

# Safety Planning for People Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence:

KEEPING YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN SAFE FROM VIOLENCE

## What is a Safety Plan?

A safety plan is a tool to help increase your safety. It lists steps you can take when confronted with an abusive situation, or potentially abusive situation. A safety plan is preplanned and rehearsed. Safety plans look different for each person, family, and community.

### Risk Factors

Abusive behaviours often occur gradually and can be hard to recognize as abuse. Common risk factors that may lead to abusive situations in your (ex)relationship may include:

- History of violence in the relationship
- Life stressors (i.e. loss of job, money troubles, pregnancy)
- Ending the relationship
- Isolating you from family and friends
- Financial control (i.e. access to PIN code, access to personal accounts, taking your paycheque, withholding money)
- Substance use
- Mental health concerns; including threats of suicide or self-harm if you leave the relationship
- Your (ex)partner's personal history of behaving violently
- Gang involvement
- Access to weapons
- Preventing access to children, threats to use family court against you or to report you to child welfare
- Harm or threats to harm children, family members, pets or animals
- Using social media as a tool to maintain control, instill fear and further the violence (i.e. posting or threats to post intimate images, creating fake accounts etc.)
- The use of, or the threat to use, technology to monitor or control you

### Warning Signs

People who experience intimate partner violence may sense when an abusive episode is about to happen. Trust your instincts and pay attention to the following:

- **Verbal and non-verbal signs:**
  - **Change in tone of voice:** yelling, swearing, short and harsh tone
  - **Body language:** getting in your personal space, an aggressive stance, clenched jaw and fists
- **Intimidating behaviours:** Throwing and breaking objects (i.e. punching walls, slamming doors and breaking phones, T.V's or other personal items)
- **Intoxication:** Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- **Mental health crisis:** Unpredictable behaviour, paranoid or delusional thinking, stopped taking medication

If you are experiencing intimate partner violence, you are not alone.

***Help is available to you.***

## Elements of a Safety Plan

A successful safety plan is one that you develop and that fits with your situation. The most important thing is your safety and the safety of your children.

### Identify who can help you

- Tell someone you trust about the abuse (i.e. boss, family, friends, or doctor)
- Inform your caretaker and neighbours about your safety concerns. Make a plan to have them call police if necessary
- Decide on a code word or gesture to signal to someone you trust that you are at risk. Agree in advance what steps should be taken when you use the signal

### Be aware of things your (ex)partner can use to harm you

- Know where weapons are stored (i.e. guns, knives, bats, tools etc.)
- If you are unable to leave the home, find a space that has fewer dangerous items (i.e. stay away from the kitchen and garage)

### Be prepared and get to safety quickly

- Do not tell your (ex)partner you are thinking of leaving
- Decide how you will escape from your home if an attack is about to happen (i.e. escaping through a door or window)
- Put some money away in a safe place that only you know about
- Keep a list of important phone numbers in a safe place, separate from your phone
- Change all passwords and PINs regularly to ensure confidential information remains secure
- Have an emergency bag packed that includes clothes (pack for the weather), hygiene products, bus tickets, medication, IDs and money. Make sure your children have a similar bag packed
- In an emergency, do not stay behind to take any belongings if it endangers you or your children

### Safety plan with your children

- Decide on a safe place you can go with your children (i.e. a shelter, the home of a friend or relative, a hotel, or any other place where you can be safe)
- Prepare an age appropriate safety plan with your children in advance (i.e. how to call 911)

### Stay safe after you leave

- Change your routine and try not to leave your home alone. Let others know where you plan to be and when
- Do not go to places where you know your (ex) partner regularly attends
- Be careful when giving out your new address and phone number
- Review privacy settings on social media and consider what information you share
- Call police if you believe you are being monitored, stalked or your whereabouts are being tracked.
- Reset your cell phone and turn off location tracker if you feel you are being monitored through your mobile device
- Apply for a Protection/Prevention Order for you and/or your children
- If you return to your home, make sure it is safe to do so. Bring someone with you
- If your (ex)partner has parenting time with your children, make arrangements to exchange children through a trusted family member or friend. Supervised exchange services are also available

**If you have questions or would like help with your safety planning, you can contact:**

Manitoba Justice

Victim Services Branch **1-866-484-2846**

Toll-Free Province Wide Gender-Based Violence Crisis and Information Line (24 hours) **1-877-977-0007**