

New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
2009 Domestic Violence Handbook

Safety Planning

One thing that many victims of domestic violence find helpful is making a **safety plan**. You can make one yourself or call your local domestic violence program to ask them to help you develop a plan. If you decide to write out a safety plan, be sure to keep it in a place where your partner can't find it. Safety plans can be made for a variety of different situations – for dealing with an emergency such as when a physical assault occurs, for continuing to live with a partner who has been abusive, or for protecting yourself after you have ended a relationship with an abusive partner.

Whether you are with your partner or have ended the relationship, and regardless of whether you have used the court system or called the police, there are certain things that are helpful to consider in planning for your future safety.

- Where can you keep important phone numbers (police, hotline, friends, shelter) for yourself and your children?
- Is there anyone you can ask to call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from your house or apartment?
- If you need to get out of your house or apartment in a hurry, what door, window, elevator, or stairwell, will you be able to use in order to get out safely?
- If you need a place to stay for awhile, where can you go? Can you arrange to stay with family or friends in a crisis? Do you know how to contact the local domestic violence program in order to arrange for emergency shelter?
- Where can you keep your bag, an extra set of car keys or money for public transportation, and a phone card, cell phone or some change to make a phone call so that you can grab them quickly?
- Do your children know how to use the telephone to contact the police?

- Is there a “code” word you can use with friends, family and/or your children to alert them to call for help?
(A code word is word that you have predetermined to alert others that you need help. The code word should only be shared with those you trust)
- Can you keep some money, extra clothing, and important papers hidden somewhere your partner doesn’t know about, but that you can get to quickly?
Can you keep the “escape bag” with a neighbor or in the trunk of your car?
- If you think your partner is about to become abusive, how can you get to a room where there are fewer things that can be used as weapons.