

Safety Tips for Victims of Domestic Violence

Tips to Share with a Victim to Plan for Safety

- Tell your kids that, if there's violence, their job is to stay safe, not to protect you. Find a safe place for them to stay in case of violence, such as with a neighbor or in a locked room. Teach them to call 911 and what to say to the dispatcher.
- Hide money, spare keys and a small bag of clothes at work or at a friend's house. For small children, hide a favorite toy or stuffed animal that will comfort them.
- Inform your employer about the situation and develop a safety plan at work. Share a photo and description of the abuser with them and any pertinent legal documentation, such as a protection order.
- Document the abuse by taking photos of bruises and injuries, tell your doctor and get copies of your medical records; save threatening voicemails, notes and e-mails and write each incident down in a journal.
- Gather important documents or copies of documents such as passports, birth certificates, social security cards, insurance papers, work permits or green cards, ownership documents for car and/or house, checkbooks and bank account numbers. Hide these papers at work or at a friend's house. Know the abuser's social security number, birth date and place of birth.
- Consider obtaining a protection order. It directs the abuser not to contact, communicate with, attack, sexually assault or telephone you, your children or other family members. If you have a protection order, carry a copy of it with you at all times.

Safety Tips for Victims Planning on Staying – When You Are Afraid

- Move away from the kitchen, bathroom, garage or anyplace where there are dangerous sharp objects.
- Plan the easiest escape route. Decide on a door or window to exit quickly and safely. Make sure your kids know the route and practice it with them. Have a code word so they know when to call the law enforcement.
- Don't wear necklaces or scarves – these could be used to strangle you.
- Always make sure weapons are secured and that guns aren't loaded.

Safety Tips for Victims Who Have Left Their Abuser

- Change the locks on your doors. Install steel/metal doors, a security system, smoke detectors and an outside lighting system.
- Get Caller ID for your telephone so you can screen your calls.
- Consider getting a post office box for your mail or participating in a confidential mailing program (if available in your state).
- Learn about your legal rights and options. If you have legal papers, keep copies of them with you at all times.
- Tell neighbors, friends, landlords or coworkers that your abusive partner no longer lives with you. Share your safety plan with people you trust. Explain it to your children.
- Tell your employer/coworkers about your situation and ask them to screen your calls, move your desk, change your work schedule/hours or accompany you to your car.
- Tell the school or day care or others spending time with your children who can pick them up and who can't. If you have a protective order, make sure they know about it.
- Vary your routes to work, to school or day care, to the grocery store and other places you frequent.
- Call a friend or someone else who will be supportive, when you feel down and ready to return to an abusive partner.

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