

SAFETY PLAN

Name: _____ Date: _____

Complaint #: _____ Officer: Net _____

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility for further violence. Although I do not have control over my partner's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to him/her and how to best get myself and my children to safety.

Step 1: Safety during a violent incident. Women cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, battered women may use a variety of strategies.

I can use some or all of the following strategies:

- A. If I decide to leave, I will _____. (Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes would you use?)
- B. I can keep my purse and car keys ready and put them (place) _____ in order to leave quickly.
- C. I can tell _____ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.
- D. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and the fire department.
- E. I will use _____ as my code for my children or my friends so they can call for help.
- F. If I have to leave my home, I will go _____ (Decide this even if you don't think there will be a next time).

If I cannot go to the location above, then I can go to _____ or _____.

- G. I can also teach some of these strategies to some/all my children.
- H. When I expect we are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as _____. (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons or in rooms without access to an outside door).
- I. I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my partner what he/she wants to calm him/her down. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

Step 2: Safety when preparing to leave. Battered women frequently leave the residence they share with the battering partner. Leaving must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. Batterers often strike back when they believe that a battered woman is leaving the relationship.

I can use some or all the following safety strategies:

- A. I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____ so that I can leave quickly.
- B. I will keep copies of important documents or keys at _____.
- C. I will open a savings account by _____, to increase my independence.
- D. Other things I can do to increase my independence include:
- E. I can seek shelter by calling the domestic Violence Program. Their # is _____.
- F. I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, the following month the telephone bill will tell my batterer those numbers that I called after I left. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I must either use coins or I might get a friend to permit me to use their telephone credit card for a limited time when I first leave.

- G. I will check with _____ and _____ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- H. I can leave extra clothes with _____.
- I. I will sit down and review my safety plan every _____ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. _____ (domestic violence advocate or friend) has agreed to help me review this plan.
- J. I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.

Step 3: Safety in my own residence. There are many things that a woman can do to increase her safety in her own residence. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step.

Safety measures I can use include:

- A. I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
- B. I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- C. I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.
- D. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- E. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.
- F. I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.
- G. I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to _____ (friend/minister/ other) in the event that my partner takes the children.
- H. I will tell people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick up my children and that my partner is not permitted to do so. The people I will inform about pick-up permission include:

_____ (school),
 _____ (day care staff),
 _____ (babysitter),
 _____ (Sunday school teacher),
 _____ (teacher),
 _____ (and),
 _____ (others),

- I. I can inform _____ (neighbors),
 _____ (pastor), and,
 _____ (friend) that my partner no longer resides with me and they should call the police if he is observed near my residence.

Step 4: Safety with an Order of Protection. Many batterers obey protection orders, but one can never be sure which violent partner will obey and which will violate protection orders. I recognize that I may need to ask the police and the court to enforce my protection order.

The following are some steps that I can take to help the enforcement of my protection order:

- A. I will keep my protection order _____ (location) (Always keep it on or near your person. If you change purses, that's the first thing that should go in).
- B. I will give my protection order to police departments in the communities where I usually visit family or friends and in the community where I live.
- C. There should be a county registry of protection orders that all police departments can call to confirm a protection order. I can check to make sure that my order is in registry. The telephone number for the county registry of protection order is _____.
- D. For further safety, if I often visit other counties in North Carolina, I might file my protection order with the court in those counties. I will register my protection order in the following counties:
 _____ and _____ that I have a protection order in effect.

E. I can call the local domestic violence program if I am not sure about B, C, or D above or if I have some problem with my protection order.

F. I will inform my employer, my minister, my closest friend and _____ and _____ that I have a protection order in effect.

G. If my partner destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the Court Clerk's office.

H. If my partner violates the protection order; I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.

I. If the police do no help, I can contact my advocate or attorney and will file a complaint with the chief of the police department.

J. I can also file a private criminal complaint with the district justice in the jurisdiction where the violation occurred or with the district attorney. I can charge my battering partner with a violation of the Order of Protection and all the crimes that he commits in violating the order. I can call the domestic violence advocate to help me with this.

Step 5: Safety on the job and in public. Each battered woman must decide if and when she will tell others that her partner has battered her and that she may be at continued risk. Friends, family and co-workers can help to protect women. Each woman should consider carefully which people to invite to help secure her safety.

I might do any or all of the following:

A. I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and _____ at work of my situation.

B. I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work.

C. When leaving work, I can _____
_____.

D. When driving home if problems occur, I can _____
_____.

E. If I use public transit, I can _____
_____.

F. I will go to different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business and shop at hours that are different than those when residing with my battered partner.

G. I can use a different bank and take care of my banking at hours different from those I used when residing with my battered partner.

H. I can also _____.

Step 6: Safety and drug or alcohol use. Most people in this culture use alcohol. Many use mood-altering drugs. Much of this use is legal and some is not. The legal outcomes of using illegal drugs can be very hard on a battered woman, may hurt her relationship with her children and put her at a disadvantage in other legal actions with her battering partner. Therefore, women should carefully consider the potential cost of the use of illegal drugs. But beyond this, the use of any alcohol or other drug can reduce a woman's awareness and ability to act quickly to protect herself from her battering partner. Furthermore, the use of alcohol or other drugs by the batterer may give him/her an excuse to use violence. Therefore, in the context of drug or alcohol use, a woman needs to make specific safety plans.

If drug or alcohol use has occurred in my relationship with the battering partner, I can enhance my safety by some or all of the following:

A. If I am going to use, I can do so in a safe place and with people who understand the risk of violence and are committed to my safety.

B. I can also _____.

C. If my partner is using, I can _____.

D. I might also _____.

E. To safeguard my children, I might _____
and _____.

Step 7: Safety and my emotional health. The experience of being battered and verbally degraded by partners is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life for myself takes much courage and incredible energy.

To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to avoid hard emotional times, I can do some of the following:

- A. If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can _____.
- B. When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can _____.
- C. I can try to use "I can . . ." statements with myself and to be assertive with others.
- D. I can tell myself - " _____ " whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.
- E. I can read _____ to help me feel stronger.
- F. I can call _____, _____ and _____ as other resources to be of support of me.
- G. Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are _____, _____, and _____.
- H. I can attend workshops and support groups at the domestic violence program or _____, or _____ to gain support and strengthen my relationship with other people.

Step 8: Items to take when leaving. When women leave partners, it is important to take certain items with them. Beyond this, women sometimes give an extra copy of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case they have to leave quickly.

Money: Even if I have never worked, I can legally take 1/2 of the funds in the checking and savings accounts. If I don't take any money from the accounts, he can legally take all money and/or close the account and I may not get my share until the court rules on it if ever. Items with asterisks on the following list are the most important to take. If there is time, the other items might be taken, or stored outside the home.

These items might be placed in one location, so that if we have to leave in a hurry, I can grab them quickly.

When I leave, I should have:

- * Identification for myself
- * Children's birth certificate
- * My birth certificate
- * Social security cards
- * School and vaccination records
- * Money
- * Checkbook, ATM (Automatic Tellers Machine) card
- * Credit cards
- * Keys - house/car/office
- * Driver's license and registration
- * Medication
- * Welfare identification, work permits, Green card
- * Passport(s), Divorce papers
- * Medical records - for all family members
- * Lease/rental agreement, house deed, mortgage payment book
- * Bank books, Insurance papers
- * Small saleable objects
- * Address book
- * Pictures, jewelry
- * Children's favorite toys and/or blankets

* Items of special sentimental value

Telephone numbers I need to know:

Police department _____

District Attorney's Office _____

Domestic Violence Program _____

Supervisor's home number _____

County Registers of Protective Orders _____

Other _____

I will keep this document in a safe place and out of the reach of my potential attacker.

Review date: _____

Domestic Violence is a pervasive problem in virtually all countries, cultures, classes and income groups. It is a complex and multifaceted problem with individual solutions that are appropriate for different women in different socio-cultural contexts.

Both short and long-term measures must be considered. Short-term measures consist of assistance programs that protect the individual woman who has been or is being abused. They often focus on the critical period after a woman leaves her home. , providing her with food, shelter and guidance. This is the period when a woman is most at-risk from the perpetrator seeking retribution, or when she might return to the home out of a sense of hopelessness. Long-term measures seek to educate the public and empower the woman to re-establish her life without violence.

Any response should involve an interrelationship between the health, legal and social sectors, so that the woman is not continually referred to another agency. One innovative approach is the use of "family crisis centers," or "victim advocates" to act as the woman's link to the various sectors. Support can come in various forms:

Crisis Intervention:

Crisis intervention services

Crisis hot lines

Shelters or other emergency residential facilities

Medical services

Transportation networks

Laws that allow either victims or perpetrators to be removed from the home.

If you are the supervisor or manager of an employee who is experiencing domestic violence:

Be aware of unusual absences behavior and take note of bruises or emotional distress.
Contact the human resources manager to discuss concerns, resources available and ways to support the employee, e.g., safety planning, employee assistance counseling, family resource referrals, flexible scheduling, security measures.
Be familiar with community resources and referrals.
Maintain confidentiality at all times; be sensitive to the seriousness of the situation.
Discuss who is appropriate to speak with the employee; agree on all forms of communication, e.g., providing the safety manager with a photo if there is a risk at work.
Assist the employee in documenting all incidences with the batterer that occur in the workplace.
Take action against domestic violence by encouraging employees to volunteer and by providing financial or in-kind support to your local domestic violence programs.

Legal Guidelines: Questions To Ask Before You Hire An Attorney

General questions about divorce and custody cases:

Have you or any member of your firm ever represented my partners or anyone associated with my partner?

Do you handle divorce or custody cases? How many of these cases have you handled?

How many of them were contested?

How many of them went to trial?

Did any of the cases involve expert witnesses?

How many were before the judge(s) who will hear my case?

What kind of decisions does this judge usually make?

Have you ever appealed a case, and if so, what were the issue(s) appealed? How many of these appealed cases did you win? (Remember that even an exceptional attorney can lose cases.)

Questions about attorney fees and costs

What are your fees? What work do these fees cover? Is this an hourly fee or a flat fee for the entire case?

Is there an additional charge for appearing in court?

Do you ever charge less for people who do not have much money?

Do you charge a retainer? How much? What does it cover? Do you refund all or part of the retainer if my case ends up being dropped or not taking much time? (Attorneys should be willing to refund any part of the retainer not spent.) Are there other expenses which I may have to pay?

What are they and how much are they likely to be?

Will you be the only person working on my case? What will other people do? How will I be charged for their work? Will I be charged for speaking to your secretary? Your receptionist?

Are there ways that I can assist you as to keep down my costs?

Will you send me a copy of letters, documents, and court papers that you file or receive regarding my case?

Do you charge extra if the case gets more complicated or we have to go back to court?

Will you require that I have paid everything that I owe you before you will go to court with me or finish my case? (Many attorneys do this. They may also refuse to return your original papers or copies of your file, and in some cases this may be legal. Therefore you should insist on getting a copy of any paper filed with the court or given or received from another party or otherwise relevant to your case. Be sure to keep all of them in a safe place, in case you ever need them.)

Are you willing to work out a payment plan with me?

Will you put our agreement about fees and what work you will perform in writing?

Questions about cases involving domestic violence:

How much experience have you had with cases involving domestic violence? Which party did you represent (the victim, the abuser or the children)?

Do you generally believe women who tell you that they have been battered?

Do you go to court with women wanting to obtain orders of protection against their abusers?

How sympathetic to battered women are the judges who will hear my case?

What are the laws of this state regarding which parent should be given custody when one parent has abused the other parent? Does the judge(s) who will probably hear my case follow these laws? What do they usually recommend?

What do you think about joint custody awards in cases involving domestic violence?

What do you think about mediation in cases where there has been domestic violence?

Do the expert witnesses likely to be involved understand the need to protect battered women and children?

What kind of custody and visitation arrangements do they usually recommend in cases involving domestic violence?

Do the judges usually follow their recommendations?

Do you have a working relationship with any batterer intervention program? Which one(s)?

How helpful is the local prosecutor in handling domestic violence cases? Questions about contested custody cases.

Do you usually believe mothers who tell you that their children's father has physically or sexually abused them?

How do you handle cases where parental alienation is alleged? (This is a popular theory which blames mothers for turning their children's affection against the father, most often in cases where the father has abused the mother or the children. The American Psychiatric Association says there is no scientific basis for this theory.)

How do the custody evaluators that you work with feel about cases where the child's father has abused the child(ren)? Do they believe a mothers' statements about the abuse? What kind of custody and visitation recommendations do they usually make?

How does the judge(s) who will probably decide my case feel about cases where the child's father has abused the child(ren) ? Do they believe mothers who have made reports about the father's physical abuse of the child? About the father's sexual abuse of the child?

Will someone be appointed for the children, and how will that person feel about the father's physical abuse of the child? About the father's sexual abuse of the child?

Will it matter that the child protective service agency has substantiated the abuse? If the father was convicted or pled guilty to the abuse in a criminal case? What do you do to protect children in cases when you know that their father is abusing them? Are you willing to stand up for my case, even if it angers the judge?

If none of the abuse allegations have been made public yet, what do you recommend about whether to raise them and how, and how to keep my children safe?