Domestic Violence Personalized Safety Plan

Name: __________________________________________  Date: ________________________

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 to safety.

STEP 1: Safety during a violence incident. Women cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, battered women may use a variety of strategies.

I can use some of the following strategies:

A. If I decide to leave, I will _______________________________.
   (Practice how to get out safely. What door, windows, elevators, stairwells, or fire escapes would you use?)

B. I can keep my purse and car keys ready and put them (location) __________________ in order to leave quickly.

C. I can tell __________________________ about the violence and request that she or he call the police if she or he hears suspicious noises coming from my house.

D. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police, the fire department, and 911.

E. I will use __________________________ as my code with my children or my friends so they can call for help.

F. If I have to leave my home, I will go to _________________________________.
   (Decided this even if you don’t think there will be a next time.)

G. I can also teach some of these strategies to some or all of my children.

H. When I expect we’re going to have an argument, I’ll try to move to a place that is low risk, such as ___________________. (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, 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. Battered women 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 battered woman is leaving a relationship.
I can use some or all of the following 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. Other things I can do to increase my independence, include: __________________________

E. I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, the following month’s phone bill will show my batterer those numbers I called after I left. To keep my phone communications confidential, I must either use coins, or I might ask to use a friend’s phone card for a limited time when I first leave.
F. I will check with __________________________ and __________________________ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
G. I can leave extra clothes or money with _______________________________.
H. 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’s name) has agreed to help me review this plan.
I. I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.

**STEP 3: Safety in my own residence.** There are many things that a woman can do to increase her safety in her own residence. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step.

Safety measures I can use:

A. I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
B. I can replace wooden doors with steel / metal doors.
C. I can install security systems, including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.
D. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
E. I can install smoke detectors and fire extinguishers from each floor of my house / apartment.
F. I can install an outside lighting system that activates when a person is close to the house.
G. I will teach my children how to make a collect call to me and to __________________________ (name of friend, etc.) in the event that my partner takes the children.
H. I will tell the people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick up my children and that partner is not permitted to do so. The people I will inform about pick-up permission include:

__________________________________ (name of school)
__________________________________ (name of babysitter)
__________________________________ (name of teacher)
__________________________________ (name of Sunday-school teacher)
__________________________________ (name[s] of others)

I. I can inform ______________________ (neighbor) and ______________________ (friend) that my partner no longer resides with me and that they should call law enforcement if he / she is observed near my residence.

**STEP 4: Safety with an Order of Protection.** Many batterers obey protection orders, but one can never be sure which violent partner will obey and which will violate protective orders. I recognize that I may need to ask law enforcement and the courts to enforce my protective order.

The following are some steps 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 purses, that’s the first thing that should go into the new purse.

B. I will give my protection order to law enforcement departments in the community where I work, in those communities where I visit friends or family, and in the community where I live.

C. There should be county and state registries of protection orders that all law enforcement departments can call to confirm a protection order. I can check to make sure that my order is on the registry. The telephone numbers for the county and state registries of protection orders are: __________________ (county) and ________________ (state).

D. I will inform my employer; my minister, rabbi, etc.; my closest friend; and ______________________ that I have a protection order in effect.

E. If my partner destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the clerk’s office.

F. If law enforcement does not help, I can contact an advocate or an attorney and file a complaint with the Chief of Police Department of the Sheriff.

G. If my partner violates the protection order, I can call 911 or law enforcement and report the violation.

**STEP 5: Safety on the job and in public.** Each battered woman must decide if and when she will tell others that her partner has battered her and that she may be at continued risk. Friends, family, and co-workers can help to protect women. Each woman should carefully consider which people to invite to help secure her safely.
I might do any or all of the following:

A. I can inform my boss, the security supervisor, and ________________ at work.
B. I can ask __________________________ to help screen my telephone calls at work.
C. When leaving work, I can _____________________________________________.
D. If I have a problem while driving home, I can _____________________________.
E. If I use public transit, I can _____________________________________________.
F. I will go to different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business and shop
   at hours that are different from those I kept when residing with my battering partner.
G. I can use a different bank and go at hours that are different from those I kept when
   residing with my battering partner.

STEP 6: Safety and drug or alcohol use. Most people in this culture use alcohol. Many use
mood-altering drugs. Much of this is legal, although some is not. The legal outcomes of using
illegal drugs can be very hard on battered women, may hurt her relationship with her children,
and can put her at a disadvantage in other legal actions with her battering partner. Therefore,
women should carefully consider the potential cost of the use of illegal drugs. Beyond this, the
use of alcohol or other drugs can reduce a woman’s awareness and ability to act quickly to
protect herself from her battering partner. Furthermore, the use of alcohol or other drugs by the
batterer may give him / her an excuse to use violence. Specific safety plans must be made
concerning drugs or alcohol use.

If drug or alcohol use has occurred in my relationship with my battering partner, I can enhance
my safety by some or all of the following:

A. If I am going to use, I can do so in a safe place and with people who understand the risk
   of violence and are committed to my safety.
B. If my partner is using, I can _____________________________________________.
   and / or _____________________________________________.
C. To safeguard my children I might _________________________________________.

STEP 7: 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 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 am returning to a potentially abusive situation, I can ______________
   _____________________________________________.
B. When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can _______
   ___________________________________________.

Updated 2011
C. I will try to use “I can …” statements with myself and 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 _____________________ for support.

G. I can attend workshops and support groups at the domestic violence program or ____________________________________ to gain support and strengthen relationships.

STEP 8: Items to take when leaving. When women leave battering partners it is important to take certain items. Beyond this, women sometimes give an extra copy of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case they have to leave quickly.

Money: Even if I never worked, I can take money from jointly held savings and checking accounts. If I do not take this money, he / she can legally take the money and close the accounts.

Items on the following lists with asterisks (*) are the most important to take with you. 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
- My birth certificate
- School and vaccination records
- Checkbook, ATM card
- Keys – house, car, office
- Medications
- Welfare identification, work permits, green cards
- Children’s birth certificates
- Social Security cards
- Money
- Credit cards
- Driver’s license and registration
- Copy of protection order

Passport(s), divorce papers
Medical records – for all family members
Lease / rental agreement, house deed, mortgage payment book
Bank books, insurance papers

Address book
Pictures, jewelry
Children’s favorite toys and / or blankets
Items of special sentimental value
Telephone numbers I need to know:

Police / sheriff’s department (local) – 911 or ________________________________
Police / sheriff’s department (work) _______________________________________
Police / sheriff’s department (school) _______________________________________
Prosecutor’s office _________________________________________________________
Battered women’s program (local) __________________________________________
National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233) 800-787-3224 (TTY) www.thehotline.org
County registry of protection orders ___________________________________________
State registry of protection orders ___________________________________________
Work number _______________________________________________________________
Supervisor’s home number _________________________________________________

I will keep this document in a safe place and out of reach of my potential attacker.

Review date: ________________________

Produced and distributed by:

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training • consulting • advocacy

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