



Downtown Support Center: 1407 Commercial St. Bellingham, WA 98225
24-Hour Helpline: 360.715.1563

SAFETY PLAN

If you feel that you or your children are in danger, advocacy counselors can help you to assess the situation and create a safety plan. Before you leave your abuser, or take any legal or financial steps to separate, you should be aware that the danger of violence can escalate.

WHEN TO USE A SAFETY PLAN

Safety plans can be made for a variety of situations: for dealing with an emergency, such as when you are threatened with physical violence; for continuing to live with or to date a partner who has been abusive; or for protecting yourself after you have ended the relationship.

USE WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW

If your partner has been abusive towards you, you probably know more about safety planning and risk assessment than you might realize. Being in a relationship with an abusive partner – and surviving – requires considerable skill and resourcefulness. Any time you do or say something as a way to protect yourself or your children, you are assessing risk and enacting a safety plan. You do it all the time. It's just not always a conscious process.

THINK IT THROUGH

It can be a helpful safety strategy to evaluate risks and make safety plans in a more intentional way. Whether you are currently with your partner or have ended the relationship, and whether you choose to use the services that are available to you, or to involve the police, there are certain things that are helpful to consider in planning for your future safety.

BE AWARE OF DANGERS

If you are planning to leave your partner or have already left, be aware that abusers often escalate their violence during times of separation, increasing your risk of harm, possibly including serious and life-threatening injury. Making a safety plan can help reduce the risks to you and your children. Be aware.

EVALUATE YOUR OPTIONS

Only you can judge who it's safe to tell about your situation and who to ask for help. Sometimes people who haven't been educated about domestic violence respond to survivors in ways that aren't helpful,

even when they mean well. But you might feel comfortable asking for help from someone you know, and that's your decision. The important thing for you is to identify all the people who might be willing and able to help you. This can be a part of your social support system. Make a list of their phone numbers and attach it to your safety plan for easy reference.

● PLAN AHEAD

You don't have to wait for an emergency to ask for help. In fact, it's a good idea to talk to people who can help before there's a crisis. Find out what they are willing and able to do for you. That way, you'll know in advance if you have a place to stay, a source of financial assistance, or a safe person to keep copies of important papers.

● TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

If you suspect the abusive partner knows too much about your whereabouts, plans, and communications, it is possible that your computer, phone, or other daily activities are being monitored. Abusers and stalkers can act in incredibly persistent ways to maintain power and control.

● REDUCE YOUR RISK

No survivor has control over their abuser's violence, but people can and do find ways to reduce their risk of harm. This safety plan is a tool to assist you in identifying and evaluating options, and committing to a plan to reduce your risk when confronted with the threat of harm or when harm is inflicted upon you. There's no right or wrong way to develop a safety plan. Use what applies to you or change it to reflect your particular situation. Review it regularly and make changes as needed.

● BEING READY FOR A CRISIS

I can leave.

If I decide to leave, I will _____

_____.

(Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes would you use?)

I can put my purse/wallet and car keys _____ so I can leave quickly.

I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____ so I can leave quickly.

I will keep copies of important documents or keys at _____.

I can get help.

I can tell _____ about the violence and request that they call the police if they hear noises coming from my home.

I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and fire department. I will make sure they know our address.

I can program emergency numbers into my phone and teach my children how to use the auto dial.

I will use _____ as my code word or phrase with my children or my friends so they will call for help if needed.

If I have to leave my home, I will go to _____.

If I cannot go to the above location, I can go to _____.

The **DVSAS 24-Hour Helpline** number is (360) 715-1563. DVSAS operates a confidential safe shelter for survivors fleeing emergency domestic violence situations.

If it's not safe to talk openly, I will use _____ as the code word or signal to my children that we are going to go, or to my family and friends that we are coming.

I can contact DVSAS for resources for free or low cost testing for pregnancy, STDs, or HIV.

I can use my judgment.

When I expect that my partner and I are going to argue, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as _____.

(Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons or in rooms without an outside exit.)

I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is serious, I can give my partner what he or she wants to try to calm him/her down. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

I also can teach age-appropriate strategies to my children.

PLANNING TO LEAVE

I can call **DVSAS** and get help making my plans. The 24-Hour Helpline number is: (360) 715-1563.

I will leave extra clothes with _____.

I will keep important numbers and change for phone calls with me at all times. I know that my partner can learn who I've been talking to by looking at my cell phone or phone bills, so I can see if friends will let me use their phones and/or their phone cards.

I will ask _____ and _____ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.

I can increase my independence by opening a bank account and getting credit cards in my own name; by taking classes or getting job skills; by getting copies of all the important papers and documents I might need and keeping them with _____.

I can rehearse my escape plan and, if appropriate, practice it with my children.

I can talk to my health care provider about birth control that I am in charge of.

AFTER I LEAVE

I can change the locks on my doors and windows or request that my landlord do so.

I can replace wooden doors with metal ones.

I can install additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, security system, and metal face plates around door locks, etc.

I can buy rope ladders to be used for escape from second-floor windows.

I can install smoke detectors and put fire extinguishers on each floor in my home.

I will teach my children how to use the phone to make a collect call to me if they are concerned about their safety.

I can tell the people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick them up and make sure they know how to recognize those people.

I will give the people who take care of my children copies of custody and protection orders, as well as emergency numbers.

● AT WORK AND IN PUBLIC

I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and the employee assistance program, if available, about my situation. The number of the EAP office is _____.

I can ask _____ to screen my calls at work.

If there's trouble when going to and from work, I can _____.

I can change my patterns—avoid stores, banks, doctor's appointments, self-service laundries and _____, places where my partner might find me.

I can tell _____ and _____ that I am no longer with my partner and ask them to call the police if they believe my children or I are in danger.

● WITH AN ORDER OF PROTECTION

I can get help filing for a protection order at the DVSAS downtown support center.

I will keep my protection order _____.
(Always keep it on or near your person.)

I will give copies to my employer, my religious advisor, my closest friend, my children's school and day-care center and _____.

If my partner destroys my order or if I lose it, I can get another copy from the court that issued it.

If my partner violates that order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my domestic violence program advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.

I can call the domestic violence program if I have questions about how to enforce an order if I have problems getting it enforced.

● MY EMOTIONAL HEALTH

If I am feeling down, lonely, or confused, I can call the **DVSAS Helpline** at (360)715-1563 to speak with an advocacy counselor.

I will practice self-care regularly by doing the following: _____

_____.

If I have left my partner and am considering returning, I will call _____ or spend time with _____ before I make a decision.

I will remind myself daily of my best qualities. They are _____, _____, _____, and _____.

I can attend support groups, workshops or classes at DVSAS or _____ so I can build a support system, learn skills, and get information.

I will look at how and when I drink alcohol or use other drugs. If I am going to drink or use other drugs, I will do it in a place where people are committed to my safety.

ITEMS TO TAKE WHEN LEAVING

- Identification for myself
- Children's birth certificates
- My birth certificate
- Social Security cards
- School, vaccination records
- Money, checkbook, bankbook, ATM cards, credit cards
- Medication
- Keys – house, car, work
- Driver's license, car registration
- Insurance papers
- Public assistance ID/Medicaid cards
- Divorce or separation papers
- Passports, green cards, work permits
- Lease, rental agreement or house deed
- Car/mortgage payment book
- Children's toys, security blankets, stuffed animals
- Cell phone and charger
- Sentimental items, photos
- Personalized safety plan

TECHNOLOGY SAFETY

I can start a new email account that my partner won't know about.

I can change the password for my email accounts, online banking, and other important logins to something non-generic that my partner won't know.

I can "Log out" or "Sign out" of my accounts each time, instead of just "Exit" or "x" out.

I can alert the 3 Credit Bureaus to put a fraud alert on my credit report to avoid fraudulent access by my partner.

I can make sure that when looking at Internet websites or sending emails regarding my attempt to leave, I use a "safe" computer, such as at the library, coffee shop, or DVSAS.

I can keep firewalls, virus-protection, and anti-spyware programs on my computer up to date.

I can change my cell phone account to be in my own name so that my partner will not have access to my phone records or location. If my partner is on my cell phone account and there is a GPS tracker in my phone, my partner can call the cell phone company and find out where I am.

I can purchase a new cell phone, or obtain a 9-1-1 phone or HopeLine phone from DVSAS.

I can change my cell phone number to unpublished and unlisted.

If safe, I can block specific numbers.

- I can avoid calling toll-free numbers because they ‘capture’ your number and publish it.
- I can block my phone number by dialing *67 before the number I’m trying to reach if I am calling an unsafe number.
- I can minimize my use of monitoring and tracking devices such as GPS, cordless phones, and baby monitors. If I sense I am being monitored I can contact the police.
- I can get a private PO Box so that I don’t have to give out my real address, or enroll in the Address Confidentiality Program if my current address is unknown to my abuser.
- I will attempt to stay in locations where my cell phone has reception so that I can make emergency phone calls if necessary. If I am driving, I will notice landmarks or mile markers so I can give my location easily if I have to call 911 from my cell phone.
- I will critically examine privacy settings and safety on social networking sites such as Facebook, and Twitter. I can enter a username other than my real name to prevent my location from being tracked. I can block or delete my abuser and/or their friends and family from my friends list so they cannot see my information.
- I can ask about my records and data in the court systems and government agencies. Many court systems and government agencies are publishing records online. I can ask court clerks and agencies how they protect my information.

- I can search for my name on the internet to see if there are links to my contact information. If I discover information that I would like removed, I can contact the person in control of that website and ask for it to be taken down.
- I will keep a record of abusive or harassing contact. If I am threatened or harassed through the use of technology, I will download, print, or otherwise obtain a record of the abusive contact.
- If I have installed a camera for my own protection I can ask how to block a receiver from receiving the information from the camera.

KEEP YOUR PLAN IN A SAFE PLACE

If you are unable to find a safe place to keep a written safety plan where your partner won’t find it, maybe you can ask a friend to keep a copy for you. If not, you can ask DVSA to keep your plan for you. Whether it’s safe to write down your plan or not, it’s still important to make one.

WHAT CAN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES OFFER ME?

- 24-Hour Helpline
- Advocacy Counseling Sessions
- Safety Planning
- Legal Assistance
- Support Groups
- Safe Shelter
- Community Education

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