

Emergency Escape Plan⁹

The Emergency Escape Plan focuses on steps that women can take in advance to be better prepared in case they have to leave a violent situation very quickly.

SAFETY DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT.

I do not control when violent incidents occur. When incidents occur, if possible I will increase my safety and manage risk using a variety of different strategies. I can use some or all of the following strategies:

- A. If I decide to leave, I will _____. (Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes would you use? Consider your physical stamina and abilities as well as the health status of anyone who may need to leave with you.)
- B. I can keep my purse and car keys ready and put them _____ (place) in order to leave quickly.
- C. I can tell _____ and _____ about the violence and request that they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.
- D. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police in case of an emergency.
- E. I will establish and use a code word with my children or my friends so they can call for help.
- F. If I have to leave my home, I will go _____.

If I cannot go to the location above, then I can go to _____
or _____.
- G. I can also teach some of these strategies to some/all of my children.
- H. When my partner is escalating and I expect we are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that poses a lower risk, such as _____, or if possible leave the house. (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, and kitchen, near weapons or in rooms without access to an outside door.)
- I. I will consider possible patterns or usual behaviours of my partner/ex-partner as to be better prepared for potential volatility (e.g., evening alcohol consumption, extended periods of unemployment, substance binges on pay day, not taking medications for mental health issues, etc.)
- J. I will watch for signs that my partner/ex-partner may become violent including rapid breathing, colour change in the face, sweating, shaking, violent gestures, angry expressions, talking loudly, and making threats.

⁹ The Emergency Escape Plan is adapted from the Peel Committee Against Woman Abuse in Ontario.

PREPARING TO LEAVE

A) Make a photocopy of the following items and store in a safe place, away from the originals. Hide the originals someplace else, if you can.

- Passports, birth certificates, Indian/First Nations status cards, citizenship papers, immigration papers, permanent resident or citizenship cards, Social Insurance Number (SIN) card etc. for all family members
- Driver's license, registration, insurance papers
- Prescriptions, medical and vaccination records for all family members
- School records
- All income assistance documentation
- Work permits
- Marriage certificate, divorce papers, custody documentation, court orders, protection orders, or other legal documents
- Lease/rental agreement, house deed, mortgage documents
- Bank books
- Address/telephone book
- Picture of spouse/partner and any children
- Health cards for yourself and family members
- All cards you normally use, for example, credit cards, bank cards, phone card
- Documentation that proves cohabitation

B) Try to keep all the cards you normally use or copies of them in your wallet:

- Social Insurance Number (SIN) card
- Credit cards
- Phone card
- Bank cards
- Health cards

C) Try to keep your wallet and purse handy and containing the following:

- Keys for your home, car, workplace, safety deposit box, etc.
- Cheque book, bank books/statements
- Driver's license, registration, insurance
- Address/telephone book
- Picture of spouse/partner and any children
- Emergency money (in cash) hidden away
- Cell phone
- Documentation of cohabitation

D) Items to take when leaving

If you leave your abusive partner it is important to take certain items with you. You may also give extra copies of documents and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case you have to leave quickly.

Items with an asterisk (*) on the following list are the most important to take. If there is time, the other items might be taken, or stored outside the home. These items might best be placed in one location, so that if you have to leave in a hurry, you can grab them quickly. Check off items on this list as you make your plans.

When I leave, I should take the following items for myself and my children:

<input type="checkbox"/> * Birth certificates	<input type="checkbox"/> * Work permits	<input type="checkbox"/> * Social Insurance Card (SIN Card)	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical records
<input type="checkbox"/> * Driver's license and registration	<input type="checkbox"/> Lease/rental agreement, house deed, mortgage papers	<input type="checkbox"/> * School and vaccination records	<input type="checkbox"/> * Assistive devices (i.e. glasses, dentures, walkers, canes, hearing aids)
<input type="checkbox"/> * Health Cards	<input type="checkbox"/> Insurance papers (car, home, health)	<input type="checkbox"/> * Passports	<input type="checkbox"/> Address/telephone book
<input type="checkbox"/> * Money	<input type="checkbox"/> Employment	<input type="checkbox"/> * Cheque book and Bank books	<input type="checkbox"/> Children's favourite toys and/or blanket
<input type="checkbox"/> * Debit and Credit Cards	<input type="checkbox"/> Divorce papers, marriage certificate	<input type="checkbox"/> * Transit pass	<input type="checkbox"/> Valuable or sentimental items such as jewelry
<input type="checkbox"/> * Keys – house/car/office	<input type="checkbox"/> Pictures of abuser and children/ grandchildren	<input type="checkbox"/> * Medications and prescriptions	
<input type="checkbox"/> * Court orders, protection orders and custody documentation	<input type="checkbox"/> Documentation of cohabitation	<input type="checkbox"/> * Citizenship or immigration documents or Certificate of Indian Status	

E) Technological Safety¹⁰

Laptops and Computers

Be aware that someone who has access to your computer may be able to see what websites you have visited, or read your email messages. ‘Spyware’ and ‘keylogging’ programs are commonly available and can track what you do on your computer without you knowing it. It is not possible to delete or clear all of the ‘tracks’ of your online or computer activities. However, there are steps you can take to make it more difficult for someone to track your activities. Computers have what is called a cache file. The cache (pronounced “cash”) automatically saves web pages and graphics. Anyone who looks at the cache file on your computer can see what information you have viewed recently on the internet. Also, most web browsers (the software on your computer that lets you search the internet and display internet pages – like Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox) keep a list of the most recent web sites and links that you have visited in a history file. You can look at your own history by clicking on the history button on your toolbar (the bar at the top of your screen). While it is possible to clear the cache and history files so that your computer doesn’t keep a list of the sites you have visited, you should be very cautious about doing this. If your abuser is comfortable with computers and sees that you have cleared all the cache and history files on your computer (including the sites the abuser has visited), this could make the abuser suspicious or angry. If that is a possibility, it would be better for you to use a safer computer that they cannot access - for example, at a library, school, internet café, a friend’s house, or at work.

Create a new email, Facebook or instant messaging account

If you suspect that anyone abusive can access your email, consider creating an additional email account on a safer computer. Do not create or check this new email from a computer your abuser could access, in case it is monitored. Use an anonymous name, and account: (example: bluecat@email.com – not YourRealName@email.com). Look for free web-based email accounts (like yahoo or hotmail), and do not provide detailed information about yourself.

Check your mobile phone settings

If you are using a mobile phone provided by the abusive person, consider turning it off when not in use. Also many phones let you to ‘lock’ the keys so a phone won’t automatically answer or call if it is bumped. When on, check the phone settings; if your phone has an optional location service, you may want to switch the location feature off/on via the phone settings menu or by turning your phone on and off.

Change passwords and PIN numbers

Some abusers use a woman’s email and other accounts to impersonate and cause harm. If anyone abusive knows or could guess your passwords, change them quickly and frequently. Think about changing the passwords for any password protected accounts – online banking, voicemail, etc. Use a safer computer to access your accounts.

Minimize use of cordless phones or baby monitors

If you don’t want others to overhear your conversations, turn baby monitors off when not in use and use a traditional corded phone for sensitive conversations.

¹⁰ The resource *Technology Safety*, developed by Caboolture Regional Domestic Violence Service Inc. & Centre Against Violence was a useful source of information in the development of this section.

Get your own mobile phone

When making or receiving private calls or arranging escape plans, try not to use a shared or family mobile phone because the mobile phone bill and the phone log might reveal your plans to an abuser. Consider using a prepaid phone card so that you won't get numbers listed on your bill.

All Technology:

Technology has advanced to the point that it is very difficult to avoid being on "the grid" so to speak. GPS technology may allow people to identify where you are. You can increase your safety by disabling GPS capabilities in any device that has that capacity such as:

- Cell phones – The find my phone application should be immediately disabled. Any phone given to you by your partner or that your partner has access to billing information should be replaced.
- iPads/Tablets – The find my device application should be immediately disabled. Any iPad or tablet given to you by your partner or that your partner has access to billing information should be replaced.
- Social Media – When accessing social media from someone's computer, or even a library computer if that capability has not been turned off.
- Children's electronic toys
- Car (low jacking)

F) Other Considerations:

- Open a bank account in your own name and arrange that no bank statements or other calls be made to you. Or, arrange that mail be sent to a trusted friend or family member.
- Save and set aside as much money as you can (e.g., a bit of change out of grocery-money if/when possible). Locate your local food bank so you can save money on groceries.
- In a place you can get to quickly, set aside \$20 to \$30 for cab fare, and quarters for a pay phone.
- Hide extra clothing, keys, money, etc. at a friend/family member's house.
- Plan your emergency exits, taking into consideration mobility and accessibility concerns, as well as appropriate modes of transportation and how to arrange it (e.g., taxi, bus etc.).
- Plan and rehearse the steps you will take if you have to leave quickly, and learn them well.
- Keep an emergency packed suitcase hidden or handy/ready to pack quickly.
- Consider getting a safety deposit box at a bank that your partner does not go to.

G) When Dialing 911:

- Remember that there is no charge when dialing 911 from a pay phone. The call is also free from cell phones.
- Remember that if you call from a landline, you can leave the phone off the hook after you have dialed 911 and the police will come to your location. However if you call from a cell phone, the police cannot tell where you are calling from, so be sure to give them your address immediately. If the phone is dropped or thrown, shouting out your address loudly may let the operator know where you are if the phone is still engaged.
- For TTY access (telephone device for the deaf) press the spacebar announcer key repeatedly until a response is received.
- If you do not speak English, tell the call-taker the name of the language you speak. Stay on the line while you are connected to interpreter services that will provide assistance in your language.
- Try to remain on the line until the call-taker tells you it is okay to hang-up.

H) Additional Notes:

- When you leave your home, take the children if you can. If you try to get them later, the police cannot help you remove them from their other parent unless you have a valid court order.
- If you have left your home, the police can escort you back to the home later to remove additional personal belongings, if it is arranged through the local police department. At this time, you can take the items listed in Section D above as well as anything else that is important to you or your children.
- Police involvement will usually result in the involvement of Child Protection Services (CPS) if children reside with you. The role of CPS is to reduce the risk to a child, not to remove the child from the care of the non-offending parent/caregiver. The role of child welfare workers is to provide support to you and advocate for you when you attempt to access financial, residential, and other practical services. RSC can support you in your relationship with Child Protection Services.