

What is a Safety Plan?

Every individual in an abusive relationship needs a safety plan. Shelters and crisis counselors have been urging safety plans for years, and police departments, victim services, hospitals, and courts have adopted this strategy. Safety plans should be individualized -for example, taking account of age, marital status, whether children are involved, geographic location, and resources available - but still contain common elements.

When creating a safety plan:

- *Think about all possible escape routes.* Doors, first-floor windows, basement exits, elevators, stairwells. Rehearse if possible.
- *Choose a place to go.* To the home of a friend or relative who will offer unconditional support, or a motel or hotel, or a shelter - most importantly somewhere you will feel safe.
- *Pack a survival kit.* Money for cab fare, a change of clothes, extra house and car keys, birth certificates, passports, medications and copies of prescriptions, insurance information, checkbook, credit cards, legal documents such as separation agreements and protection orders, address books, valuable jewelry, and papers that show jointly owned assets. Conceal it in the home or leave it with a trusted neighbor, friend, or relative. Important papers can also be left in a bank deposit box.
- *Try to start an individual savings account.* Have statements sent to a trusted relative or friend.
- *Avoid arguments with the abuser in areas with potential weapons.* Kitchen, garage, or in small spaces without access to an outside door.
- *Know the telephone number of the domestic violence hotline.* Contact it for information on resources and legal rights.
- *Review the safety plan monthly.*