

## What Is a Safety Plan?

A safety plan is a personalized, practical plan that includes information and strategies to remain safe while in an abusive relationship, when planning to leave, or after you leave.

Survivors are the experts in their own situation, and some of the information or suggested steps provided here may not be relevant to an individual survivor.

If you need help creating a safety plan or connecting to services, Safe+Sound Somerset can help:

- Call or text our 24/7 helpline at **866.685.1122**
- If you feel you are in danger or if your restraining order is violated, call **911**.

## Staying with the Abuser:

If you are staying with the abuser, think about:

- What works best to keep you safe in an emergency?
- Who you can call in a crisis
- If you would call the police if the violence starts again.
- Can you work out a signal with the children or the neighbors to call the police when you need help?
- If you need to flee temporarily, where would you go? Think through several places where you can go in a crisis. Write down the addresses and phone numbers, and keep them with you.
- If you need to flee your home, know the escape routes in advance.

## Preparing to Leave:

Because violence can escalate when leaving an abusive relationship, here are some things to keep in mind when planning to leave:

- If possible, keep any evidence of physical abuse, such as pictures of injuries.
- If possible, keep a journal of all violent incidences, giving particular attention to dates, events and threats made. Store your journal in a safe place.
- Tell someone you trust what is happening to you.
- Know where you can go to get help.
- If you are injured, go to a doctor or an emergency room and report what happened to you. Ask that they document your visit.
- Plan with your children and identify a safe place for them, like a room with a lock or a friend or neighbor's house where they can go for help. Reassure them that their job is to stay safe, not to protect you.
- Contact your local domestic violence agency to learn more about your rights and the resources available to you before you have to use them during a crisis.
- Try to set money aside or ask friends or family members to hold money for you.

## When You Leave:

Make a plan. Consider how you can escape quickly in case of an emergency.

You may request a police escort or stand-by when you leave. Our advocates can help you come up with a personalized safety plan for leaving. If you have to leave in a hurry, use the following list of items as a guide to what you need to bring with you.

### 1) Identification

- Driver's license
- Birth certificate and children's birth certificates
- Social security cards
- Financial information
- Money and/or credit cards (in your name)
- Checking and/or savings account books
- Health Insurance cards

### 2) Legal Papers

- Temporary or final restraining order, if you have one
- Copies of any lease or rental agreements, or the deed to your home
- Car registration and insurance papers
- Health and life insurance papers
- Medical records for you and your children
- School records
- Work permits /permanent resident card/Travel Visa
- Passport
- Divorce and custody papers
- Marriage license

### 3) Emergency Numbers

- Your local police and/or sheriff's department
- Your local domestic violence program or shelter
- Friends, relatives and family members
- Your doctor's office and local hospital
- County and/or District Attorney's Office

### 4) Children

- Several changes of clothing
- Diapers
- Formula
- Medications
- A comfort item (special toy, blanket, etc.)

### 5) Other

- Medications
- Extra set of house and car keys

- Valuable jewelry
- Pay-as-you-go cell phone
- Address book
- Pictures and sentimental items
- Several changes of clothes
- Emergency money

### After You Leave:

Your safety plan should strategies to ensure your continued safety after leaving an abusive relationship. Here are some safety precautions to consider:

- Change your phone number. Consider an unlisted number.
- Call the telephone company to request Caller ID. Ask that your phone number be blocked so that if you call anyone, neither your partner nor anyone else will be able to get your new, unlisted phone number.
- Change your work hours and the route you take to work.
- Change the route taken to transport children to school.
- Alert school authorities of the situation. If applicable, provide them a copy of your restraining order.
- If you have a restraining order, keep a certified copy of it with you at all times.
- Inform friends, neighbors and employers that you have a restraining order in effect. Provide them a copy along with a picture of the offender.
- If your restraining order is violated, call law enforcement to enforce the order.
- Review the safety of your childcare arrangements. Consider adding your childcare center or childcare provider's home to your restraining order.
- Tell people who take care of your children or drive them/pick them up from school and activities. Explain your situation to them and provide them with a copy of the restraining order.
- If there is a visitation agreement, check children's bags for trackers or smart phones upon return.
- Consider renting a post office box or using the address of a friend for your mail. Be aware that addresses are on restraining orders and police reports, and be careful to whom you give your new address and phone number.
- Reschedule appointments that the offender may be aware of.
- Go to different stores and frequent different social spots.
- Alert neighbors and request that they call the police if they feel you may be in danger.
- Conduct a safety assessment of your home, if possible replace wooden doors with steel or metal doors and install a home security system.
- Install a motion sensitive lighting system.

### If the Perpetrator Leaves:

- If you had the perpetrator evicted or are living alone, you may want to:
- Change locks on doors and windows.
- Install a security system — window bars, locks, motion sensors, better lighting, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.
- Teach your children how to call the police. Talk to schools and childcare providers about who has permission to pick up your children.

- Find a lawyer knowledgeable about family violence to explore custody, visitation and divorce provisions that protect you and your children.
- Obtain a restraining order.

**Following are some topics that may warrant special consideration:**

### **Technology and Social Media Safety:**

- Change your phone number. Consider an unlisted number.
- If possible, buy a new phone.
- Turn off all location services on cell phone.
- Change passwords on all devices, programs and apps.
- Stay off social media sites (for example, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter).
- Have your car and computer checked for tracking devices.
- Check your children's bags for tracking devices when they return from visitation.

### **Safety Planning during Pregnancy**

Pregnancy is a time of change. If your partner is emotionally or physically abusive toward you, it can make these months of transition especially difficult. If you're pregnant, there is always a heightened risk during violent situations.

- If you're in a home with stairs, try to stay on the first floor.
- Getting into the fetal position around your stomach if you're being attacked is another tactic that can be instrumental in staying safe.
- Discuss what is happening in your relationship with your doctor.
- If your partner goes to these appointments with you, try to find a moment when they're out of the room to ask your care provider (or even the front desk receptionist) about coming up with an excuse to talk to them one-on-one.
- If you've decided to leave your relationship, a health care provider can become an active participant in your plan to leave.
- If possible, see if you can take a women-only prenatal class. This could be a comfortable atmosphere for discussing pregnancy concerns or could allow you to speak to the class instructor one-on-one.

### **Safety Planning for Pets**

If you're creating a safety plan of your own to leave an abusive relationship, safety planning for your pets is important as well. If possible, don't leave pets alone with an abusive partner.

- Can a trusted family or friend take care of them?
- Call your local animal welfare center to see if they will take care of your pets while you relocate
- If you are taking your pets with you, make sure to bring extra provisions, and copies of their medical records and important phone numbers.

## Safety Planning in the Workplace:

- Save any threatening emails or voicemail messages. You can use these to take legal action in the future, if you choose to. If you already have a restraining order, the messages can serve as evidence in court that the order was violated.
- Park close to the entrance of your building, and talk with security, the police, or a manager if you fear for your safety at work.
- Have your calls screened, transfer harassing calls to security, or remove your name and number from automated phone directories.
- Relocate your workspace to a more secure area.
- Obtain a restraining order and be sure to keep a copy with you at all times. Include your workplace on the order. A copy should be provided to the police, the employee's supervisor, Human Resources, the reception area, the Legal department, and Security.
- Provide a picture of the perpetrator to reception areas and/or Security.
- Identify an emergency contact person should your employer be unable to contact you.
- Ask Security to escort you to and from your car or public transportation.
- Look into alternate hours or work locations.

## Resources:

Police: **911**

Safe+Sound Somerset's 24-Hour Call or Text Helpline: **866-685-1122**

Central Jersey Housing Resource Center: **908-704-8901**

Legal Services of Northwest Jersey: **908-231-0840**

NJ Address Confidentiality Program: **1-877-218-9133**

NJ Child Abuse Hotline: **877-652-2873**

NJ State-wide Information and Referral: **211**

Sexual Assault Support Services Hotline: **908-526-7444**

Somerset County Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P): **800-392-2734**

Somerset County Prosecutor's Office/Victims Witness: **908-575-3300**

Somerset County Social Services: **908-526-8800**

Somerset County Superior Court/ Family Division: **908-332-7700**

St. Hubert's Animal Welfare: **908-526-3330**

Zufall Community Health Center: **908-526-2335**

427 Homestead Road, Hillsborough, NJ 08844

Office 908.359.0003 Fax 908.359.8881 [www.safe-sound.org](http://www.safe-sound.org)

**24-Hour Call or Text Hotline 866.685.1122**