

Domestic Violence Safety Plan

These are possible steps victims/survivors can take to increase their safety. A safety plan is a plan to reduce risk when faced with the threat of harm or actual harm. Safety plans will change as situations change. Everyone's safety plans will be different based on their unique risks and rewards.

Emergency Numbers

Police: 911 (via call or text)

Domestic Violence Hotline: 888-774-2900 (via call or text)

Safety During an Argument

- Stay in an area with an exit and don't let the other person get between you and the exit.
- Practice getting out of your home safely.
- Avoid rooms with weapons, such as the kitchen. Move to safer rooms with easier exits, like the first floor.
- Have emergency 911 phones hidden throughout the home.
- Tell trustworthy neighbors about the violence. Ask them to call the police if they hear or see any disturbance.
- Devise a code word or signal to use with your children, family, friends, and trustworthy neighbors when you need the police.
- Trust your instincts and judgment. You have the right to protect yourself.
- Have an overnight bag ready if you need to leave quickly and know where it is located.
- Have a plan for where you could go if you needed to leave. Be prepared even if you think you will never have to leave.

Safety in Your Own Home

- Change the locks on your doors. Landlords are legally obligated to change locks within 24 hours if you are experiencing domestic violence.
- Install locks on your windows. Renters, please check with your landlord first.
- Inform neighbors and landlord that your partner no longer lives with you and to call the police if they see him or her near your home.
- Purchase rope ladders to be used for escape routes from the second floor.
- Install smoke detectors and buy fire extinguishers for each floor of your home.
- Install an outside lighting system that lights up when someone approaches your home.
- Install a security system.

Safety at Work

- Tell you boss, security staff, and/or EAP about situation.
- See if your employer offers flexible work hours or if a transfer to another location is possible.

- Ask the human resources department to help work out the best use of attendance and leave benefits, such as sick time, vacation, personal time, etc..
- Give workplace security a picture of the abuser and copies of orders of protection.
- Ask security staff for an escort to and from the car.
- Devise a safety plan for leaving work, such as exiting through the back door.
- Use a variety of routes to go home.
- Know your workplace's security phone number in case of emergency.
- Ask a co-worker to screen calls at work and ask for a phone with caller ID and recording capabilities.

Safety with Orders of Protection

- Keep your protective order on you at all times and give a copy to a trusted neighbor, friend or family member.
- Call the police if your abuser violates the protective order. Think of alternative ways to keep safe if the police do not respond right away.
- Inform family, friends, neighbors and health care providers that you have a restraining order in effect.
- If my protection order gets destroyed, I know I can go to the courthouse and get another copy.

Safety with Children

- Teach children how to use the telephone and consider getting children a cell phone to be used for emergencies.
- Teach children a code word to be used to dial 911.
- Tell the people who take care of children, including their school, who has permission to pick them up and make sure they know how to recognize those people.
- Give the people who take care of children copies of orders of protection, custody and other court orders, and emergency numbers.
- If children use social networking websites, talk to them about being very careful with what information they post there.

Self-Care & Emotional Health

- Think about who to call when feeling down, lonely or confused.
- If you have ended the relationship, know who to call for support when thinking about going back to your partner.
- Talk it out with someone- hotlines are not just for crisis calls.
- Attend support groups, workshops, or classes at the local domestic violence program or another community agency that directly address your experiences and needs.
- Find ways to care for yourself: exercise, make time to relax, create a safe environment and do things you enjoy.

Stalking

- Change your routines as to not create a routine that your abuser can follow. With this in mind, your safety plan should always be changing.
- Inform family and friends.

- Consider reporting to the police.
- Consider getting a restraining order. Call DVCC's Attorney Advocate to discuss the risks and limits of restraining orders.
- Keep a log of all stalking incidents, including date, time, location, type of incident, and witnesses.
- Keep all evidence, including letters, emails, voicemails, and gifts received from abuser.
- Consider using an Address Confidentiality Program: Safe At Home: <https://portal.ct.gov/SOTS/Commercial-Recording/ACP/Address-Confidentiality-Program>
- Increase your security at home. See "Safety in Your Home" section above for more ideas.

Safety with Technology*

General Cell Phone Strategies:

- Lock your cell phone with a pass code.
- Turn off location services on your phone and leave it on E-911 only. Be aware that some phones may limit this capability and some apps will not work with location services turned off.
- Turn off the Bluetooth on your cell phone when it is not in use.
- Check your cell phone account every now and then through your wireless carrier's website to ensure that you know all the features that are running on your phone.
- Run anti-virus and security software on your phone. Some software will even list all the programs that are running on your phone.

Strategies if you feel you are being monitored:

- If you can, and you feel it's safe, replace your current phone.
 - You can get a donated phone through the Verizon Hopeline (which partners with domestic violence programs) or through a low-income program such as Safe Link Wireless.
 - You can purchase a pay-as-you-go phone, one that isn't connected to any accounts that the perpetrator might have access to. Make the purchase with cash to avoid the phone being connected with your personal information.
 - If you purchase a new phone with a traditional carrier, considering switching carriers and phone number. Ask that you are the only authorized account holder and check to see what type of notifications you will receive if any features get added or removed.
- Think about your safety when getting rid of the monitored cell phone. Some abusers may escalate their abusive behavior if they think that the victim/survivor is removing their control and access.
- Take caution before moving data (porting contacts through the carrier or using the same memory card) or SIM cards from the cell phone that is monitored onto the new phone. The safest method is to manually enter the new data onto the new phone.
- If you cannot leave the cell phone but don't want the person monitoring you to know where you are going, you can turn off the phone and take out the battery.

Safety strategies for location tracking devices:

- Narrow down what might be used. If it is a location tracking device that is in the car, you could ask a trusted mechanic or law enforcement to go through the car to see if they can find the device.
- Be thoughtful about identifying and removing the device. Keep in mind that the person monitoring you might also know that you visited a mechanic or law enforcement and may escalate his/her abusive behavior if he/she suspects that you may be removing his/her access and control.
- Location tracking devices can also be hidden in gifts either to you or to family members. Look through anything that is new or was given as a gift.

Safety When Preparing to Leave

- Establish your independence. Open savings and credit card accounts in your name only and specifically instruct institutions that your partner is not to have access.
- Leave money, extra keys, copies of important documents, extra medicine and clothes with someone you trust so you can leave quickly.
- Determine safe people you can stay with and or how long you can stay.

• Checklist of Items to Take When Leaving:

Identification

- Driver's License
- Birth Certificate
- Children's Birth Certificates
- Social Security Cards
- Passports

Financial

- Money and/or credit cards (in your name)
- Checking and/or savings account books

Legal Papers

- Orders of Protection
- Lease, rental agreement or house deed
- Car registration and insurance papers
- Health and life insurance papers
- Medical records for you and your children
- School records
- Work permits/Green Card/Visa
- Marriage license
- Divorce and custody orders

Other

- Medications
- House and car keys
- Cell phone
- Address book

Adapted from the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence's sample safety plan.

**Source: The National Network to End Domestic Violence' Cell Phone & Location Safety Strategies.*