



# MY SAFETY PLAN



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The Western Integrated Family Violence Partnership (Women and Children's Services) is comprised of the following member agencies:



McAuley Community  
Services for Women  
a subsidiary of the Sisters of Mercy

Molly's House Inc.



# PLANNING FOR YOUR SAFETY

## WHAT IS FAMILY VIOLENCE?

Domestic or family violence occurs when a person uses violence, threats, intimidation or force to control or coerce a family member, partner or former partner. Abuse can be verbal or physical including sexual abuse, social isolation, financial abuse, emotional abuse and intimidation, including threats to harm you, damage property, spiritual deprivation, threats towards or actual harm of pets and threats to commit suicide as a form of manipulation. It is an act or behaviour that causes fear.

***It is against the law for one person to assault another person, whether they are living together or not.***

The information provided in this booklet is not an exhaustive list of options. It is not a checklist. It contains information that others have found useful when they have left a violent relationship. This booklet contains suggestions that may be adapted to suit your individual circumstances; only you can decide on the best options for yourself and your family and what is realistic and affordable.

# WHAT IS A SAFETY PLAN?

## A SAFETY PLAN IS A GUIDE FOR STAYING SAFE FROM VIOLENCE

Planning for your safety is a process of looking at your situation and assessing what you might need to help you feel and be safer. Your safety plan must be relevant to your needs and be adapted if your situation changes. It needs to incorporate an escape plan as well as practical strategies to improve your home and personal security. Safety planning is not about focusing on living in fear; it is about taking proactive steps to improve your and your children's safety. It is about taking back control over your life.

Safety plans need to include safety strategies for different environments such as home, social, work and vehicle security.

This booklet highlights some strategies for making your home and workplace safer. There is also space for you to make your own notes.

# PLANNING FOR MY SAFETY

## YOUR HOME

- ✓ If there are threats made against you or your family, contact 000.
- ✓ The most dangerous rooms in your house are the bathroom, kitchen, garage or any room where the person who has used violence has access to weapons.
- ✓ Speak to the Domestic Violence Liaison Officer at your local police station or any other police officer, about applying for a Family Violence Intervention Order (IO) which can include an exclusion order to keep the person you fear away from you.
- ✓ Keep a record or diary of any breaches of intervention orders or suspicious behaviour such as phone hang ups.
- ✓ Report all breaches of your intervention order to police.
- ✓ Keep a note by your phone that includes information such as your street address and nearest cross-street that will help guide police to your location.
- ✓ Have dead locks installed. Do not dead lock yourself in at night; you need to be able to leave the building in case of an emergency such as fire.

**NB:** The cost of changing locks and installing sensor lights may be reimbursed through the Victims Assistance Scheme or you may be eligible for support from your local family violence service.



- ✓ Install lockable security screens, where possible and keep them locked.
- ✓ Keep external doors locked when at home.
- ✓ If door keys go missing, change the locks.
- ✓ Make sure windows and sliding doors have good locks.  
You can lock windows cheaply by drilling a hole through the window jamb into the window frame and using a bolt to secure the window shut. A dowel stick can be used to prevent sliding doors and sliding windows from being opened (make sure these are an exact fit so windows cannot be jimmied open).
- ✓ Be alert to any suspicious people hanging about.  
Don't ignore any 'funny feelings' – trust your intuition.
- ✓ Ask for identification before opening the door.
- ✓ Install a veranda light at a height that makes it hard to reach.  
Consider installing a sensor light.
- ✓ Trim shrubs and bushes from entrance ways.
- ✓ Ensure pathways are well lit.

**NB:** *In rental properties changing locks or making changes to houses is permitted however you must supply your landlord or estate agent with a key to the premises as well as a copy of the intervention order that excludes the offending tenant from the property. The landlord or agent must not give a copy of the key to the excluded tenant.*

## MY NOTES:

- ✓ Keep electric fuse boxes locked. Check with your electricity supplier as they will need access to read the meter and can supply padlocks.
- ✓ Keep torches and spare batteries in an easy-to-reach place.
- ✓ Consider a back-to-base alarm system with a remote button. Know the range of this device.
- ✓ Let trusted people know if you go away, e.g. neighbours or family.
- ✓ Give a phone contact list of important people or services to people you trust in case of emergencies.
- ✓ Consider installing a loud, outside alarm that can be activated from inside the house.
- ✓ Make sure everyone in the home talks about suspicious calls or occurrences.
- ✓ Choose a code word that you can use without attracting attention e.g. on the phone. Let family and friends know that when they hear the word it means that a crisis is occurring.
- ✓ Keep in touch with neighbours; ask them to let you know if anyone has been hanging around your house and to contact the police if they hear any violent incidents or have any concerns about your safety.
- ✓ Keep trusted friends and neighbours informed about what's going on.
- ✓ Make a safe evacuation plan. Make sure all household members know about and practice it occasionally.



## MY NOTES:



- ✓ Get a dog. A family dog can be one of the least expensive and most effective alarm systems. Some breeds are better watch dogs, but any breed will bark at an intruder. If this has been a family dog known by the violent person, consider getting another. You also need to check with the landlord/estate agents if it is okay to have a dog.
- ✓ Is there a 'safe room' in your house that you can secure and that has mobile phone coverage? This could be the toilet or laundry. Install a lock to make it a more secure place for you and your children to wait for the arrival of the police.
- ✓ Keep your outside area clear of garden utensils such as rakes, shovels, ladders or wheelie bins. Keep shed door locked.
- ✓ If possible lock the area under your house and consider installing a manhole padlock.
- ✓ Prepare an 'escape bag' of your belongings and hide it in a safe place. If you leave you will need money, keys, clothes, bank cards, driver's licence, immigration papers, Health Care or Medicare cards, property deeds, medication, birth certificates, passport and any other important documents for yourself and your children.
- ✓ Keep copies of important papers in a safe location.

# CRISIS PLAN

THINGS I WILL DO IF THERE IS A CRISIS AT HOME:



**MY NOTES:**

## HOW I WILL TEACH MY CHILDREN TO MANAGE THEIR SAFETY?

- ✓ Teach your children how to telephone the police and how to give their full name and address.
- ✓ Tell your children's school or child care centre about the situation and about who has authority to pick up the children. Provide the school or centre with copies of any family law orders or intervention orders.

### MY NOTES:

# PHONE AND MOBILE



- ✓ Get an unlisted phone number. Make sure everyone you give it to knows it's a silent number. Make sure they know not to give it out to anyone.
- ✓ Consider installing caller identification and use an answering machine to screen callers.
- ✓ In cases where family law court orders allow the other parent to have contact with your children and you would prefer not to give out your land line phone number, consider purchasing a pre-paid mobile phone that the other parent can call.
- ✓ Make sure you know where in your house you can get reception for your mobile phone.
- ✓ Keep your mobile charged and with you in case the phone line is disconnected. Note that portable land line phones rely on electricity. If there is a power outage, you have no phone.
- ✓ Report all phone abuse. This is against the law. Keep accurate records and original messages for police and courts. Do not delete text or voice messages from your phone.
- ✓ Consider changing your number if phone abuse continues.
- ✓ Dialling 000 on mobile phones will work, however, if you have a GSM digital mobile phone the Emergency Services number for Police, Fire and Ambulance is 112.
- ✓ Program emergency contact numbers into your phones, both mobile and landline.

# YOUR WORK, SHOPPING OR SOCIAL EVENTS



- ✓ It is important that there is someone in your workplace who knows what is happening for you, but you can be selective about how much to tell them. In a large workplace this could mean a manager and the office person.
- ✓ Make sure everyone in the workplace is aware not to give out your contact details.
- ✓ Park in a well lit space if possible and ask a work colleague or security person to escort you to your car.
- ✓ Form a buddy system with a co-worker in sharing rides or catching public transport.
- ✓ Have a plan of action if you are followed home. Know where your nearest police station is and drive there if you are in a car.
- ✓ Plan what you would do if you are followed while catching public transport.
- ✓ Change your routines. If you have always shopped on a certain day at a certain location, change the days and the shopping places from week to week.
- ✓ Purchase a small, battery operated alarm and be prepared to activate it. Keep it somewhere you can access it readily.
- ✓ If you have a back-to-base alarm, carry the mobile button with you. Often this is worn around the neck or as a wrist band. Although this cannot be activated away from the home it can be used when entering or leaving the premises.
- ✓ If there is an emergency in a public place, find someone, (even a shopkeeper), and ask for help.

# YOUR COMPUTER



Computer use can be monitored. Although you can clear the history or cache that shows what web pages you have visited, it is impossible to completely delete where you have been surfing on the net. The only way to be sure is to use a safer computer e.g. at a friend's house, a library, or an internet café.

# YOUR CAR



- ✓ Keep the garage door locked at all times.
- ✓ Keep car locked when at home.
- ✓ Always park in a secured garage if possible.
- ✓ Park in well lit areas when shopping or at work.
- ✓ Keep a torch in your car.
- ✓ Keep a personal alarm on your key ring (regularly check to ensure battery has not gone flat).

**WHAT I WILL DO IF I AM PUT AT RISK IN A PUBLIC PLACE, AT WORK,  
WHEN SHOPPING OR AT A SOCIAL EVENT?**

**MY NOTES:**



# INFORMATION THAT MIGHT HELP



- ✓ Police can carry out a safety audit of your home.
- ✓ The family violence service in your area should be able to conduct safety audits of your home and provide practical assistance.
- ✓ You might be eligible for the Victims Assistance Scheme to reimburse you for changing locks. Phone Victim Assistance and Counselling Program (VACP) on (03) 8398 4178.
- ✓ You might be eligible for a crisis payment from Centrelink (you need to apply within 7 days after the incident).
- ✓ Your local family violence service might be able to help. Check your phone book for local services.

**Try not to panic.** Each area has its own family violence support agencies listed in your phone book. Make a note of your local services. This is not an exhaustive list. These are only a set of ideas that might provide some options for improving your and your family's safety. Make your own notes of what would work for you in your situation.

## LIST YOUR LOCAL SERVICES:

# EMERGENCY SERVICES

## **Call 000 for police, fire and ambulance in an emergency**

The 000 (triple zero) service is provided free of charge to callers within Australia from any fixed or mobile phone.

The emergency call is initially answered by a Telstra operator who transfers the calls to the appropriate emergency service organisation - police, fire or ambulance.

When using a standard phone or landline call **000** (triple zero) for police, fire or ambulance.

If you are using a GSM digital **mobile phone** and you are out of range of your service provider, or your phone displays a message indicating emergency calls only, or does not have a SIM card, try dialing 112.

If you have a speech or hearing disability the **National Relay Service** provides three ways to contact emergency services: TTY, ordinary phone, and internet relay.

## **24-HOUR RELAY CALL NUMBERS**

- ✓ **TTY/voice calls** 133 677
- ✓ **Speak and Listen** 1300 555 727

# LOCAL SERVICES

## **Women's Health West Family Violence Service**

9689 9588

Provides information, counselling, crisis and court support for women and children affected by family violence.

Our Safe at Home program can provide you with financial support to increase the safety of your home.

## **Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service of Victoria**

1800 015 885

24- hour service

Safe accommodation, information, referral and advocacy.

## **Elizabeth Hoffman House Aboriginal Women's Services**

9482 5744

Provides emergency accommodation and support for Aboriginal women in relation to domestic violence

## **In Touch – Multicultural Family Violence Services**

9413 6503

## **Western Region Health Centre**

8398 4178

Victims Assistance Counselling Program

## **The Gathering Place**

9318 7885

Western Suburbs Indigenous Health and Cultural Service

## **Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)**

9627 6143

Housing and tenancy information

## **Sunshine Magistrates Court**

9300 6274

## **Werribee Magistrates Court**

9974 9300

## **Melbourne Magistrates Court**

9628 7873

## **Victims of Crime Helpline**

1800 819 817

