

Creating a Safety Plan

Safety During a Violent Incident

- Know how to get out safely.
- Know where your purse and car keys will be.
- Tell friends or neighbors about the violence you are experiencing so that they can call 911 for you if they hear suspicious noises coming from your house.
- Teach your children to call 911 if needed.
- Have a safe place you can go to if you must leave your home.
- Find a space you can move to in your home that presents the lowest risk to you. (Try to avoid areas that are near weapons or without access to an outside door.)

Safety When Preparing to Leave

- Find someone who can keep money, extra clothes, important documents and an extra set of keys for you.
- Think about opening your own savings account.
- Explore other things you could do to increase your independence.
- If possible, have someone in mind who could lend you money or let you stay with them if necessary.
- Rehearse your escape plan and practice it with your children.

Safety in the Home

- Change all locks.
- Replace wooden doors with metal doors.
- Install security system including additional locks, window bars, electronic system, etc.
- Install outside lighting system.
- Teach children how to call 911.
- Change telephone number, email address and email password.
- Watch for stalking behaviors.
- Inform friends, neighbors, and/or landlord that your partner no longer lives with you and that the police should be called if he is observed near the home.

Safety with a Protective Order

- Get information about obtaining a Protective Order from a local domestic violence program.
- Know where the Protective Order is at all times.
- Distribute Protective Order where you live or work or other places you might visit.
- Inform trusted others that you have a Protective Order in effect.
- Contact the police and court if the Protective Order is violated.
- If the police do not help, contact police department to file a complaint.

Safety on the Job

- Inform supervisor and co-workers of your situation.
- Ask for help at work to screen your calls.
- Find a safe escort when leaving work.
- Use a different route home to avoid problems from partner who knows your routines.

Items to Take When Leaving

- Identification, driver's license
- Children's birth certificates
- Your birth certificate
- Social Security cards
- School and vaccination records
- Money, checkbook, ATM card, credit cards
- Keys
- Medications
- Work permits
- Green card, passport
- Divorce papers
- Medical records
- Lease, house deed, mortgage book
- Insurance papers
- Small saleable objects
- Address book
- Pictures
- Jewelry
- Children's favorite toys
- Items of sentimental value

Safety Planning for People with Disabilities Preparing to Leave an Abusive Situation

A safety plan is a unique strategy to reduce the risks of abuse or violence which may include escaping a dangerous situation. Each person's plan is individualized for her/his situation and may be altered at any time. The following are ideas to consider for women or men with disabilities, but are not in any particular order of importance.

- If you are thinking about leaving, do not let your abuser know of your plans to escape. Be careful not to leave clues regarding your destination (i.e., long distance phone bills or literature about domestic violence services).
- Change your payee (if you have one) on your SSI/SSDI benefits to someone *you* trust other than the batterer. You (or a caseworker from a domestic violence, disability service agency or Adult Protective Services) will need to contact the Social Security Administration to change the payee name.
- Open a savings account in your name only. Have your benefit checks direct deposited into that account. If possible, try to set aside as much money as you can. If you have joint accounts with your spouse or partner, try to take all of your money out and put it in your own account. It may seem sneaky or it may even be risky for you, but it may mean your survival.
- Plan for assistance with personal care tasks. Be prepared to receive this assistance from someone else besides the batterer. Ask several friends, family members or faith community members for help if possible so that one person is not over-taxed.
- If you receive Medicaid/Medicare and are low income and living in Texas, you may be entitled to services from the Texas Department of Human Services/Primary Home Care Program. Some home health care agencies have rates based on income. Contact a caseworker or an intake worker and let them know about your service needs. If at first she/he does not respond or assist, call again and ask for a status report or for an explanation about why services have not been initiated. If they still do not respond, ask to speak to their supervisor.
- Get a post office box in your own name and hide the key or give it to a trusted friend or relative.
- Gather money, extra set of keys, medications, spare adaptive aids or medical supplies, a packed bag with a few changes of clothes for you and your child(ren) and leave those items at the home of a trusted friend or relative.
- Assess your own resources. Figure out if you have people (i.e., friends, family, church or synagogue members, etc.) who would be able to let you stay with them or lend you some money to make the transition.
- Make sure if you drive an adapted vehicle that the adaptations are in good repair and the vehicle itself is in reasonable, working order. Have your vehicle checked often in case the abuser has tampered

with it in any way. Never leave your vehicle with less than half a tank of gas. This is so that if you need to leave in a hurry, you have a reasonable amount of gas available.

- If you live in a major metropolitan area, consider applying for special or para transit services. A doctor or caseworker can certify your disability if you have seen them for services before. This may even be done by mail.
- Call the battered women's shelter in your area (or the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE; 1-800-787-3224 (TTY) to discuss safety planning. Let them know what your needs are and that you have a disability. Inquire about accessibility. Be aware that shelters are often full. More than likely, the shelter is not turning you away because of your disability. Ask to be put on the waiting list and check back with them daily to inquire about their status. Remember, safety planning is very, very important at this stage of the process. Stay in touch with your local hotline. Ask them for help to strategize with safety planning. A woman is much more likely to be killed upon leaving a relationship than at any other time. Consider attending a domestic violence support group if there is one available in your community.
- Keep the battered women's shelter or domestic violence or other crisis hotline telephone number with you. Better yet, memorize it! Keep some extra change with you for phone calls. Most shelter hotlines will take collect calls.
- Call and talk with other disability related service providers and disability rights organizations listed in the phone book (i.e., support groups, coalitions, independent living centers, etc.) and ask for assistance with locating accessible housing or other support services.
- Call Adult Protective Services (APS) and report the abuse. Let them know if your health and safety are at stake. The telephone number in Texas is 1-800-252-5400 (voice and TTY). They must take down all self reports. Ask APS what the process will be for investigation and services. Not all APS reports end in a nursing home placement. If you are not willing to tolerate a nursing home placement, then let the social worker know that. There are emergency options other than an institutional setting and APS may be able to set up other temporary emergency services.
- When you leave, write a note to the abuser that says you went to a doctor's appointment or another place that will not make the abuser suspicious. This will give you a head start.
- If you use a credit card after leaving, make sure that the bill will not be sent to the residence where the abuser lives or has access.
- If after you leave you need to telephone anyone who knows the abuser, be careful that your location cannot be traced through caller ID or call return.
- Leaving an abusive relationship is a process for people with disabilities just like it is for people without disabilities. For individuals with disabilities, this process can be longer because of all the logistics. Leaving an abusive relationship is one of the bravest, most frightening experiences a person can go through. Being abused is not your fault and neither is having a disability.
- Only you know your batterer best. Use the steps that make sense for your personal situation. If something does not feel safe and might put you or your children in further danger—don't do it!
- Remember there is hope. There are options. There is a way out.

This document is not intended to be all-inclusive, nor do any of the suggestions provided in this document guarantee personal safety.

Personal Safety Planning for Explosive Incidents

- THINK AHEAD & PLAN AHEAD for personal safety, if possible.
- Pay attention to cues that the abuser demonstrates before becoming explosive and/or angry. Watch for those cues, so you can plan ahead before the situation escalates. Trust your instincts.
- Plan to have your caregiver or partner perform personal care tasks when they are in a good mood, if possible, and not violent or angry. Have them do some extra, simple tasks, (i.e., extra laundry, organizing personal items) so that these items can be easily accessed in an emergency/crisis situation.
- Try to have your form of mobility available (already be in your wheelchair, have your walker or cane close by).
- Stay close to a phone. If you have a cellular or cordless phone, keep it safely tucked away at your side, in your wheelchair, or in a scooter basket and turn the ringer off so your abuser will not know you have it. Program 911 and other safety numbers into your telephone if it has this feature.
- If an argument seems unavoidable, try to move into a room or area away from potentially dangerous items (i.e., furniture, walls, glass, weapons, etc.). Try to stay near an exit if possible. This is especially important if your partner/caregiver has been violent toward you in the past. It almost always happens again.
- Get out an exit if possible and YELL OR MAKE SOME LOUD NOISE (only if it is safe for you to do this!)
- Practice ahead of time how to get out of your home or how to get to the phone to call for help.
- Identify a friend or neighbor ahead of time you can call. Memorize their phone number or keep it in a safe place. Pick a safe time to talk to them ahead of time about the violence. Then ask them to call 911—police, if they hear a disturbance coming from your house.
- Contact the police when a crisis is not happening. Tell them about your situation. Ask them to send a patrol car to drive by your house a couple of times during an evening or as regularly as possible. Many police will do this on a semi-regular basis if they know you are a person with a disability.
- Figure out a code word or code phrases you can use with your children, family, and friends to alert them to call 911 if you are in a violent situation.
- Plan ahead for where you will go if you have to leave home (even if you don't think leaving is possible).
- Use your own judgment and trust your feelings and instincts. If the situation is dangerous, consider giving the abuser what they want, in order to calm them down temporarily. You have the right to protect yourself until you are out of danger.

REMEMBER:

You Do Not Deserve to Be Hit,
Threatened or Verbally or Sexually Abused!!!
You Have the Right to Be Safe!

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Checklist for Persons with Disabilities:

What to Take with You When You Leave an Abusive Relationship

Identification

- ☐ Driver's license or state I.D. card
- ☐ Your and your children's (or other family member's) birth certificates
- ☐ Social Security card or Social Security award letter
- ☐ Proof of disability
- ☐ Food stamps/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families card
- ☐ Insurance, Medicaid, Medicare and/or clinic card

Money

- ☐ Money and/or credit cards/ATM card
- ☐ Bank books/account information/checkbook
- ☐ If applicable, information on stocks (including stock certificates), bonds, retirement account(s), mortgage

Legal Papers

- ☐ Lease/house payment information/deed to the house (even if you do not plan to live there)
- ☐ Car registration/car insurance papers
- ☐ Health/life insurance papers
- ☐ Medical records/doctor's orders
- ☐ Children's school records/shot records
- ☐ Work permits (green card, VISA)
- ☐ Passport
- ☐ Divorce papers
- ☐ Child custody papers
- ☐ Protective or Restraining Order

Other Important Disability-Related Items

- ☐ Adaptive equipment (wheelchair, shower bench, crutches, communicative devices, etc.)
- ☐ Medications/prescriptions/doctor's orders
- ☐ Urological supplies
- ☐ Service animal and needed supplies for their care
- ☐ Names and phone numbers of home health agencies, caseworkers and other disability service providers to assist in coordinating services for you
- ☐ Phone numbers of friends or past attendants who might be willing to help with personal care tasks during the transition period and also provide you with some emotional support
- ☐ Fixed route bus pass, Mobility ID card or Special Transit ID card

Miscellaneous Items

- ☐ House/car/office keys
- ☐ Small objects to sell
- ☐ Jewelry
- ☐ Address book
- ☐ Pictures of you, your children, grandchildren, and the abuser
- ☐ Children's small, favorite toys
- ☐ Toiletries/diapers
- ☐ Cellular phone programmed to 911 (these can often be obtained for free through Adult Protective Services or a local domestic violence program)