



Individualized Safety Plan

A Step-by-Step Course of Action

Developed by WomenattheCentrE

Step I: Services and Supports

Crisis Support

Emergency: 911

Toronto Rape Crisis Centre: 416-597-8808

Assaulted Women's Help Line: 416-863-0511

Sexual Assault Line York Region: 905-895-7313

Rape Crisis Centre of Peel: 905-273-9442

Legal

Toronto Police Non-Emergency: 416-808-2222

York Region Community Legal Services: 905-508-5018

North Peel & Dufferin Community Legal Services: (905) 455-0160

Legal Aid Ontario: 1-800-268-8326 or 416-947-3330 (GTA)

Emergency Welfare: 416-392-8623

Victim Witness Assistance Program: 416-314-2447

Steps to Justice: <https://stepstojustice.ca/>

Housing

Housing Connections (one-stop housing solution): 416-981-6111 or 416-981-6112

Animals

Dog Tails (King Township)

Through Ruff Times (Toronto): <https://www.throughrufftimes.org/contact-us>

Medical

Chantel's Place (Trillium hospital, Mississauga): (905) 848 - 7580 ext. 2548

Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Care Centre (SA/DVCC)

(Women's College Hospital, Toronto): 416-323-6040

Peer Support

Connect with other survivors through WomenattheCentrE's online membership at <https://www.womenatthecentre.com/become-a-member/>.

Important contacts

Make a separate piece of paper with these numbers for easy access when leaving.

Step II : Safety Planning During a Violent Incident

- Be aware of any weapons in the home or the person's access to weapons.
- Try to notice if there are any triggers for the aggressor of the violence. This can help you try to predict the next likely incident and give you a chance to prepare (e.g. by making plans for you and/or the children to be sent to family/friends in advance)
- Use your judgment and intuition. If verbal self-defense is a possibility, you may want to consider pretending to agree with the person in order to calm them down, so that you can buy yourself time to escape. Silence can be a powerful resistance strategy.
- Try to move to a space where you think the risk is the lowest. Avoid areas without a clear exit path or where there could be a weapon at hand (e.g. kitchen, bathroom, closet). Try and position yourself so that your back is facing the exit area (e.g. if you are in your bedroom, keep your back facing the door).

I can go to these rooms if I am in danger: _____

(Think of rooms that have ways to escape and doors that lock, but don't have things like kitchen knives and power tools)

- If you feel comfortable, make as much noise as possible (set off the fire alarm, yell "FIRE", break things, break a window) - to draw attention to the situation
- Practice how to get out safely. What doors or windows will you use?

If I decide to escape, I can get out of the house by _____.

(Decide on a safe place to go to when violence occurs.)

I can go to _____.

(Decide this even if you don't think there will be a next time).

If I need to call for help, telephones are located at these places:

(Use a code word with a person of choice so they can call for help.)

I am going to confide in _____.
Our code word will be _____.

Pack a bag with essentials for you (and your children, if applicable) - change of clothing, important documents, toothbrush/toothpaste - and keep this bag somewhere safe (e.g. at work)

I will keep my packed bag at _____.

(Use a code word with a person of choice so they can call for help.)

Step II : Safety Planning During a Violent Incident (Continued)

- Once you are in a safe place, you may want to consider seeking medical attention for any physical injuries. If you have been sexually assaulted, and if you choose to seek medical assistance, you may want to choose not to bathe or shower. If you want medical assistance, Chantel's Place in Trillium Hospital Mississauga is excellent! A trained professional will conduct a trauma-informed examination and can collect and store evidence on your behalf, if you choose.
- You do not need to report to the police. You may want to think about keeping the clothes you were wearing during the assault (don't wash them), as you can provide them for use as evidence if you choose to pursue charges against the person who committed the violence.
- When you leave your home, take your children if you can. If you try to get them later, the police cannot help you remove them from their other parent unless you have a valid court order.
- Document abuse patterns and the date, time of abusive incidents, and contact with abuser. If you have been hit in the head or strangled, tell your first responder (e.g. police, ambulance, neighbour) and request medical attention. You may have a concussion and/or traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Safety Planning with Children:

- The most important thing for children is to get away from where the violence is happening. Although children often try to help stop the violence, it is important to tell children that the best and most important thing for them to do is to keep themselves safe.
- Stress the importance of being safe, and that it is not the child's responsibility to make sure that their parent is safe
- Have your child pick a safe room/place in the house, preferably with a lock on the door and a phone.
- Create a code word to use with your children so that they know when to run to safety and to call for help.

Our code word is: _____.

Teach your children how to call for help. It is important that children know they should not use a phone that is in view of the violent person. This puts them at risk. Talk to your children about using a neighbour's phone if they are unable to use a phone at home. Remember there is no cost when dialling 911 from a pay phone or cell phone .

If you have a cell phone, teach your children how to use it.
Ensure that your children know their full name and address.

My address is: _____.

Rehearse what your child/children will say when they call for help
Pick a safe place to meet your children, out of the home, so you can easily find each other after the situation is safe (e.g. Neighbour, park, pond)

Our safe place is: _____.

Step II : Safety Planning During a Violent Incident (Continued)

If Law Enforcement Becomes Involved:

- It will likely result in the involvement of Child Protection Services (e.g. Children's Aid Society), if you have children.
- It can result in arrest, detainment and/or deportation if you are a woman without legal status in Canada. If you have Permanent Residence or are here with a permit or sponsored by your aggressor/someone else, you cannot be deported, despite what your aggressor claims.
- There is a chance you may be charged. This often occurs if the aggressor(s) you experience violence from claims you have assaulted them, even if you acted in self-defense.
- Ask the police officer to provide you with their name, badge number and telephone number for future contact and reference.
- The police can escort you back to the home later to remove additional personal belongings, if it is arranged through the local police division. At this time, you can take the items listed above as well as anything else that is important to you and your children.
- The police may charge your aggressor(s). If this happens, find out if they will be held in custody or released. You can provide input into release conditions to the investigating officer. Ask for a copy of the conditions of their release.
- Call Victim Services within your region to get information on court information.
- Key things to identify to the police are whether there has been a pattern of abuse, whether your aggressor(s) owns weapons or has access to them. If the police do not assist you, you can report the violation to the detachment commander of the local OPP or to the Chief of Police of the Police Service in the jurisdiction where the violation occurred.
- Request the police to put a "premise history" on your address on file. This will provide additional information and security for officers responding to your call and alert them of a potentially hazardous history at the location.

List of Important Documents / Items:

- Passports
- Birth certificates
- Driver's licence
- SIN card(s)
- First Nations status cards
- Citizenship papers
- Immigration papers
- Work permit
- Permanent resident
- Citizenship cards
- Vaccination papers
- Court documents
- Health cards
- An extra set of keys
- Money
- Credit cards
- Medications

Step III : If and When Preparing to Leave

- Make a photocopy of the aforementioned documentation items and store in a safe place, away from the originals. Hide the originals someplace else, if you can.

**Note: If you use your phone to copy important documents and/or evidence (you can use a scan app on your phone called "Genius Scan"), send to a safe person you can confide in OR upload to a drive (e.g. Google Drive or One Drive). Ensure you delete the original copy from your phone and any history of conversation with that contact person.*

- Check in with those you have confided in to see if they are able to stay with them.

I will check in with _____ and _____.

- Open a bank account in your own name and arrange that no bank statements or other calls be made to you. Or, arrange that mail be sent to a trusted friend or family member. Or set up an online banking account.
- So you can leave quickly, leave money, important documents, an extra set of keys, and your packed bag at a safe place.

I will keep these at _____.

- Do not attempt to leave when your aggressor is in the house. Plan to leave when they are not in the home.

Step IV : In Survivor's Own Residence

- If comfortable to do so, inform a neighbour (or, if applicable, your concierge if you live in an apartment) that your aggressor no longer resides with you and that they should call the police if he/she is seen at your residence.

I can inform _____.

- Ensure that your aggressor does not have access to your locks/doors/windows.
- Victim Services may be able to pay for this in the event that your case is considered "high risk".
- If you are able to, install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.
- Victim Services may be able to pay for this in the event that your case is considered "high risk".
- What are some additional strategies to increase the safety within your home.

Step IV : In Survivor's Own Residence (Continued)

- Do not put your name in your apartment building directory or mailbox.
- Replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- If you are able to, install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.
- Install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for your home.
- If you are comfortable to do so, tell people who take care of your children which people have permission to pick up your children and that your partner does not have permission.

The people I will inform about this are:

_____ (school)

_____ (daycare)

_____ (babysitter)

_____ (teacher)

_____ (others)

Step V : Safety With An Order of Protection

- Restraining orders and protective orders are available from the court. Some abusive partners obey protective orders, some do not. Sometimes a protective order can escalate the violence the abusive partner uses when they learn that an order has been granted. You know your situation best and can make decisions about protective orders in a way that will be meaningful for you and your children. You can always talk to an advocate about your concerns with applying for a protective order.
- Keep a copy of your protection order near you at all times. Give a copy to the police in the community where you live, work and visit. Inform your friends, colleagues, family that you have a protection order in place.

I will keep my protection order _____ (location).

- Should your protection order be lost or destroyed, you can obtain another copy from the Victim Witness Assistance Program, who can also assist you in preparing for court.
- When the aggressor(s) violate the protection order or if they threaten you in any way, you can call the police to report the violation.

Step VI : Safety On The Job and In Public

If you are comfortable, you may choose to do any or all of the following:

- Show a picture of the person(s) and provide a description of their car to colleagues, neighbours, and building security personnel to make them aware and alert to your safety needs.
- Talk to your employer about Bill 168 Workplace Violence and Harassment legislation to determine what supports can be put in place to reduce your risk at work.
- Ask to have your calls screened at work or use voicemail to screen your calls. Document any unwanted calls from your aggressor(s). Block unwanted emails or document them by sending them to a folder where you do not have to read them.
- Use different grocery stores, shopping malls, and banks to shop and do business at hours that are different from those you used when residing with your aggressor(s).

When arriving at or leaving work:

- Let someone know when you will be home and when to expect you to arrive at work, and that you will call them when you have safely arrived.
- Consider carrying your keys in your hands so you are prepared to leave quickly or so that you can press the panic button to draw attention to yourself if you are in danger
- Walk with someone to your vehicle and scan the parking lot when walking to your vehicle.
- If your aggressor(s) are following you, drive to a place where there are people who may support you (e.g. safe person, gas station, the police, etc.)
- If problems occur while you are driving, use your cell phone, honk your horn continuously, and drive directly to a well-lit, open, populated space or your identified safe place.
- Plan to take a route that is populated and well-lit.
- Change the patterns of when you arrive and leave work and the routes you take.
- If you see the person(s) on the street, try to get to a public place, such as a store or call attention to yourself and ask for help.
- If you use public transit, you can choose to sit close to the front near the driver and have someone you know meet you at the bus stop to walk home with you. Consider changing your transit route if possible.
- Once you have arrived home/at work, call a friend or relative to let them know you have arrived safely.

Step VII : Safety & Technology

Accounts and Access:

- Change your passwords regularly and avoid writing them down.
- Log out of your computer profiles and social media accounts before leaving electronics unattended.
- Clear browsing history for the duration of the time you were using the computer.
- Be aware of which social media interactions and settings are public and not private.
- Check whether the violent person can access your phone's incoming and outgoing call lists.
- Check to see if any of your devices and social media accounts have a tracking application or location services enabled and see websites below for information on how to remove or disable them.

Social Media:

- There are steps you can take to make it more difficult for someone to track your social media activities; however, the aggressor(s) may still find ways of tracking your activities through your social media accounts that are difficult to prevent. If the violent person knows a lot about social media platforms, it might be better for you to use an anonymous account/name and change all of your social media passwords and security answers.
- For various social media platforms, visit their privacy settings for ways to limit who sees your posts, photos, etc. or to block/remove and report someone.

Step VII : Self-Care

The experience of violence is exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life takes power, courage, and energy. It can be challenging to put yourself first, but every small step helps. Try getting enough sleep and eating regular meals and snacks. Take some time for yourself (e.g. read, draw, write, meditate, play music, etc.) Fulfill your spiritual needs in whatever way feels good for you

I enjoy doing the following:

_____.

Call someone you can confide in to talk about your feelings and experiences.

I can call _____ and _____.