

## A SAMPLE SAFETY PLANNING TOOL

### Safety Planning

- ⊖ Always assist a survivor with developing a safety plan, regardless of whether the client seeks a protection order.
- ⊖ As part of safety planning, consider with the survivor if there are other parties who should be notified about the existence of a protection order and/or the possibility of further violence. Possible people or places requiring notification are: other family members, victim's workplace, victim's school, local police, domestic violence shelter, embassies, US Passport Agency, and children/grandchildren's school, babysitter/daycare.
- ⊖ Safety planning tools should be available in alternative formats – such as large print, Braille, and on audiotape. Also consider having safety plans translated into languages that may be needed given the needs of the community.

### *PERSONALIZED SAFETY PLAN*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Review dates: \_\_\_\_\_

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, grandchildren or other dependents (such as frail elderly or persons with disabilities who may be living with the survivor) to safety.

#### **Step 1: Safety during a violent incident.**

Survivors cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, survivors 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? Consider your physical stamina and abilities as well as the health status of anyone who may need to leave with you)

- 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 that they call the law enforcement if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.

I can also tell \_\_\_\_\_ about the violence and request that they call the law enforcement if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.

- D. I can teach my children/grandchildren how to use the telephone to contact law enforcement and the fire department.
- E. I will use \_\_\_\_\_ as my code word with my children/grandchildren 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 of my children/grandchildren.
- 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, and 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.

Survivors 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 survivor is leaving a relationship. I can use some or all of the following safety strategies:

- A. I will leave money and an extra set of keys with \_\_\_\_\_ so 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. If I have a payee for SSI/SSDI benefits and the payee is my abuser, I can contact the Social Security Administration at \_\_\_\_\_ to have my payee changed.
- E. The domestic violence program's hotline number or TTY number is \_\_\_\_\_. I can seek shelter by calling this hotline. If I have a disability, I can contact my local domestic violence agency at \_\_\_\_\_ to ensure in advance that they would be able to provide emergency shelter for me if needed.
- F. I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times or I can purchase a telephone calling card or get a cell phone. 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 a telephone *calling* card. I may also get a friend to permit me to use his/her 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.
- K. If I have a disability, I may need to set up an emergency care plan if my abuser is also my caregiver. I can contact \_\_\_\_\_ to make a plan for an emergency care provider.

**Step 3: Safety in my own residence.** There are many things that survivors can do to increase safety at home. 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. I can contact \_\_\_\_\_ to help with purchasing the locks and \_\_\_\_\_ to help with installing.
- B. I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors. I can contact \_\_\_\_\_ to help with purchasing the doors and \_\_\_\_\_ to help with installing.
- C. I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc. I can contact \_\_\_\_\_ to help with purchasing the items and \_\_\_\_\_ to help with installing.
- D. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows if I am physically able. I can contact \_\_\_\_\_ to help with purchasing the ladders.
- E. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment. I can contact \_\_\_\_\_ to help with purchasing the items and \_\_\_\_\_ to help with installing.
- F. I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house. I can contact \_\_\_\_\_ to help with purchasing the lighting system and \_\_\_\_\_ to help with installing.

- G. I will teach my children/grandchildren how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to \_\_\_\_\_ (friend/clergy/other) in the event that my partner takes the children/grandchildren.
- H. I will teach my children/grandchildren how to not disclose our address and phone number to: the abuser, and the abusers family/friends including \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and others including \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
- I. I will tell people who take care of my children/grandchildren which people have permission to pick up my children/grandchildren 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), \_\_\_\_\_(religious schoolteacher), \_\_\_\_\_ (teacher), \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_(others).
- J. I can "red flag" my child's name with the State Department to alert authorities if someone were to try and take my child out of the \_\_\_\_\_ country. I know this is especially important if my child already has a \_\_\_\_\_ passport. I can contact \_\_\_\_\_ for more \_\_\_\_\_ information.
- K. I can have my child/grandchild ID'ed and registered through a local child identification program. I can call \_\_\_\_\_ to find out more information.
- L. I can inform \_\_\_\_\_(neighbor), \_\_\_\_\_(clergy), and \_\_\_\_\_(friend) that my partner no longer resides with me and they should call the police if my partner is observed near my residence.
- M. I can contact local law enforcement and tell them about my abuser including the abusers birthrate \_\_\_\_\_, his physical description height \_\_\_\_\_, weight \_\_\_\_\_, hair color \_\_\_\_\_, facial hair \_\_\_\_\_, tattoos and/or scars \_\_\_\_\_, the type of vehicle he drives \_\_\_\_\_, and his license plate number \_\_\_\_\_.
- N. I can change my name or social security number. I can contact \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to assist me with doing this.
- O. I can take steps to assure the confidentiality of certain documents, possibly through using an alias, a PO Box or alternative address or setting up a

password with certain institutions to assure only I can access my personal information. The documents I will change include: \_\_\_\_\_ bills, \_\_\_\_\_ utilities, \_\_\_\_\_ car registration, \_\_\_\_\_ taxes, and \_\_\_\_\_ bank accounts.

- P. I can request that my taxes and/or court records be placed in a confidential file.

**Step 4: Safety with a protection order.** Many batterers obey protection orders, but some do not. I recognize that I may need to ask the police and the courts 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 your purse, your protection order is the first thing that should go in.)
- B. I will give my protection order to police departments in the community where I work, in those communities where I usually visit family or friends, and in the community where I live. 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 the registry. The telephone number for the county registry of protection orders is \_\_\_\_\_.
- D. For further safety, if I often visit other counties in \_\_\_\_\_, I might file my protection order with the court in those counties. I will register my protection order in the following counties: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
- 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 religious leader, 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 courthouse by going to the Office of the \_\_\_\_\_ located at \_\_\_\_\_.
- 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 not 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 \_\_\_\_\_ in the jurisdiction where the violation occurred or with the district attorney. I can charge my battering partner with a violation of the protection order and all the crimes that he commits in violating the order. I can call the domestic violence advocate to help me with this.
- K. I will inform and provide a copy of my restraining order to people who have contact with my children/grandchildren. The people I will inform about my restraining order include:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_(School), \_\_\_\_\_(day care staff), \_\_\_\_\_(babysitter), \_\_\_\_\_(religious school teacher), \_\_\_\_\_ (teacher),  
\_\_\_\_\_(coach) \_\_\_\_\_(others).

**Step 5: Safety on the job or volunteer setting and in public.** Survivors must decide if and when to tell others about their experience as a survivor of domestic violence and that they may be at continued risk. Friends, family, and co-workers can help to protect survivors. Survivors should consider carefully which people to invite to help secure 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/volunteer site, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- D. When driving home if problems occur, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- E. If I use public transit, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- F. I can use different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business and shop at hours that are different than those that I used when residing with

my battering 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 battering partner.

H. I can also \_\_\_\_\_.

**Step 6: 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 to 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 relationships with other people.



**Step 7: Items to take when leaving.** When survivors leave partners, it is important to take certain items with them. Beyond this, survivors sometimes give extra copies of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case they have to leave quickly.

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 best 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 take:**

- \* Identification for myself
- \* Children's/grandchildren's birth certificates
- \* My birth certificate
- \* Social Security cards
- \* Social Security award letter (if appropriate)
- \* School and vaccination records
- \* Money
- \* Checkbook, ATM (Automatic Teller Machine) card
- \* Credit cards
- \* Keys - house/car/office
- \* Driver's license and registration
- \* Bus pass, mobility ID card or special transit ID card for persons with disabilities
- \* Medications
- \* Welfare identification
- \* Work permits
- \* Green card
- \* Passport(s)
- \* Divorce papers
- \* Medical records - for all family members
- \* Medications and prescriptions for you and others
- \* Assistive devices like glasses, dentures, walkers, canes, wheelchairs, hearing aids for you and others
- \* 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 - home \_\_\_\_\_

Police department - school \_\_\_\_\_

Police department - work \_\_\_\_\_

Domestic Violence Victims' Services Program \_\_\_\_\_

County registry of protection orders \_\_\_\_\_

Work number \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's home number \_\_\_\_\_

Clergy \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

County or Tribal aging unit \_\_\_\_\_

Case worker \_\_\_\_\_

National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

National Domestic Violence Hotline (TTY) 1-800-787-3224

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Adapted from "Personalized Safety Plan," Office of the City Attorney, San  
Diego, California, April, 1990

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## Resources:

Anticipate: A Training Exercise on Safety Planning for Older Individuals and  
Persons with Disabilities available from NCALL, a project of WCADV.  
Available at [www.ncall.us](http://www.ncall.us).

Davies, J, Lyon, E and D. Monti-Catania (1998) Safety Planning with  
Battered Women: Complex Lives/Difficult Choices