

Safety Strategies for People Experiencing Domestic Violence

If you are living in an abusive situation:

- Be prepared to call 911 at any time.
- Keep a 24-hour crisis line with you (maybe saved under a fake name in your contacts).
- When there's violence occurring in your home, try to stay out of small, enclosed rooms where weapons may be close at hand, like the kitchen or bathroom.
- Contact a domestic violence agency to discuss your situation and options.
- Tell someone you trust (friend, neighbor, relative) about your situation. Arrange a signal to let them know when you need help.
- Plan where you can go to be safe. Consider the help of a friend, relative, neighbor, domestic violence shelter, coworker, or police.
- If you can, stay clean and sober. This will help you make clearer decisions.
- It's okay to defend and protect yourself. Have pictures taken of any visible injuries.
- Plan on where you will go if you have to leave, even if you don't think you will.
- Have a packed bag ready and keep it in a secret but accessible place so you can leave quickly.
- Trust your own instincts and judgment.
- Whatever you need to do to survive is the right choice, even if it doesn't feel like it at the time.
- Meet with an advocate.

Developing a safe escape plan:

- Figure out other ways out of the house in case doors are blocked.
- Keep a spare set of keys in a safe place.
- Keep important papers in a safe place where you can get to them quickly or with a person you trust.
- Keep a bag packed with spare clothing, money, and coins for payphones, medicine, diapers, formula, and emergency food.

- Choose a safe time to leave, such as when your partner is at work or out for the night. If you have to return to the house to get things and you're scared your partner will be there, you can ask the local police to escort you. This is called a "civil standby."

Staying safe after you've left:

- You may want to get a restraining order. This is a legal paper authorized by a judge to keep someone from being near you physically, phoning, or harassing you. You can get help filling out forms from local domestic violence agencies. If the police are called out during a violent incident, you may be able to get an emergency protective order (EPO).
- Change the locks on your doors if your partner has the keys. Be sure your windows can be locked also.
- Change your phone number.
- If it's safe, let your neighbors know what's going on and how they can help. If they see your partner near your house, do you want them to call the police? Let you know?
- Consider having friends stay with you or go with you when you leave home. If your partner follows you on the street you can go to a public place and ask for help.
- Consider taking a self-defense class.
- Keep a diary of any threatening contact, messages, or letters. Save any offensive phone messages. You may want to limit contact with your partner to text or email, rather than a verbal call if possible, so you have a record of all your interactions.
- Consider attending a support group for domestic violence survivors.



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Keeping your children safe:

- Plan a safe place for your children to go if violence occurs: a room with a lock, a safe neighbor's house. Reassure them that their job is to stay safe, not to protect you.
- Limit what you tell them so they cannot be bribed or forced by your partner to tell.
- Teach your children how to call 911 in an emergency. If you don't have a phone, teach them a safe place to go where they can use one. Payphones dial 911 for free.
- Teach them their full name, your full name, your phone number, and your address.
- Consider getting them counseling.
- Tell your children's school, daycare workers, babysitters, and the children themselves how you want them to respond if the abuser

Emergency Services

911

United Way

211

Dominican Hospital

(831) 462-7700

Watsonville Hospital

(831) 724-4741

Walnut Avenue

Family & Women's Center

1 (866) 269-2559 (24-hour)

Suicide Prevention (24-hour)

(831) 458-5300

California Youth Crisis Line

1 (800) 843-5200 (24-hour)

Victim Witness Assistance

(831) 454-2010

attempts to contact them. You may want to put

your children on your restraining order if you decide to apply for one.

Checklist

Ideas of what to take with you
when you're ready to leave:

- ☐ Photo ID, driver's license, car registration
- ☐ Court orders (custody, restraining orders, etc.)
- ☐ Birth certificates for you + kids
- ☐ Social security card
- ☐ Welfare identification
- ☐ Work permits and/or identification
- ☐ Passport, green card, immigration papers
- ☐ School and immunization records
- ☐ Divorce papers, marriage license
- ☐ Police reports/documentation of abuses
- ☐ Money
- ☐ Bank books and/or bank account numbers
- ☐ Checkbooks, credit/debit cards
- ☐ Lease/rental agreement, house deed
- ☐ Medical, life, and auto insurance papers
- ☐ House and car keys, pink slip
- ☐ Medications
- ☐ Address book
- ☐ Pictures
- ☐ Jewelry
- ☐ Small saleable objects
- ☐ Children's clothing and small toys
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses, contact lenses
- ☐ Other:

Remember: These things are not as important as the lives of you and your children!



Walnut Avenue Family & Women's Center
Office: (831) 426-3062 | Crisis Line: 1 (866) 269-2559