



Safety Planning & Support Booklet

PLANNING FOR AN EMERGENCY • PREPARING TO LEAVE

THE
CENTRE
FOR WOMEN
& CO.

Specialist
Domestic Violence
& Women's Wellbeing
Services

PLANNING FOR AN EMERGENCY

Safety planning is a plan to assist you and your children to stay safe. If you are not ready to leave a relationship with an abusive partner, there are some important things you can do to improve your safety and the safety of your children, particularly at times when your partner becomes abusive, or you sense the situation is escalating.

- Make arrangements to ensure the safety of your children. If you are able to predict a situation escalating exit the house safely, consider sending the children to a friend or neighbour for help.
- Give trusted neighbours, friends and family permission to call police if they hear a situation developing.
- Consider having a code word or phrase you can say to a friend over the phone if you are feeling unsafe or want them to collect you. You can use code word or an emoji in a text also.
- You may also need to make arrangements for your pets. Think about speaking with friends who may be able to assist.
- Create physical signals with supportive neighbours, friends and family. Let them know to come over or call police on your behalf.
- Identify safe low risk areas in the house that you can move to where you can phone police and wait safely for help to arrive, does this door have a lock, consider if the space has another exit.
- If a situation is escalating, try to avoid areas in the house where there is no exit. Avoid areas like the kitchen and bathrooms where there are knives and other easily accessible weapons. If possible, consider putting knives and other similar items away.
- Identify possible exits routes from the house, this could be through a door or window, can you leave via gate if you need to.
- Program your phone with emergency numbers including police, DV Services and friends and family who can assist.
- If you have a disability or mobility issues arrange with a trusted friend or other support person to come and collect you straight away if you ring.
- If possible have a spare phone that your abusive partner doesn't know about.
- Keep your phone and keys on you.
- Plan where you will go and how you will get there in an emergency. Consider knowing routes and public transport options.
- Can you reverse park your car for easy exit.
- Have family and friends check in regularly.
- Let people around you know what's going on, for example, your employer, your family general practitioner (GP/doctor), etc.
- Consider opening up your own bank account. Try to save some money even if its only slowly.
- Keep access to cash in a safe place if you need to exit quickly.
- Share your safety plan with trusted friends and family. Educate your children about your safety plan.

SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN

- Teach your children that their responsibility during an incident is to keep safe - not rescue you.
- Identify a safe room in the house they feel safest and can escape by if possible.
- Consider having a code word or safe phrase with the children, so they know to exit the house immediately and seek help or go to a safe room.
- Practice safe exit with your children.
- Reassure children that none of the violence is their fault. Tell the children that violence is wrong and be a role model for ways of managing anger and problem solving.
- Arrange care for pets if needed.
- Does the children's school need to be contacted?
- Plan for what you will do if your children tell your partner of your plan or if your partner otherwise finds out about your plan.



PREPARING TO LEAVE

Preparing to leave a relationship with an abusive partner can be overwhelming. Having a safety plan in place can help you and your children stay safe. This guide might help you think about how you can leave and some things you may need for when you decide to leave.

- You may request a police stand-by or escort (keep the peace) while you leave. Do not discuss with your abuser, or anyone else who may tell him/her, that you are planning to leave.
- Only tell trusted friends and family of your plan.
- Make a plan for how and where you will leave. Plan for a quick escape; learn the most practical route out, practice run this route.
- Hide an extra set of car keys if possible.
- Pack an emergency bag containing changes of clothes (work, school uniforms, nappies), spare keys for your house and car, medication, copies of important documents and emergency money. You may also want to store this somewhere other than your home for example at work or at trusted friends house.
- Organise somewhere to go straight away, such as to a friend's house or a safe place in the community like your local police station or The Centre For Women & Co. where arrangements can be made.
- Organise a place to stay for a while, make contact with DV Connect who can assist with providing emergency accommodation and transport for women and children moving away from domestic violence - 1800 811 811.
- Delete phone messages that may give away your intention to leave, call history, website history etc.
- Put aside emergency money as you can.
- Ensure location settings on your phone are off when you do decide to leave including inside apps like Find My Phone
- Make arrangements in advance.
- Make a list of your personal/important papers.
- Take with you important phone numbers of friends, relatives, doctors, schools, etc. as well as other important items, including:
 1. your driver's license and/or ID, Centrelink Cards, etc
 2. regularly needed medication
 3. a list of credit cards held by self or jointly or the credit cards themselves if you have access
 4. information about bank accounts and other assets.
- Think about making copies of important documents you will need in advance. If you have time you may want to take these documents with you.
 1. Citizenship documents (your passport, residency, etc.)
 2. Titles, deeds, and other property information
 3. Medical records
 4. Children's school and immunisation records
 5. Insurance information
 6. Copy of marriage license, birth certificates, will, and other legal documents
 7. Valued pictures, jewelery, or personal possessions.
 8. Children's favourite toys, books, blanket etc (to help them feel comfortable)
- Link in with a counsellor who can help you during this overwhelming time.
- Arrange care for pets, if needed.
- Do you need to contact the children's school?

NOTES



AFTER LEAVING

Australian statistics show that the most lethal time for a woman in a relationship with an abusive partner is after separation. If you are about to or have just left an abusive partner, this is a time for the utmost security, support, planning and knowledge. Following these suggestions is not a guarantee of safety but could help to improve your protection. Remember, the most important thing is for you and your children to be safe, and to get out of an abusive situation safely.

- Do you have a current DVO? Are the conditions relevant to your situation. Does it need to be varied? Keep a copy of the order on you, this can be a digital copy also.
- If you have a DVO and the person using abuse continues being violent, threatening, stalking or contacting you, call the police. If the police don't take action, talk to the officer in charge at the station or the Domestic Violence Liaison Officer, you can consider making an official complaint.
- You can access court support for obtaining DVO in certain courts in the South East area. Police may also be able to assist with this.
- Keep key contacts easily accessible - e.g. Centrelink, support services, police, safety supports, counsellors, emergency relief, accommodation options, court, etc.
- Consider thinking about what will you do if the abuser attempts to contact you? Call 1800 Respect for 24 hour counselling and support.
- Consult Legal Aid, Womens Legal Service or a solicitor about your rights.
- Keep in touch with family or friends for support. Ask them for help when you need it. Consider keeping your location limited to trusted friends and family only, make sure they know not to disclose your location.
- Consider using a third party when having contact with your abuser (e.g. for mail, collecting children, when returning to the property). Always take someone with you if you can't avoid seeing them, and try to make meetings in public places with other people around.
- Use email if you need to keep in contact with the person using violence, this is also a way to keep a record of conversations.
- Considering changing your phone number and set your phone to private.
- Inform your children's school/childcare who has permission to pick up the children if you have a Family Court Order, or a DVO. Provide them with a copy. If necessary safety plan with the school/childcare as to what they will do if the person using abuse tries to collect them.
- Try to avoid frequently visited place, use different shops, consider altering your routes to and from places of work and school.
- Update work on your situation, and that the person using abuse is not to attend work if you have a no contact DVO. Also consider leaving work at the same time as colleagues, where do you park your car? Is it close to work? can you reverse park for easy exit.
- Contact Centrelink and notify them of the changes to your living situation. Also review your My Health Record.
- Be mindful about what you disclose on social media, your location and so on. Consider reviewing your friend list.
- Update your address with the bank if you have moved and change online banking passwords. Consider speaking with you bank about obtaining a new Client ID number.
- Rearrange any standing or upcoming appointments that the person using abuse is aware of.

NOTES



AFTER LEAVING

AUSTRALIA POST SERVICE

Use a Post Office Box to protect your privacy and make sure your mail is completely safe. You can also have your mail redirected. If you have a DVO Australian Post may be able to assist with mail redirection

<https://auspost.com.au/receiving/manage-your-mail/redirect-hold-mail/redirect-mail/free-mail-redirection-and-po-boxes>

Remember: choose a post office that is easy to access but NOT in the same locality that you and/or your ex/partner (the perpetrator) are living, and preferably in a major regional centre or busy location.

AUSTRALIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Apply for a Silent Elector Status by filling the Silent Electors Form, which can be downloaded from

https://www.aec.gov.au/Enrolling_to_vote/Special_Category/Silent_Electors.htm

E TOLL OR LINKT

You may need to update your E Toll account. If the person using abuse has access to the online account they may be able to see when you travel through a toll. If the car and account is in your name you can update the account. If the account is in the persons using abuse name, and you have the car, you will need a DVO order to update the TOLL or LINKT account.

Q STARS

If you require support in relation to your tenancy you can contact QSTARS on 1300 744 263

Tenants have a right to leave a tenancy where they no longer feel safe to continue to occupy the premises because they are experiencing domestic violence. Tenants can use the Notice Ending Tenancies (NET) with 7 days notice plus providing evidence to support DFV.

SERVICES AUSTRALIA AND CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY (CSA)

You can request for an exemption from seeking child support from the biological father if you feel child support will increase your risk. Contacting the Family Assistance Office on 13 12 72. Or visit your local

Family Assistance Office, and discuss your situation with a Centrelink Social Worker.

CHILD CARE/ SCHOOLS

Speak to the childcare agencies/schools your children attend to alert them to the situation. Find out what their protocols are regarding the release of information to people other than yourself.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS

If you receive a traffic infringement notice (e.g. fines) and have not notified the council or QLD Transport and Main Roads about your change of address, the notice will be sent to your old address and will indicate where the fine occurred. As part of your safety plan, update your address with organisations.

MY HEALTH RECORD

You can take steps to control the information on the My Health Record. Call My Health Helpline on 1800 723 471 for 24/7 support, there are protections that can be quickly put in place to protect your family safety.

SILENT OR UNLISTED NUMBER

Considering getting your phone listed as a silent number. Be mindful to not update or disclose your phone number with unnecessary people and organisations.

TENANCY DATABASE (TICCA)

Tenancy databases hold information about the tenancy history of tenants. They are often used by real estate agents and lessors to decide a tenant's suitability when assessing tenancy applications.

Victims of domestic and family violence can apply to QCAT for an order not to be listed on a tenancy database, or can request a listing be removed. This applies if the listing relates to a breach of the tenancy agreement arising from an act of domestic or family violence.

More information is available from the QSTAR website or call QSTARS on 1300 744 263.



SAFETY DATING

Here are some things you can do to help keep yourself safe when you are dating someone:

- 1** Correction, appropriately expressed, is not destructive, hurtful or shame inducing. Pay attention to your feelings and trust your instinct: If a situation feels wrong or scary, it probably is and you may be in danger. Listen to your feelings and try to get out of that situation.
- 2** Let the person you are with know what you want: You have the right to set limits about what is welcome in your relationship. Let the person you are with know what your expectations are. Even though it can feel embarrassing, talking things out can help to avoid dangerous or hurtful situations.
- 3** Notice changes in your relationship: If someone stops respecting your wishes or listening to you, then it is a warning sign of an abusive relationship. Be assertive about what you need in the relationship, and get clear with yourself and your boyfriend/girlfriend about what behaviour you will not put up with.
- 4** Have a Safety Plan: Plan ahead for a situation that is unsafe. Think about where you could go or who you could call if you were in danger or things didn't feel right. Always let someone else know where you are going and what your plans are. Take a screenshot of the profile and messages of the person you are meeting if you have had online contact (such as Messenger, Tinder or another dating app) and send to someone you trust before you go - this is also helpful if you need to report the person after meeting them. You could arrange with a friend or family member to call you at a certain time to check you are OK. Think about carrying a personal safety alarm, and always make sure you have a mobile phone with credit with you, if you can afford it. Carry a phone card and spare cash. Public phones are now free to call landlines across Australia. Use your own transport. Look into your SOS settings on your smart phone and smart watch. Planning ahead can help you to get out of a dangerous situation and to stay safe.
- 5** Remember you have the right to make decisions for yourself: You have the right to be in control of yourself, so if something doesn't feel right for you, say "no!"

CHOOSING TO STAY

If you are not ready to leave a relationship with an abusive partner yet, for whatever reason, there are some important things you can do to improve you and your children's safety, and to prepare you for if/when you are ready to leave. You will know what is the safest thing to do.

- Identify your partner's use and level of violence so that you can assess danger to you and your children before it occurs.
- Make arrangements to ensure the safety of your children. If you are able to predict a violent outburst, send the children to a friend or neighbour for help. You may also need to make arrangements for your pets.
- See The Cycle of Violence, and check out the 'Does he, or Did He Ever' questionnaire.
- Try to avoid an abusive situation by leaving. Look out for verbal cues and triggers.
- Have a safe room to lock yourself in if needed.
- Identify safe areas of the house where there are no weapons and where there are always ways to escape. If arguments occur, try to move to those areas. Note the possible exits in every room - can you easily get out the back or side door or a window?
- Don't run to where the children are as your partner may hurt them as well.
- If violence is unavoidable, make yourself a small target; dive into a corner and curl up into a ball with your face protected and arms around each side of your head, fingers entwined.
- If possible, have a phone accessible at all times and know the numbers to call for help. Know where the nearest pay phone is located. Know your local Domestic Violence Service number. Don't be afraid to call the police. Decide who you will call if you are in immediate danger. You can call emergency (000) from any landline or mobile phone in Australia, even with no credit.
- Have a spare phone that your abusive partner doesn't know about.
- Plan where you will go if you need to leave your house in a hurry – this may be a neighbour, a family member who lives close by, a shop down the road, doctor's surgery etc – somewhere for you, your children and pets - where you can ring the police on 000. Practice travelling to this location.
- Check access to transport - car, public transport times, taxi, etc?
- Have family and friends check in regularly.
- Let trusted friends and neighbours know of your situation and develop a plan and visual signal for when you need help. If you trust your neighbours, ask them to call the police if they hear a fight.
- Let people around you know what's going on, for example, your employer, your family general practitioner (GP/doctor), etc.
- Educate your children about your safety plan.
- Teach your children how to get help. Instruct them not to get involved in the violence between you and your partner. Plan a code word to signal to them that they should get help or leave the house. If appropriate, teach your children to call 000.
- Tell your children that violence is never right, even when someone they love is being violent. Tell them that neither you nor they are at fault or cause the violence, and that when anyone is being violent, it is important to keep safe.
- Practice how to get out safely. Practice with your children.
- Plan for what you will do if your children tell your partner of your plan or if your partner otherwise finds out about your plan.
- Keep weapons, such as knives and guns, locked up and as inaccessible as possible.
- Get your own set of keys to the house and car.



