

Creating a Safety Plan

Leaving an abuser can be dangerous. You may know you are in an abusive relationship or you may become concerned about your partner's behavior. Regardless of which situation you find yourself, you are the only one who knows when the safest time to leave will be. In anticipation of that time, you must create a plan so you know what to do, you are prepared to leave and you have everything you will need for yourself and, if applicable, your children.

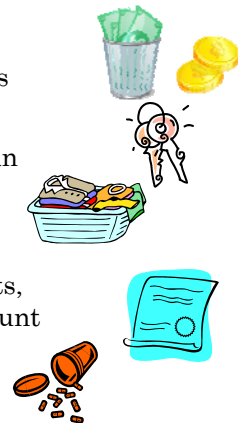
Before a Violent Incident Occurs:

It is important that you know how to identify your spouse or partner's level of violence so you can judge the amount of danger you and your children are in. You should try to leave before violence occurs and when your spouse/partner is not home. You should identify a safe place to go to once you leave – it may be important that this place be somewhere your spouse/partner is not aware of – going to a family member's house is perhaps not the best choice. Wherever you choose, you must talk to the person, tell them what is going on and ask that they not tell anyone else. You might want to tell neighbors that there have been some problems and if they hear any strange noises, they should call the police. You do not need to go into detail about what is happening. If there are weapons in the home and you can get rid of them when your spouse / partner is not at home, you should. Know the telephone number of the local battered women's shelter. As appropriate, you may want to inform your employer that they should not discuss anything with your spouse/partner unless they speak with you first. This is especially true if you fear your spouse/partner would come to your workplace. If you have custody arrangements for your children, talk with school administrators and warn them about possible problems.

Some victims arrange a safety signal with a neighbor, ensuring that if they personally cannot alert the police, there is someone else who will. This may be a certain light lit in a window, the way the curtains are drawn or any other sign that will alert the neighbor but be overlooked by your spouse/partner.

Most importantly, pack a bag, that you will keep hidden, for the day you do leave. This bag should contain the following at a minimum:

- ✓ Money – at least enough for a weekend stay at a hotel, telephone calls, gas and food expenses. Keep both bills and coins.
- ✓ Keys – have an extra set made for both your car and your home. These can be kept in the bag or with a trusted friend.
- ✓ Clothing
- ✓ Important papers such as birth certificates, social security cards, passports, etc for both you and your children, as well as insurance papers, bank account information, etc.
- ✓ Prescription medication(s)



If a Violent Incident Occurs:

Leave the area where the batterer is – leave the room, house, area. Locate your escape bag and leave without delay. If you cannot get out of the house, get to a room with a lock on the door and a telephone if possible. **Scream as loud as you can – call 911.** Call the local battered women shelter. Instruct your children to call the police. If you must leave your children in the house, call the police as soon as possible after you leave. If you leave in your car, lock the doors as soon as you get into it and do not unlock them until you reach a safe location.

Once you arrive at the safe location, check yourself and your children for injuries. If there are any, go to the hospital for treatment