

Safety Planning for People Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence:

KEEPING YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN SAFE FROM VIOLENCE

What is a Safety Plan?

A safety plan is a tool to help increase your safety. It lists steps you can take when confronted with an abusive situation, or potentially abusive situation. A safety plan is preplanned and rehearsed. Safety plans look different for each person, family, and community.

Risk Factors

Abusive behaviours often occur gradually and can be hard to recognize as abuse. Common risk factors that may lead to abusive situations in your (ex)relationship may include:

- History of violence in the relationship
- Life stressors (i.e. loss of job, money troubles, pregnancy)
- Ending the relationship
- Isolating you from family and friends
- Financial control (i.e. access to PIN code, access to personal accounts, taking your paycheque, withholding money)
- Substance use
- Mental health concerns; including threats of suicide or self-harm if you leave the relationship
- Your (ex)partner's personal history of behaving violently
- Gang involvement
- Access to weapons
- Preventing access to children, threats to use family court against you or to report you to child welfare
- Harm or threats to harm children, family members, pets or animals
- Using social media as a tool to maintain control, instill fear and further the violence (i.e. posting or threats to post intimate images, creating fake accounts etc.)
- The use of, or the threat to use, technology to monitor or control you

Warning Signs

People who experience intimate partner violence may sense when an abusive episode is about to happen. Trust your instincts and pay attention to the following:

- **Verbal and non-verbal signs:**
 - **Change in tone of voice:** yelling, swearing, short and harsh tone
 - **Body language:** getting in your personal space, an aggressive stance, clenched jaw and fists
- **Intimidating behaviours:** Throwing and breaking objects (i.e. punching walls, slamming doors and breaking phones, T.V's or other personal items)
- **Intoxication:** Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- **Mental health crisis:** Unpredictable behaviour, paranoid or delusional thinking, stopped taking medication

If you are experiencing intimate partner violence, you are not alone.

Help is available to you.

Elements of a Safety Plan

A successful safety plan is one that you develop and that fits with your situation. The most important thing is your safety and the safety of your children.

Identify who can help you

- Tell someone you trust about the abuse (i.e. boss, family, friends, or doctor)
- Inform your caretaker and neighbours about your safety concerns. Make a plan to have them call police if necessary
- Decide on a code word or gesture to signal to someone you trust that you are at risk. Agree in advance what steps should be taken when you use the signal

Be aware of things your (ex)partner can use to harm you

- Know where weapons are stored (i.e. guns, knives, bats, tools etc.)
- If you are unable to leave the home, find a space that has fewer dangerous items (i.e. stay away from the kitchen and garage)

Be prepared and get to safety quickly

- Do not tell your (ex)partner you are thinking of leaving
- Decide how you will escape from your home if an attack is about to happen (i.e. escaping through a door or window)
- Put some money away in a safe place that only you know about
- Keep a list of important phone numbers in a safe place, separate from your phone
- Change all passwords and PINs regularly to ensure confidential information remains secure
- Have an emergency bag packed that includes clothes (pack for the weather), hygiene products, bus tickets, medication, IDs and money. Make sure your children have a similar bag packed
- In an emergency, do not stay behind to take any belongings if it endangers you or your children

Safety plan with your children

- Decide on a safe place you can go with your children (i.e. a shelter, the home of a friend or relative, a hotel, or any other place where you can be safe)
- Prepare an age appropriate safety plan with your children in advance (i.e. how to call 911)

Stay safe after you leave

- Change your routine and try not to leave your home alone. Let others know where you plan to be and when
- Do not go to places where you know your (ex) partner regularly attends
- Be careful when giving out your new address and phone number
- Review privacy settings on social media and consider what information you share
- Call police if you believe you are being monitored, stalked or your whereabouts are being tracked.
- Reset your cell phone and turn off location tracker if you feel you are being monitored through your mobile device
- Apply for a Protection/Prevention Order for you and/or your children
- If you return to your home, make sure it is safe to do so. Bring someone with you
- If your (ex)partner has parenting time with your children, make arrangements to exchange children through a trusted family member or friend. Supervised exchange services are also available

If you have questions or would like help with your safety planning, you can contact:

Manitoba Justice

Victim Services Branch **1-866-484-2846**

Toll Free Province-Wide Domestic Abuse Crisis Line (24 hours) **1-877-977-0007**