

## *Brief Safety Planning*

We provide information and options and allow those we assist to make their own choices about the best options for them. Safety planning is an important technique to consider when victims are staying in an abusive relationship or intend to leave. Several things should be considered. Personalized safety planning is available in English and Spanish. Please call our 24-hour hotline at 919-929-7122 if you would like to speak with an advocate about a plan for your daily safety.



### **Here are some things to consider in a Brief Safety Plan:**

1. Gather all important papers for yourself and your children. These include Social Security cards, birth certificates, financial records, immigration papers, passports, etc. Put them in a safe place where you can get to them in a hurry.
2. Try to set aside some extra cash, checkbook, savings account or credit cards. Be sure to hide any cash or financial records of your savings in a safe place.
3. Hide an extra set of car and house keys in a safe place or give them to a friend or neighbor.
4. Pack a suitcase or bag containing essential clothing, toiletries and medications; anything you would want if you must leave in a hurry – for yourself and your children.
5. Plan ahead where you could go for safety in an emergency and how you would get there. If your plan includes other people, discuss it with them. You may want to arrange a signal that will indicate to them that you need help. Be sure to make arrangements for your pets.
6. If danger is imminent, leave at once! Try to take your suitcase and other items, but don't risk your safety for them. Take your children if you can.
7. Talk with your children about safety if they are old enough to understand. Teach them how to call for help on 911 and where to go to be safe. You may want to set up a signal with them so that they will know when to call for help or leave.



## Telephone, cell phone, and technology safety planning:

### Telephone

- A corded phone is much safer for sensitive conversations than a cordless phone. Cordless phone conversations can sometimes be heard on other cordless phones or on baby monitors.
- If you have caller ID and your abuser has access to it, be sure to clear/delete the ID after receiving calls that might let him the abuser know what you are doing.
- If your phone has a redial function, be sure to call a common number after making calls so that the last number called won't arouse suspicion.
- The number of the call received can be retrieved by dialing \*69. If you are concerned that your abuser may check this, you may want to have a friend or relative (someone that has a common number) call you after you've made calls so that their number is stored as the number that would be retrieved with \*69.

### Cell Phone

- If you are using a cell phone provided by your abuser or if you are on a family plan, keep in mind that numbers that you call will appear on billing records and in the log on the cell phone. You can clear the log on the cell phone, but numbers will still appear on the bill.
- Cell phones with pre-paid minutes do not have a billing record, but numbers called and received will still be stored in the log on the phone.
- Cell phones will call 911 even if they do not have a plan or are not activated. When calling 911 from a cell phone, you MUST tell the operator where you are when you call. The operator cannot get your location from a cell phone without a plan.
- If your abuser knows the PIN (Personal Identification Number) to your voicemail on your cell phone, you can change it; however, this may make your abuser suspicious.

### Computers

- Computers can be very valuable in helping you plan and maintain your safety. However, it is important to remember that this form of communication is not completely secure, and can be used by your abuser to further control or gain information about you. While these internet safety instructions will help you cover your activities, please remember that it is impossible to completely erase everything and that there is also a risk that changing settings and erasing histories will alert your abuser to your activities. Please use these instructions in the safest way for your situation.
- The safest computer for you to use is one your abuser cannot access. There are many programs available to track computer and internet use, and it is difficult to tell if your abuser is watching what you do. Try to use a computer at your local library, a friend's house, community center, or internet café.
- Change passwords and PINs frequently, and never give your passwords/PIN to anyone. Choose passwords that are difficult to guess and include letters and numbers. If you need to write it down, write down a hint rather than the actual password. Do not allow the computer to remember passwords for you.

### Internet

- Check to see if the "Use inline AutoComplete" box is checked. If it is, partial web addresses will be completed while typing in the Address bar and could reveal where you have been browsing. To make sure this isn't enabled, pull down the Tools menu, choose Internet Options, then click the Advanced tab. There is a box that can be checked or unchecked called Use inline AutoComplete – uncheck the box if it is checked.



- When opening a web page, don't type the address directly into the Address bar. Instead, pull down the File Menu and choose Open. Then type the web address and click OK. This will keep the website out of your history.
- Cache/History file – This file automatically saves a list of all the websites you've visited while you were on the internet, and should be cleared after every session, especially if you've visited sites you wish to keep private from your abuser.
- To find out what information about you is available on the internet, put your first and last name in quotes in a search engine. Also, be cautious about having photos of yourself or your children displayed online. This includes photos from your children's school, relatives, or sporting events.
- Be aware that government agencies and court systems may publish records on the web. Find out from all of the agencies you work with as to what is published and ask if your information can be restricted.
- If you are using a chat room, check to see if your program has a Disable/Enable log setting that you can disable while you are chatting. Once you are done chatting, you can restore the settings.

### Email

- Create a new email account from one of the free email providers like [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com), [www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com), [www.gmail.com](http://www.gmail.com) or [www.hushmail.com](http://www.hushmail.com). Choose a gender-neutral, non-specific username that is nothing like you've had before, not [yourname@hotmail.com](mailto:yourname@hotmail.com). Don't reference favorite hobbies or birthdates, anything that might alert your abuser to your identity.
- If you use the address book associated with your email program, do not enter sensitive information into the address book. If your email program automatically enters email addresses of those you've replied to into the address book, you may be able to disable that feature. You may also be able to disable the automatic name completion feature, which fills in an email address after the first few letters are typed.
- Your Sent and Deleted Items folders will contain copies of sent and deleted items. You can prevent items from being saved in your Sent folder by disabling that feature in your email. You either set your deleted items folder to be cleared daily, or simply empty it at the end of each email session.
- You can block incoming emails through your email program. You can select to block specific email addresses, or addresses ending in the same address (i.e. [name@address.com](mailto:name@address.com) or any email that ends in [address.com](mailto:address.com)).
- You can also choose to have designated senders' emails sent to a specific folder. This will allow you the ability to read the emails at a time that is convenient for you, and also allows you to have a copy of the email should there be threats, etc.
- If you are being harassed online, there are several steps you can take to end the harassment. The first thing to do is save copies of everything. If you have a DVPO that stipulates no contact, email/contact in a chat room is a violation, and you can report that to the local authorities. You can also contact the internet service provider (ISP) and email the service of the person that is harassing you. For example, if you are receiving harassing emails from a hotmail account (address ending in [@hotmail.com](mailto:@hotmail.com)), you can contact hotmail through their website to report the harassment. If a website has been created about you, you can contact the host of the site. This can usually be done by selecting the Contact Us option on the website.

