

# SAFETY PLANS

Having a safety plan in a domestic violence situation will help you to take the necessary steps to ensure your safety. Here are several tips to help you prepare for various situations:

## Before an incident of domestic violence

If you believe that your partner or your former partner might become violent, you can prepare yourself in advance by doing a number of things.

### Prepare yourself by doing the following things:

1. Keep a suitcase, box or bag in a place where you can grab it quickly and easily. Whenever possible, keep the following things in the container:
  - An extra set of house and car keys,
  - Cash in small denominations as well as change for taxis or telephone calls,
  - IDs: passport, social insurance card, birth certificates (yours and your children's), immigration papers, citizenship card, and aboriginal status card,
  - Driver's licence and vehicle registration
  - Your health insurance card and immunization record, as well as those of your children,
  - Bankbooks, cheques, credit cards, and mortgage or other loan papers,
  - Lease, property deeds, business or partnership agreements, rent or mortgage payment receipts,
  - Address book,
  - A photo of your partner or former partner to help identify him,
  - A list of other items that you can pick up later.
2. Make sure that your purse, wallet, IDs, keys and other emergency items are located where you can easily and quickly grab them (a location known only to you), so that you can leave the house in a hurry.
3. Open a separate bank account in your name, and have the statements sent to another address (a friend or family member's address) so that your partner cannot see them.
4. Check the balance in your joint account often, so that you can withdraw your half quickly.
5. You can help your children get to safety by showing them a meeting point where you can all gather. Teach them the number of the local police station, and tell them to call 911 when there is an emergency (accidents, blows or injuries inflicted on them or you, or when they feel that they are in danger).
6. Regularly review and update your safety plan.

## During an incident of domestic violence

During a violent incident, you need to think and react quickly to make sure that you and your children stay safe.

### Here are some steps that you can take beforehand to help you stay safe during a violent incident:

1. Make sure that you have some clothes ready for your children and you so that you can grab them quickly. If your partner asks you what you are doing, have an answer ready (e.g., "I'm putting some things away" or "I'm getting the kids' clothes ready for tomorrow morning."):
 

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2. Talk about your situation with people that you trust completely. Agree upon a code word that you can use to warn them that you are in danger, so they can immediately call the police. You can also choose a code word with your children so they can protect themselves during a violent episode.
3. Go around each room in your home, and think of how you could escape. If possible, avoid any room without an exit (like a bathroom, basement, or cellar) when you are with your partner. Also avoid places where are firearms or knives are stored.
4. Locate the best places to escape to the ground floor, second floor and basement.
5. Always trust your judgement and intuition. Before the situation becomes very dangerous, you should think of ways to calm down the perpetrator. Always remember that your priority is your safety and your children's safety.
6. Regularly review and update your safety plan.

## After the separation

If you fear that other incidents of domestic violence will occur following your separation, make sure that you have access to the following documents:

- Divorce and child custody papers
- Restraining orders, bond to keep the peace, or any other court orders