



## CREATING SAFER ENVIRONMENTS

There are many things victims can do to increase safety. It may not be possible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step. Here are a few suggestions.

At home  
(living with  
abuser)

- Get your emergency escape plan in order and review it often.
- Tell someone you trust about the abuse.
- Create a telephone list with numbers of local police, the nearest shelter(s), crisis help lines, family members, counselors and children's friends.
- Know where you're going. Make arrangements with friends or family so that you can stay with them if necessary; or go to the nearest shelter, hospital emergency department, or police station.
- Try to predict the next likely violent episode and make plans for the children to be sent to friends or family.
- Teach the children to let you know when someone is at the door, before answering it.
- Teach your children how to use the telephone (including your cellular phone if you have one) to contact the police and the fire department. Talk to them about 911, and when it is appropriate to call 911.
- Ensure your house number ("911 Number") is clearly visible for emergency responders.
- Create a code word or sign (for example, a flower pot in the window) with your children and/or family and friends so they know when to call for help.
- Teach your children how to make a collect call to you and to a special friend if your abuser takes the children.
- Plan your emergency exits. Teach your children, and know them well yourself.
- Teach your children their own safety plan(s).
- Make sure all weapons and ammunition are hidden or removed from your home.

At home  
(NOT  
living with  
abuser)

- Change the locks on the doors, windows and mailbox.
- Install a peep hole in the door.
- Either disconnect the automatic garage door opener, or change the code or frequency.
- Teach your children not to answer the door by themselves, and to tell you when someone is at the door.



- Keep your restraining order and any other court orders with you at all times. Ensure you have the most current orders. Consider adding your workplace/school to your restraining order and supplying a copy to your employer.
- Make sure the school, daycare and police have a copy of all court orders, including restraining orders, custody and access orders, as well as a picture of the abuser.
- If you have call display on your phone, be careful about who can get access to the stored numbers (eg., the last number dialed). Be careful who you call as well, or block your number so that your new number does not appear on someone else's call display if you do not want the abuser to obtain your new phone number.
- Have your telephone number unlisted, as it is harder to track when it is unlisted. Again, block your number when calling out.
- Consider getting a cell phone and preprogramming numbers of people to call. Keep your cell phone charged at all times.
- Consider rearranging your furniture, as this is something your abuser may not anticipate, and cause him/her to bump into it and give you warning that he/she is in the house. Also, put your kitchen utensils and knife block in the cupboards so that they are not as accessible.
- If you live in an apartment, check the floor clearly when getting off the elevator. Look in mirrors and be aware of doorways in hallways. Always be aware of your surroundings.
- If you arrive home and something looks out of the ordinary, do not enter your residence; call the police for assistance.
- Consider purchasing rope ladders to be used for escape from upper floors.
- If you have a balcony, consider putting wire around it.
- Replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors if possible, and keep doors and windows locked.
- Consider the advantages of getting a guard dog.
- Install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to your house, and ensure it is high enough so that it would be difficult to disable it. Consider installing security systems, including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors and old hockey sticks in windows/doors that are sliders.
- Document all contact, or attempted contacts from your abuser. Keep all e-mails, voice mail messages, Facebook messages, etc. in case the police need them for evidence.



## While travelling/ in the community

- Always let someone know where you are going and when you arrive. That way, if the contact person doesn't hear from you they can take steps to find you and ensure your safety.
- Vary your routines, shop at different stores and frequent different businesses to throw off the abuser.
- When out, always scan your surroundings for the abuser, always walk in well lit areas and try not to walk alone
- Carry a cell phone at all times if possible.
- If you have a court order against the abuser, carry a copy of the court order with you at all times.
- If driving, make sure to have your keys in hand when walking to the car so you can get in the vehicle quickly.
- Have a remote keyless entry system so you can unlock doors quickly, and keep doors locked at all times, even when in the vehicle.
- Take well travelled and main routes, and always be aware of landmarks and surroundings in case you need to call the police.
- Keep your vehicle well maintained and always make sure there is sufficient gas.
- Check your rearview mirror frequently, and if you notice you are being followed by the abuser, drive to a public place and ask someone to call the police if necessary (if you don't have a cell phone).

## At work

Friends, family and co-workers may be able to help protect you. However, each person should consider carefully which people to ask for help. If you are comfortable, you may choose to do any or all of the following:

- Tell your boss, the security supervisor, and other key people or friends at work of your situation.
- Consider having your workplace added to your restraining order or peace bond, and supplying a copy of these to your employer.
- Supply your employer, security, and reception with a photo and/or description of your abuser and his/her vehicle.
- Ask to have your calls screened at work. It would also help to have these calls documented.
- Discuss the possibility of having your employer call the police if you are in danger from your abuser.
- Consider asking for your employer's help in making yourself less visible at work by changing your email address, phone extension, and office location, varying your hours of work, and taking time off if necessary.



- When there is a clear threat to your physical safety or the physical safety of others in your workplace, you must report this to your employer. Call the police if there is an immediate threat.

#### When arriving or leaving work:

- Let someone know when you will be home.
- Carry your keys in your hands.
- Get a remote or keyless entry car door opener.
- Walk with someone to your car. Consider asking for a parking spot near the building and in a well-lit area.
- Scan the parking lot.
- Walk around your car, look under it and check the backseats to ensure no one is hiding there. Once you get in your car, lock your doors.
- If your abuser is following you, drive to a place where there are people to support you, like a friend's house; or, drive to a police station.
- If you have underground parking, consider parking across the street.
- Keep a sign in your car saying "CALL POLICE" and use if needed.
- If you are walking, take a route that is populated.
- Change the patterns of when you arrive and leave work and the routes you take home.
- If you see your abuser on the street, try to get to a public place like a store or a coffee shop.
- If you see your abuser on the street, call attention to yourself and request help.

#### Safety with a court order

You should be prepared for the possibility that your abuser will not obey a court order. To help enforce court orders:

- Record any violence and/or breach of the order.
- Report any breach of the court order to the police.
- Be aware of where you can obtain a copy of the court order if needed, and carry a copy of the court order at all times.
- Notify police in the jurisdiction of the court order if you move or if you are travelling.
- Tell others about the court order, including family, friends and employers.