# Safety planning

Safety planning is about finding ways to try and be stay safe. This may include building on ways already tried which have been helpful in reducing the risk of physical and emotional harm.

It is crucial to remember that while the person being harmed may take steps to try and reduce the risk, violence or abuse can only stop happening by the person using it against others.

A safety plan can assist women and older children to know what to do when their safety is at risk. The safety plan is unique to their situation and is made up of information relevant to each woman and her children who may remain in the relationship, or are planning to leave, or have left.

Women can find it extremely helpful to discuss a safety plan with someone they trust so ideas can be explored together, rather than having to try and think about everything by themselves. Women can also be offered ways that they may not have thought about, however other women have found these ways to be helpful. It is important that the safety plan is confidential to the woman and only shared with the people she can trust.

It is very important that it is not seen by the person using abuse. Some women have said they feel a sense of relief by knowing what they can do practically from having a safety plan in place. However, the woman’s sense of relief may be noticed by the person using abuse and they may get an inkling that something has changed or may be about to change. For this reason, it is important to stick to usual routines and activities, and even ways of responding to the person using abuse, so as to not heighten their suspicion and ultimately increase the risk.

Any safety plan is fluid, meaning it needs to be regularly reviewed and changed as circumstances change. This will ensure that it remains relevant and up to date.

Here are some safety planning ideas that may be useful for women before leaving the relationship, and after leaving the relationship. These ideas are limited however and are provided to give you some idea of what can be included. Remember that it is ideal for each safety plan to be specific with details about what to do in different situations that may pose a risk to safety.

## Before leaving the relationship

* Know where a safe place is, such as a friend’s house, with family, or a women’s refuge. Always try to take the children and go somewhere that the person who uses violence is not aware of or doesn’t know the address.
* Only tell trusted friends and family about the safety plan and any specifics, for example code words or emojis may be used to represent a message to them.
* Arrange any transport and pick up places in advance if possible.
* Collect important documents that are not in the home, for example a GP can note evidence of injuries in medical records which may also include photos.
* Make a list of personal papers and items that need to be taken when leaving. Do not leave the list lying around the home. It might be possible to start moving some items out of the home to somewhere safe, like to a friend’s place. The list may include:
  + Birth certificates and passports (including the children’s)
  + Marriage certificate
  + Domestic Violence Protection Order
  + Family Court Orders
  + Driver’s licence
  + Insurance policies
  + Taxation, employment, and income documents
  + Centrelink card or number
  + School records
  + Medicare card or number
  + Bank account numbers and statements
  + Bank cards, credit cards
  + Department of Immigration and Citizenship documentation
  + Medical records
  + Medication
  + Leases or mortgages
  + Car rego papers
  + Jewellery and other special items including photos
  + House keys
  + Phone numbers in case the phone is left behind

## After leaving the relationship

* If there is a Domestic Violence Order, check to see whether the conditions are relevant to the current situation. It may need to be amended or varied. If it is from another State in Australia, it is recognised nationwide, however if it is from New Zealand it will need to be registered in Queensland.
* Contact the children’s school or childcare centre and let them know who has permission to collect the children. A copy of any legal orders may be left with the school.
* If moving to a new address, arrange for mail to be redirected to a post office box.
* Consider reviewing banking and postal arrangements.
* If possible, try not to frequent usual places. Use different shops and services to those used previously. Be aware of the surroundings.
* Increase security on the new home if this is needed and plan for extra safety between where the car is parked and the entrance to the home. Here are some things to consider:
  + install an automatic garage door opener
  + install outside security lights
  + remove or cut down shrubs or trees to maximise visual exposure
  + change the locks on the house and ensure the windows are secure
  + fit security chains or other safety devices to all entry doors and make sure they are always in use.
* If there is a land line, ensure the display is on caller ID and get a private unlisted number.
* Always keep a mobile phone nearby and pre-program any emergency numbers such as the police and DV Connect.
* Let the neighbours know who is living in the house, and if they hear any disturbance or the person who uses abuse is seen nearby, ask the neighbour to call the police. It might be helpful to provide a photo or the car registration number of the ex-partner.
* Vary travel routes to and from work or other places such as the gym.
* Let employers know if there is a Protection Order and to screen telephone calls at work, if this is possible.
* If the Protection Order is breached, notify the police.
* Seek legal service and assistance to understand legal rights.
* Seek DV specific support from a domestic violence support service.
* Contact the Australian Electoral Commission to exclude a name and address from the published electoral role.
* Centrelink or the Family Assistance Office to notify them of the change in circumstances.

*Transcript from video: Safety planning  
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