as a weapon (almost anything can be a weapon)
    - Hammer
    - Ice Pick
    - Sharp/Heavy Objects
  - Know where the guns, knives, and other weapons are at. If I can safely do so, I could lock them up or make them harder to access
    - If it is safe for me to do so I can separate the ammunition from the weapons.
  - If my abuser is about to hurt me, I can get to a safe place within my home
- Transportation may be limited in my area
  - If my abuser keeps me from using the car I can
    - Keep warm clothing and shoes available outside the home in case I need to leave quickly
    - Make a plan with a friend
    - Other people I could call are:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Safe places, like a friend's home or shelter, may be far away
  - I can:
    - Keep a full tank of gas in my car
    - Keep extra clothing (scarves, coat, hat, boots) in a safe place
    - Learn about the area I live in and identify safe places to stop if needed
    - Think about going to a shelter outside my area, even if it's just for a while
    - Carry a cell phone, but do not depend upon it. I know that good cell phone service may be limited in my area

## GOING TO COURT AND SAFETY

If I am going to court for my protection order, divorce, custody, or other hearing, my abuser may be coming to court as well.

- Getting to the courthouse, I can:
  - Get to court early, that way I will be at court before my abuser. This may make it easier to get inside the building.
  - Call ahead of time to see if there is an additional entrance to the court other than the main entrance
  - Call to see if an advocate can go with me to the hearing
  - Bring a friend or family member with me
  - See if there is a police officer or security guard willing to walk me into the building
  - Have a friend drive me and drop me off in front of the building
  - Borrow or rent a car that my abuser will not recognize if possible
- Inside the courthouse, I can:
  - Travel with other people who came with you. Have a friend or family member pay attention to the surroundings and safety considerations
  - Find someone who knows the building well, like a domestic violence advocate
  - Know where the security/police are located within the building
  - Be cautious of my assailant's family
  - Find the exits and know where they are
  - Ask if there are witness rooms or other locations where I could wait for the hearing
  - Let the court officer or judge's clerk know who the abuser is so they can assist in keeping him/her away from you
- Leaving the courthouse, I can:
  - Ask the judge to have the abuser wait until I can leave
  - If the judge does not have the abuser wait I can chose to wait a while before leaving
  - Go to a public place after the hearing if I have concerns that my abuser may be following me
  - Have a police officer, court employee, or advocate walk me out
  - Have a friend pick me up at the exit

## FINANCIAL SAFETY AND INDEPENDENCE

I realize that financial control is one of the biggest factors that can keep me tied to an abusive relationship.

- Lack of my own personal money can cause
  - Stress and reduced options for myself and my children
  - Lack of privacy
    - My partner may
      - Monitor my spending or my activities (where I have shopped at)
      - Locate me
- If possible, I can protect my financial privacy by
  - Using cash and limiting my credit card
    - Stashing enough cash to cover a hotel stay and meals just in case
  - Talking with my bank or looking online and resetting passwords
- Credit is another way my partner may try to control me
  - Maxed out credit cards
  - Canceling accounts
  - Open accounts without my knowledge
- I can combat credit control by
  - Contacting the credit card companies to find out which ones I am responsible for
  - Closing accounts in my name so there is no new activity
  - For the cards that I am responsible for
    - I can ask the credit card company to assist; they may be able to suspend late fees or interest for up to a year
  - Getting a copy of my credit report
    - [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com)
    - [www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com)
    - [www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com)
    - [www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com)
  - I can contact my local credit counseling agency or a local bankruptcy attorney

## INTERNET USE AND SAFETY

A computer can be monitored by an abuser and **is impossible to completely clear**. There are ways that an abuser can access your email and to find out what sites you have been to on the internet. I know that it is impossible to completely hide my tracks. The safest way to find information on the internet is at a computer that my abuser cannot access. If I need to use a computer I could go to the public library, a community center, or internet café.

- Spyware
  - My abuser may have installed spyware on my computer which tracks of where I have visited and who I have sent email to
- Access to email
  - My email account may automatically pop up when the browser opens. To prevent this I can:
    - Change my homepage
    - Delete my “cookies” and clear my browsing history
    - Check my settings to make sure my abuser is not having all my mail forwarded to his/her account
    - LOG OUT of my email, not just close the browser
    - Change my password(s) often
    - I can change my settings so my username/password are not saved
    - Be cautious of AUTO COMPLETE; that may allow the abuser access to a variety of places you have been on the internet
      - Auto complete may pop up when you begin to type something; for example, a credit card into an online form.
  - I can open a new email account using different information to remain anonymous and private
    - I can create a new username and password that my abuser is unlikely to know

Google: [www.gmail.com](http://www.gmail.com)

Hotmail: [www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com)

Yahoo Mail: <http://mail.yahoo.com>

- Receiving threats or harassing emails
  - Emails can be printed and saved as evidence
  - Emails can be forwarded to another email account
  - Threats may constitute a crime
    - If needed I can contact my local police department, but I understand that the police may not be able to assist with the threats
- Myspace and Facebook
  - I can be cautious of using personal information
  - I can set my pages to “private” and “friends only”
  - If there are threats or inappropriate messages I can contact the website administrator
  - Complete a print screen to save the message for my records if my assailant contacts me
  - I can block my abuser from having access to my page

## TECHNOLOGY AND SAFETY

It is possible for my abuser to access my phone, email, computer, or other activities. Abusers and stalkers can act in a persistent and creative manner to maintain power and control. The steps I can take to ensure my safety are:

- Take precautions
  - If computers are a hobby or profession for my abuser, I can trust my instincts.
  - If I think I am being monitored, I can contact my advocate or police department
- Check my cell phone settings
  - I can consider turning my phone off when not in use
  - If I can “lock” my phone, I can to prevent calls placed on accident
  - I can check to see if my phone has a “location” feature
    - If it does I can turn it off or ask about getting a new phone
- Change pins & passwords
  - My abuser could use my email to impersonate me and cause harm.
  - I can change my passwords and pin numbers often and use them on bank accounts, emails, etc.
- Minimize the use of cordless phones or baby monitors
  - If I don’t want others overhearing my conversation, I can use a traditional corded phone and turn off any baby monitors
- Use a donated or new cell phone
  - I can check my cell phone plan to see if my abuser could access my call history
  - I can ask my local domestic violence program for a 911 phone
- Ask about my records and data
  - Many court and government agencies are publishing records online
    - I can ask agencies about my safety
    - I can request that courts and programs restrict access or seal my records
    - I can check websites to see what information about me is available
      - **[www.zabasearch.com](http://www.zabasearch.com)**
- If I can afford a fee, I could get a private mailbox so I don’t need to give out my real address
  - When asked by businesses, doctors, or other places I can use a private mailbox address
  - I can contact a post office in my area and get information on a P.O. Box
  - I can try to keep my true residential address out of national databases
- Search for my name on the Internet
  - I can search for my name on “Yahoo” or “Google” which may have links to my contact information
  - I can also check phone directories online for my information and ask for my numbers to be unlisted
- GPS (Global Positioning Systems)
  - I can check to see if my cell phone or vehicle have GPS
  - If my phone or vehicle have GPS, I can contact the company and discuss safety options
    - I could possibly limit who has access to the account and set up a pin to activate my GPS Systems
- On Star/Sync Systems
  - I can check with my car company to limit access or activation of my systems without a pin or special authorization
- Text Messaging
  - I can set up an automatic text to send a message to people I trust with the hit of a button

I recognize that my abuser may have recording devices on the phone, in my vehicle, or in my car. I can trust my instincts and call the police if I have concerns.

## **SAFETY AND DRUG/ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION**

The use of alcohol or other drugs can reduce my awareness and ability to act quickly to protect myself from a battering partner. If I am going to consume alcohol, I can do so in a safe place with people who understand the risk of violence. I can monitor the amount I will allow myself to consume.

These are places and situations I would feel comfortable consuming:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

These are places and situations I DO NOT feel safe consuming:

4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

**REMEMBER, consumption is not the cause of violence. It only ESCALATES violence.**