

Creating A Safer Home

The risk for violence is greater surrounding the time around when you are leaving an abusive relationship. It is very important to consider your safety if you are planning to or have just ended the relationship.

Living with an abusive partner:

- ☐ Tell someone you trust about the abuse.
- ☐ Create an Emergency Escape Plan and consider reviewing it with a counsellor.
- ☐ If there are firearms on your property- explore ways to have firearms removed or ammunition stored elsewhere or change locks on the gun cabinet. If not possible, know where the guns are stored, where the ammunition and keys to the gun cabinet are kept. Plan an escape route that takes into consideration the location of the guns in the home. The public can confidentially call the Canadian Firearms Program 1-800-731-4000 if they believe a person who owns firearms could be dangerous to themselves or to others. <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cfp-pcaf/cont/index-eng.htm>
- ☐ Create a telephone list with numbers of local police, nearest shelter, Victim Services, Assaulted Women's Helpline, Crisis Help Lines, family members, counsellors, children's friends.
- ☐ Make arrangements with friends or family so that you can stay with them if necessary.
- ☐ Be aware of the likelihood for violence and make plans for the children to be sent to friends, family, etc. Think about your (ex)partner's use and level of force. This will help you predict what type of danger you and your children are facing and when to leave.
- ☐ Tell your children that abuse is never right, even when someone they love is being abusive. Tell them the abuse isn't your fault or their fault; they did not cause it and neither did you. Teach them it is important to keep safe when there is abuse.
- ☐ Teach the children to let you know when someone is at the door before answering the door.
- ☐ Teach your children how to contact 911.
- ☐ Create a code word with your children and/or friends so they know to call for help.
- ☐ Plan your emergency exits, teach your children and know them well.
- ☐ Teach your children their own Safety Plan - See Insert.
- ☐ Identify a neighbour you can tell about the violence and ask that they call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.

During a Violent Incident:

There are some things you can do to help increase your level of safety such as:

- ☐ Remind yourself that you have an EMERGENCY ESCAPE PLAN and go over it in your mind.

- ☐ Start to position yourself to get out quickly or near a phone so you can call 911 if necessary. Note your cell phone can make a call to 911 without any data or cellular plan.
- ☐ During an argument/incident try to move to a space where the risk is lower and avoid being in confined areas with your (ex)partner such as bathroom, garage, kitchen, basement, near weapons, or in rooms without access to an outside door.
- ☐ Use your code words with your children so they can call for help.
- ☐ Use your judgement and intuition – if the situation is very serious, you can agree with your (ex)partner or give them what they want to calm them down. You have to protect yourself until you are out of danger.
- ☐ During, or after, you have been assaulted, call the police if you can. Tell them you have been assaulted, provide your address, and leave the phone line connected.
- ☐ Make as much noise as possible (set off fire alarm, yell “FIRE”) so neighbours call the police for you.
- ☐ Once you are in safe place, have a friend/family member take photographs of any injuries you sustained during the assault, or consider attending Nina’s Place Domestic Violence Care Centre at Joseph Brant Hospital for medical attention. This applies also in cases where you have been sexually assaulted.
- ☐ Take photographs of damaged clothing and/or property to be used as evidence if needed once you’re in a safe place.

Ending an abusive relationship

- ☐ You can contact a shelter or 24-hour crisis line for women to talk in more detail about how you can leave safely, where you can go and what other resources are available to you.
- ☐ You should NOT tell your (ex)partner that you are thinking about or planning to leave.
- ☐ Decide if you want to stay in your home, or if you will leave your home.
- ☐ If you are renting, new legislation allows survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault/ harassment by a roommate to break a lease with only 28 days notice without it being tied to a specific date. Note, your landlord could require documentation proving domestic violence (i.e. restraining order).
- ☐ Halton Housing offers Special Priority for survivors of domestic violence. If approved, while waiting for a permanent offer of government assisted housing you may be able to access the Portable Housing Benefit. This program can assist with first/last month rent, provide an advocate to help with negotiating a lease, and support a monthly housing benefit after moving. To learn more about eligibility and the application process, contact Halton Women’s Place or Halton Housing.
- ☐ Think about documents and important papers that you will need. The detailed list is found within this booklet. Gather these items and hide them in a safe place or take copies of them and store them in a safe location.
- ☐ Create a list of personal items you would like to take with you when/if you get a chance to come back to your home later.
- ☐ Set up a bank account in your own name and arrange that no bank correspondence or calls be made to you at home.

- ☐ If you can afford it, set up a post office box to get mail in any way related to your plans to leave
- ☐ Use a trusted friend or family member's address for your mail.
- ☐ Try to save money for an emergency fund.
- ☐ Hide extra clothing, keys for your house, office and/or car, comfort items, etc., at the house of a trusted family member or friend.
- ☐ If you move things out of your home before you leave, plan an explanation for their absence to your (ex)partner if they notice such as, it is getting repaired; it's at the cleaners, etc.
- ☐ You may request police attend for you to leave safely.
- ☐ You can ask that friends or family come to your home when you leave.
- ☐ You can leave when the (ex)partner is going to be out of the home for at least the time it will take you to leave safely.
- ☐ If you had to leave quickly, you can request police meet you back at your home to pick up your personal belongings.
- ☐ When making phone calls related to your plans to leave, try to use the phone at a trusted friend's, neighbour's, at work, at a shelter, etc.
- ☐ If you are making a call from a landline at home that you do not want your (ex)partner to know about, dial other numbers in after you are finished the call. This prevents your (ex)partner from pressing redial to find out where you have called.
- ☐ If you need to provide a call back number, use the number of a trusted friend, a shelter or another safe number where you can pick up messages.
- ☐ Plan for a safe place for your pets to stay if you can't bring them with you to the shelter or where you are staying temporarily. Call the women's shelter for options for your pet.
- ☐ Have a safe place planned to go when you leave.

Living on your own

- ☐ Be aware of all the entrances and exits to your home and building.
- ☐ Change the locks on your door and install dead bolts and peep holes.
- ☐ Keep your doors locked even when you are at home. Always check who is at the door before opening it.
- ☐ Change the locks on your garage and mail box.
- ☐ Make sure that windows are locked and that sliding glass doors are blocked with dowels or security bars.
- ☐ Consider purchasing rope ladders to use for escape from second story windows.
- ☐ Keep a fully-charged phone near you as much as possible even when you are outside on the step or in the yard.
- ☐ Install outdoor motion sensitive lights and trim trees and bushes to allow a clear view from all windows.
- ☐ Ensure that your street address is clearly visible and well-lit for emergency calls.

- ☐ If possible, create a safe room in the house to assist you if your (ex)partner gains access to your home. While the safe room may not keep you completely safe, it will buy you time while you make use of an alternative safe escape route or until assistance arrives. There are many options to create a safe room, some of which could include a secure lock, a phone, an exit and a chair to prop under the door handle. It could also have a rubber door stop to wedge under the door, an extra set of car keys, etc.
- ☐ Inform landlord, superintendent and neighbours that your (ex)partner no longer lives with you and request that they inform you/or call the police if they see them near your home. Ask friends and family to report to you any suspicious calls including hang-ups, wrong numbers and others asking for information about you.
- ☐ Consider telling police about any unwanted and/or persistent contact by your (ex)partner (I.e. by phone, email, letters, sending you unwanted gifts, following you, showing up at work or school, etc).
- ☐ You may also want to document unwanted and/or persistent contact by your (ex)partner in order to demonstrate a pattern of behaviour should this be of use at a later date.
- ☐ To avoid distraction, have your home and/or car keys ready in hand before arriving at your door.
- ☐ You may want to consider having an unlisted phone number, blocking the number of your (ex)partner, or speaking to your service provider about other safety options.
- ☐ Be careful of having identifying information on your voicemail such as your name and your phone number, and don't allow your message to say that you are not home.
- ☐ Keep your mobile phone charged. Be aware of what tracking you have on your phone.
- ☐ Only share your number with people you trust to keep it confidential. Be conscious that your (ex)partner may intimidate or pressure others to disclose your contact information.
- ☐ Caution people that need your number they are not to give it out to anyone under any circumstance.
- ☐ Change email address, bank accounts, passwords, entry/other access codes, and/or reprogram remote fobs.
- ☐ If you live in an apartment or condo, consider not having your name listed on the resident list in the front lobby.
- ☐ Be cautious when entering and exiting elevators, hallways, or stairs for safety. Check your surroundings and consider entering on an angle so you can see the entire area.
- ☐ Always lock your apartment/unit door – even when travelling in the building.
- ☐ If you return home and find something is out of the ordinary, consider not entering the home and instead go to a safe place to contact police or a safe person.