



SAFETY PLANNING

No ONE DESERVES TO BE ABUSED. If you are in an abusive relationship, and you feel that you are ready to leave, here are some tips to help keep you as safe as possible when preparing to leave. Following these suggestions can't guarantee your safety, but it could help make you safer. However, it is important that you create a safety plan that is right for you. Not all suggestions will work for everyone, and some could even place you in greater danger. You have to do what you think is best to keep you and your children safe.

Getting ready to leave. .

- Make a plan for how you are going to leave, including where you're going to go, and how to cover your tracks. Make one plan for if you have time to prepare to leave home. Make another plan for if you have to leave the home in a hurry.
- Get a bag together that you can grab quickly when you leave. Some things to include in the bag are:
 - Spare car keys.
 - Your driver's license.
 - A list of your credit cards so that you can track any activity on them.
 - Your checkbook.
 - Money.
 - Phone numbers for friends relatives, doctors, schools, taxi services, and Alternatives to Violence number.
 - Change of clothing for you and your children.
 - Any medication that you or your children need.
 - Copies of legal documents for you and your abuser, such as Social Security cards, passports, green cards, medical records, insurance information and copies of any court orders (custody order and protections orders). Any evidence you've been collecting to show that you've been abused.
 - Copies of your children's birth certificates, Social Security cards, school records and immunizations.
 - A few things you want to keep, like photographs, jewelry, or personal items.
- Hide this bag somewhere the abuser will not find it. Try to keep it at the home of a trusted friend or neighbor. Avoid using your next-door neighbor, close family members, or mutual friends, as the abuser might be more likely to find it there. If you are in an emergency situation and have not had time to plan for this event, remember getting out safely is the priority. Those items can be replaced or copies requested through various agencies.
- Hide a second set of car keys in a place you can get to easily in case the abuser takes the car keys to prevent you from leaving.
- Try to set money aside. If the abuser controls the household money, this might mean that you save only a few dollars per week; the most important thing is that you save whatever amount you can that will not tip off the abuser and put you in further danger. You can ask a trusted friend or family member to hold this money for you so that the abuser cannot find it or use it.

- If you can always have a phone where you know you can get it. Know the numbers to call for help such as 911, or Alternatives to Violence 970-669-5150. If you have to leave the house without your phone, know where the closest pay phone is located.
- Let friends and neighbors that you trust know what is happening in your home. Make a plan with them so that they know when you need help and so they know what to do (such as calling the police or banging on your door). Make up a signal with a trusted neighbor, like flashing the lights on and off or hanging something out the window, which will alert them that you need help.
- Think of several reasons for leaving the house at different times of the day or night that the abuser will believe, in case you feel violence is about to erupt and you need an excuse to get out.

Evidence File

If you can, keep any evidence of the abuse and take it with you when you leave. Make sure to keep this evidence in a safe place that the abuser will not find - this may mean that you keep it in a locked drawer at work or with a trusted friend. If the abuser finds it, you could be in more danger. Such evidence of abuse might include:

- Pictures you have of the bruises or injuries. If possible try to have these pictures dated.
- Torn or bloody clothing.
- Household objects that the abuser damaged or broke during a violent episode.
- Pictures that show your home destroyed or messed up after violence happened.
- Any records you have from doctors or the police that document the abuse.
- Whenever you are hurt, go to a doctor or an emergency room as soon as possible. Tell them what happened. Ask them to make a record of your visit and of what happened to you. Be sure to get a copy of the record. Especially go to emergency room if the abuser choked or strangled you, damage can be done to the brain that will not show up immediately and you might feel fine but in 72 hours you could be in a bad way
- A journal that you may have kept with details about the abuse, which could help prove the abuse in court.
- Anything else that you think could help show that you've been abused.
- Save all threatening voicemails, text messages, emails, etc. Bring copies of all that information.