

Protection Planning for People in Abusive Relationships

Keeping yourself and your children safe from violence.

The Protection Plan

What is a protection plan?

A protection plan will help you and your children get to a safe place when you are in danger. The plan will include where to go – and what you need to take with you, if you're forced to leave your home to escape from a violent partner.

When do you need a protection plan?

- a) If you are in an abusive relationship.
 - When you are living within the “cycle of abuse”, you need to be prepared to get yourself and your children to safety when you feel tension building.
- b) If you have recently left an abusive relationship.
 - If you remain in the family home, it is possible your partner may return and threaten or assault you again. Even if you have obtained a court order, it is no guarantee that the abuser will stay away.
 - If you leave the family home, your partner may search for you, and threaten or assault you.

The Cycle of Abuse (and its role in the protection plan)

Violence in abusive relationships follows what is known as a “cycle of abuse”. An assault is usually followed by a period of justification or calm, where the abuser either rationalizes his/her behaviour or feels and acts sorry about the attack. Although both partners may try to make the relationship continue in a normal way by pretending that everything is alright, tension begins to build again. **It is during the build-up phase that the chances of assault**

are much greater. The safest and surest way to protect yourself (and your children) is to put some distance between you and your partner during these high-risk times. (See the *Cycle of Violence* fact sheet.)

Elements of a Protection Plan

Remember – each protection plan is unique, because each person's circumstances are unique. The most important thing is your safety and the safety of your children.

1) Be aware of the signs that tell you an assault is about to take place.

Every abusive person has a different set of signs that indirectly tells the partner that an incident is about to happen. Being aware of these “signs” can help people in an abusive relationship know when they will be at risk. It is important to trust your instincts.

Answering the following questions will help you figure out what signs to look for:

- What does your partner do or say in the period before an incident?
- Does alcohol play a role in the violence towards you?
- Is there a predictable time between incidents? When was the last incident and when can you expect the next one?
- Are there other indicators an incident is about to happen? Examples may include unemployment, pregnancy and money troubles.

2) Be aware of things the abuser can use to hurt you.

- Be aware of where guns, knives and other weapons are stored.
- Find "safe places" where there are fewer dangerous things. Try to stay out of the kitchen, garage or workshop.

3) Decide on a safe place you can go with your children.

This might be a crisis shelter, the home of a friend or relative, a hotel, or any other place in which you can be safe. Be aware of who lives in your area. If you cannot leave your home, is there a room or area of your home where you can be safe? Tell your neighbours about the situation and request that they call the police if they see the abuser or hear suspicious noises coming from your house.

4) Decide how you will get there.

Decide what transportation you will use to get to a safe place. If you have a car, hide a spare key and keep a full tank of gas. If not, who can help you get to your place of safety? You might arrange for a friend, neighbour or relative to pick you up when the time comes. You may also want to keep some money with friends, so that when you feel threatened, you can leave quickly by taxi even if you have no cash on you. The police or Domestic Abuse Crisis Line may be able to help you plan your transportation.

5) Decide how you will escape from your home if an attack is about to happen.

Find out if there is a door or window you can use for escape, if necessary, and whether your children can also be taken out through these exits. Make sure that once you leave the home, you know immediately where to go. Find out beforehand where the nearest public phone is. Memorize any emergency numbers you may need (i.e., crisis shelter, police, social worker, etc.).

6) Decide what to take when you leave.

Do not stay behind to take any belongings if it endangers you or your children. If possible, do not leave your children. If you are in immediate danger and need to leave them, return as soon as possible, with the police if necessary.

BEFORE YOU RETURN TO YOUR HOME, MAKE SURE IT IS SAFE TO DO SO. BRING SOMEONE WITH YOU, IF YOU ARE IN DOUBT.

Additional tips

- Put some money away in a safe place – a little at a time
- Change computer passwords to ensure confidential information remains secure
- Teach your children how to contact police

If you are not in immediate danger, you should pack the following useful items:

- identification for you and your children – such as birth certificates, your social insurance number, driver's license, immigration papers or treaty card, health care band numbers, passports
- legal documents – your mortgage or lease, or information about loans or assets you have, a copy of a protection order, custody orders
- address book
- credit cards, ATM card, checks, bank book
- keys – for your house, car and safety deposit box (if you have one)
- personal items – clothing and toiletries
- medications you or your children are taking
- things for your children – clothing, favourite toys, medicine, diapers or bottles

Remember – safety for you and your children is most important.

7) If an assault occurs, contact the police.

If you do not have a phone think of where you can access one.

For more information contact:

Manitoba Justice
Victim Services Branch
1-866-484-2846

Toll Free Province-Wide Domestic Abuse Crisis Line
(24 hours) 1-877-977-0007