

Safety Planning with Your Child/Children

Children are impacted by abuse in many ways. Some children may be unaware of the abuse, while others will have more knowledge and be exposed to violence, often more than the caregiver is aware of. Children and youth adopt various coping strategies, including getting directly or indirectly involved, often putting themselves at risk. Some children may feel responsible for the violence and change their behaviour in an attempt to reduce risk of violence. Children and youth may benefit by having safety planning strategies to cope with their feelings of fear, anger, or helplessness.

- ☐ Tell your children that violence is never right, even when someone they love is being violent. Tell them nothing they did or did not do has caused the violence.
- ☐ Teach them that their only job is to stay safe themselves. They must always run to safety, even without you. It is the best way they can help you and themselves.
- ☐ Tell them they must never try to protect you and let them know you too have a plan to help keep you safe.
- ☐ Teach them to leave the room or not enter the room where the danger is.
- ☐ Help them identify a safe room in the house, preferably where they can access a phone and lock the door. A ground floor room is best so they can leave through a window if necessary.
- ☐ Teach them how to use the phone to ask for help.
- ☐ Ensure they know their full name, phone number and address and encourage them not to disconnect the line after they are done talking with 911 so the dispatcher can hear what is happening.
- ☐ Teach them to call from a phone that is out of sight from the (ex)partner if possible.
- ☐ Rehearse what they will say when they call for help. For example, when the operator says "Police, Fire or Ambulance", your child should say "POLICE, I need help, send the police, someone is hurting my Mom. The address is...."

- ☐ If your child calls 911 from a cell phone, teach them to state their address first.
- ☐ If you want them to leave the home during a violent incident, plan with them where they will go and the safest way of getting there. Also plan what to do if the designated friend/neighbour is not at home.
- ☐ Have a code word with your children so they know when it is not safe and they should go to a safe room or neighbour to call 911
- ☐ Teach them to let you know if someone is at the door and not to open it themselves. If children are older, encourage them to check who is at the door before opening it.
- ☐ Make sure their schools, daycare or anyone who cares for your children have a copy of all court orders as well as a photo of the (ex)partner. In some cases, there may be a publication ban in place or a sharing restriction regarding court information or courts. Check with a court officer or with your lawyer before sharing court documents with others.
- ☐ Make sure their schools, daycare or anyone who cares for your children to know who can and can NOT pick up the children.
- ☐ Teach your children how to make collect calls to you and to a trusted friend in case your (ex)partner takes the children.
- ☐ Talk to your children about safe people they can talk to.
- ☐ Consider downloading the free Red Panic Button app: <http://redpanicbutton.com/> which allows your child to contact pre-arranged emergency contacts on their cell phone with a message along with their GPS location.