

CREATING A SAFETY PLAN

What is a Safety Plan?

Creating a safety plan involves mapping out actions to increase your safety and the safety of your children by preparing in advance for the possibility of further abuse and violence. This safety plan offers different alternatives which you could consider. You will know what is best for yourself and what actions are or are not appropriate in your own situation.

In creating a safety plan, it is important to remember:

- A safety plan is needed whenever the potential for abuse is identified.
- It is helpful to be aware of the resources available to abused, sexually-exploited, prostituted, trafficked and/or harassed women and girls in your community.
- Each safety plan is specifically designed for actions that you can take. A separate safety outline has been created to assist you in creating a children's safety plan specifically for your children.
- Safety plans must be and reviewed and/or revised regularly. Abusers/harassers/pimps/traffickers can shift the tactics they use suddenly and quickly and the risk of harm may change accordingly.
- It is important to have both a short and long-term emergency safety plan.
- For your safety, it may be necessary to keep your personal safety plan hidden

SAFETY PLAN

- Safety planning during violent/abusive experiences
- Safety planning when I am preparing to leave an abusive partner
- Safety planning if you are preparing to exit prostitution or the commercialized sex industry
- Safety in my home after leaving my abuser, pimp and/or trafficker
- Safety with a protection order
- Safety in the workplace and in public
- Safety and substance use
- Safe use of technology
- Safety and my emotional health

Safety planning during violent/abusive experiences:

In order to increase safety during a violent/abusive experience abused, tortured, harassed, prostituted and/or sex-trafficked women and girls may use a variety of strategies. Some strategies for you to consider are:

- What is/are the possible escape route(s) from my home? What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, or fire escapes could I use:

_____.

I will take the time to practice how to get out safely.

- When I am in any location with an abuser/harasser/pimp/trafficker/sex purchaser, where are the possible escape routes? Where is a telephone or my cellphone? Can I get away from isolated locations by going to a public place and asking for help?
- I will keep my purse/wallet, identification, money, keys and cell phone handy or in the same place (_____), so I can locate them easily if I need to leave in a hurry. I will have a second set of keys made in case my abuser takes the first set.
- If it is safe for me, I can tell the following people about the violence/abuse and request that they call the police or someone I trust if they suspect I am in danger:
_____ and _____.

- I will develop and share a code word with the people I trust and my children so they know that when I use it, I need immediate help. My code word is _____.
- My children’s safety is central to my safety plan. I will to develop and share a children’s safety plan with my children. The London Abused Women’s Centre has a specific safety planning outline for children that can be used as a template.
- Safe places I can go to if I need to leave my home or the location where I am staying are:
 - ◇ A place to use the phone: _____
 - ◇ A place I could stay for a couple of hours: _____
 - ◇ A place that I could stay for a couple of days: _____
 - ◇ A safe women’s shelter where I can stay usually for up to six weeks: _____
- During a violent/abusive experience, it is important to try to avoid places where I may be trapped or where weapons are readily available such as the bathroom or kitchen. Larger rooms with more than one exit will be safer.
The places I will try to avoid are: _____.
The places I will try to move to are: _____.
- During a violent/abusive experience women may say or do things that in someone in a healthy relationship or someone not being sexually exploited would not. These are known as survival skills and include things like claiming to agree with an abuser/harasser/pimp/trafficker even when it’s not true in order to increase your safety. Women may also retaliate against her abuser/harasser/pimp/trafficker; however, her actions could lead to being charged with a criminal offence.
- Calling the police can increase safety. Male violence against women is illegal. If there are reasonable and probable grounds to assume an assault has occurred, the police are mandated to lay a charge of assault against the party deemed to be the primary aggressor. Purchasing sexual services, trafficking, and pimping are also illegal. Contacting the police may increase your safety. If the police wrongly charge you with a crime, contact the London Abused Women’s Centre immediately.
- Given my past experience, other protective actions that may keep me safe are:

Safety planning when I am preparing to leave an abusive partner:

Some abused women may need to leave the residence they share with their abusive partner. You will need to consider these protective actions if you are preparing to leave. Even if you are not planning to leave, it is important to have a safety plan in the event the violence escalates and you have to leave quickly.

- It may not be safe to inform my abuser that I am leaving. It may not be safe to tell others I am leaving the abuser.
- I will look into options for accessing women's shelters, transitional housing and support and/or safe, affordable, long-term housing. I will see whether there are financial supports in the community to assist me with obtaining housing. Organizations like the London Abused Women's Centre which assist abused women can help with this.
- Should I need to leave quickly, I will plan to leave some emergency cash, an extra set of house and car keys and extra clothes with:
_____, and
_____.
- I will keep copies of important documents such as immigration papers or birth certificates with:

_____.
- I may open a savings account to increase my freedom to leave. I will alert the bank not to send any correspondence to my home address.
- I can get legal advice from a lawyer who understands the issue of male violence against women. I will make certain the lawyer knows not to send any correspondence to my home address. It is critical to consult with a family lawyer if you have children.
- The provincial Assaulted Women's Helpline's number is 1-866-863-0511; FEM'AIDE (Ligne de soutien pour femmes violentées) number is 1-877-336-2433. I can seek crisis support and safe shelter and by calling the help line.
- I will keep a cell phone with me at all times. To ensure my abuser doesn't see the numbers I have called outlined on my monthly bill I will either make arrangements to have my phone bill sent to trusted friend or purchase a pre-paid phone. If I cannot access a cell phone, I will use the phone of a trusted friend, family member, social service agency or pay phone. Note: It is never safe for a sex-trafficked woman or girl to use her social media without the permission of her pimp. If you are being trafficked you

must assume your trafficker is monitoring all your social media apps. You can also assume your trafficker is monitoring all calls made and received. Trafficked women and girls MUST NOT use their apps on any computer or cell phone because your activity can be accessed.

- I can ask the following people for assistance:

- ◇ Financial/money: _____
- ◇ Childminding: _____
- ◇ Support attending appointments: _____
- ◇ Transportation: _____
- ◇ Other: _____

- If I need to return home to get personal belongings, I can call the police for an escort to stand by and keep the peace. To do this, I will call 911 and ask the police to make an appointment to meet me somewhere close to my home. The police will stay while I pick up my own and my children's personal belongings.

- Other protective actions I have considered are: _____

- When you leave your abuser it is important to take certain items with you. You may need to store these items outside your home. Keeping them together in one location will make it much easier if you have to leave in a hurry. If you feel it is safe, you may want to hide small items in feminine hygiene products or other hiding places until you can safely take them.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| * Identification for myself | * Children's birth certificates |
| * Protection order papers/documents | * My birth certificate |
| * Social insurance cards | * Immigration papers |
| * School and vaccination records | * Money |
| * Checkbook, bank book/cards | * Credit cards |
| * Keys - house/car/office | * Driver's license and ownership |
| * Medications | * Passport |
| * Health cards | * Medical records |
| * Divorce/separation papers | * Lease/mortgage/insurance |
| * Cell phone | * Pictures/photos |
| * Children's favourite toy/blankets | * Jewelry |

- Telephone Numbers I Need to Know:

For safety reasons it may be necessary to keep the following telephone numbers hidden but accessible. Please try to memorize any number you may need immediate access to:

- ◇ Assaulted Women’s Helpline’s number (24 hours): 1-866-863-0511
- ◇ FEM’AIDE (Ligne de soutien pour femmes violentées) number: 1-877-336-2433
- ◇ Local Abused Women’s Help Line (24 hours): _____
- ◇ London Abused Women’s Centre: 519-432-2204
- ◇ Regional Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Centre: _____
- ◇ Reach Out Mental Health Crisis Line (24 hours): 519-433-2023
- ◇ Lawyer: _____
- ◇ Work: _____
- ◇ Minister/Rabbi/Priest/Elder: _____
- ◇ Salvation Army – Choices Program Outreach: 519-870-9553 & 226-378-1814
- ◇ Salvation Army – Phoenix Project Peer-Led Outreach: 226-378-7105
- ◇ Youth Opportunities Unlimited – Phoenix Project Outreach: 519-432-1112
- ◇ Police - emergency: 911
- ◇ Women’s Shelters: _____
- ◇ Women’s Drop-In Centres (e.g., My Sisters’ Place): _____
- ◇ Other: _____

- I can ask the following people for help re:

- ◇ money: _____
- ◇ childcare: _____
- ◇ support attending appointments: _____
- ◇ transportation: _____
- ◇ other: _____

Safety planning if you are preparing to exit prostitution or the commercialized sex industry

If I am being sexually exploited, pimped or trafficked, it may not be safe to tell anyone about my plan to leave. They may tell your pimp, trafficker or sex purchaser(s) to gain favour or “rat you out.”

- Should I need to leave quickly, it will be helpful for me to leave some emergency cash, a cell phone and extra clothes with a trusted friend or family member. This could be: _____, and _____.
- I will need to look into options for accessing women’s shelters, safe houses, transitional housing and/or safe, affordable, long-term housing, financial supports and services that specialize in working with sexually exploited, prostituted and sex-trafficked women and girls.

- If I am substance-involved, I can seek support and treatment from relevant services including detox centres, addiction services and residential treatment programs.
- If I am threatened or at risk of violence by a pimp, trafficker or sex purchaser, I will need to avoid certain people and places associated with these individuals. I may need to consider relocating to a different city for a period of time. There is help available through the London Abused Women's Centre to assist you.

- Leaving the commercial sex trade and trafficking can be isolating. To help me belong to a community, I will reconnect or build new relationships and social supports with the following people/organizations:

◇ _____

◇ _____

◇ _____

- I will have access to immediate funding by applying to Ontario Works. I can obtain additional support from community service providers like the London Abused Women's Centre who work specifically with women and girls in the commercial sex trade and/or who have been sexually exploited or sex trafficked. They will help me gain access to supports including long-term, woman-centred, trauma-informed counselling, advocacy and support; long-term employment; financial assistance (Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Plan); family reintegration; training; and education.

- If I am incarcerated or going to be incarcerated, I can call the London Abused Women's Centre collect for support or to arrange to have someone provide service to me while in jail (or in a detention centre). I can also talk to the Social Worker at the jail to help me develop a release plan that addresses my specific needs. This may include legal advocacy, housing, financial support, physical and mental health support, substance use treatment, trauma counselling, employment/education assistance, etc.

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- ◇ FEM'AIDE (Ligne de soutien pour femmes violentées) number: 1-877-336-2433
- ◇ Local Abused Women's Help Line (24 hours): _____
- ◇ London Abused Women's Centre: 519-432-2204
- ◇ Regional Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Centre: _____
- ◇ Reach Out Mental Health Crisis Line (24 hours): 519-433-2023
- ◇ Lawyer: _____
- ◇ Work: _____

- ◇ Minister/Rabbi/Priest/Elder: _____
- ◇ Salvation Army – Choices Program Outreach: 519-870-9553 & 226-378-1814
- ◇ Salvation Army – Phoenix Project Peer-Led Outreach: 226-378-7105
- ◇ Youth Opportunities Unlimited – Phoenix Project Outreach: 519-432-1112
- ◇ Police - emergency: 911
- ◇ Human Trafficking Unit, London Police Service: 519-661-5674
- ◇ Women’s Shelters: _____
- ◇ Women’s Drop-In Centres (e.g., My Sisters’ Place): _____
- ◇ Other: _____

- I can ask the following people for help re:

- ◇ money: _____
- ◇ childcare: _____
- ◇ support attending appointments: _____
- ◇ transportation: _____
- ◇ other: _____

Safety in my home after leaving my abuser, pimp and/or trafficker

The following are some suggestions regarding safety measures you may incorporate into your home. Some of these measures may require the permission of your landlord and/or lawyer if you remain in the marital home. Some of these safety measures cost money. The London Abused Women’s Centre may be able to help you access funds to contribute to some of the costs.

- If financially possible I might:

- ◇ Change the locks on my doors and windows
- ◇ Install a peep hole in the door
- ◇ Replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors
- ◇ Install window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic alarm system
- ◇ Purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows
- ◇ Install smoke detectors (this is mandatory) and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment
- ◇ Install a motion sensitive lighting system outside that lights up when a person is coming close to my home
- ◇ Leave the lights on

- If I have custody and access issues, I will inform everyone involved in my child(ren)’s lives of the terms of the custodial order and who has permission to pick up my children and who does not. I can provide copies of the custody and access order and a picture of the abuser. The people I will inform about pick up permission include:

- ◇ School: _____

- ◇ Daycare staff: _____
- ◇ Babysitters: _____
- ◇ Teachers: _____
- ◇ Other: _____

- I can ask that my _____ (neighbour),
 _____ (superintendent/landlord),
 _____ (friend) _____ (other) call the police
 if they see my abuser near my residence or around my children due the risk they pose to
 me.
- Other strategies that I am already using or that I might use: _____
 _____.

If you are concerned about parental abduction of your child, call Childfind Canada for preventative measures that you can take.

Safety with a protection order

Protection orders are legal restrictions on movement and actions that come in different forms: peace bonds, restraining orders, bail conditions, parole conditions, child custody access orders, etc. Many abusers/harassers do obey protection orders, but you can never be sure which violent/abusive partner, harasser, pimp, trafficker or sex purchaser will obey and which one will violate protection orders. It is often necessary to ask the police and the courts to enforce a protection order. The following are some steps that I can take to help support the enforcement of my protection order.

- It is important to know the specifics and limitations of my protection order. I will find out the conditions and what they mean for my safety.
- I can call the police station to ensure that the protection order is registered on CPIC (the police computer system).
- If the abuser/harasser/pimp/trafficker/sex purchaser violates the protection order, I can call the police and report the violation. Depending on the type of protection order, I can also contact the abuser's/harasser's/pimp's/trafficker's/sex purchaser's parole/probation officer, contact my lawyer and/or my Advocate. **It is important to report to the police every violation of the order.**

If the police do not help, I can call the Duty Sergeant immediately at the police station and express my concern. I can also contact an officer specializing in human trafficking or contact my Advocate, my abuser's probation/parole officer or my lawyer, as well as filing a complaint with the police.

- I will keep my protection order document(s) (originals, if possible) in the following location(s): _____

-
- It is beneficial to keep the document(s) on or near me. It may also be helpful to keep a copy in a second safe location also.
 - If the abuser/harasser/pimp/trafficker/sex purchaser destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the courthouse, my lawyer, or by contacting:
_____.
 - If it is safe to do so, I can inform my employer, my friend and the following individuals that I have a protection order in effect:
_____.
 - I can also file a private criminal complaint with the Justice of the Peace in the jurisdiction where the violation occurred. I can charge the abuser with a violation of the protection order and all the crimes committed in violation of that order. I can call the Assaulted Women's Helpline 1-866-863-0511; FEM'AIDE (Ligne de soutien pour femmes violentées) 1-877-336-2433 or a local Abused Women's Help Line for more information regarding this action.

Safety in the workplace and in public

An abused/sexually harassed woman must decide based on her individual circumstances if and/or when she will tell others that she may be at continued risk of harm from her abuser/harasser. Friends, family and co-workers may be able to help and support women. Each woman is encouraged to carefully consider who she will recruit to help and support her.

I might do any or all of the following:

- If it is comfortable to do so, I can inform my employer, co-workers, security and _____ about my situation.
- According to how comfortable and safe I feel, I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work. It may be of assistance to me if they document these calls.
- If it is comfortable to do so, and I feel it would be supportive to me and my situation, I can discuss the possibility of developing a safety plan for work with my employer including having my employer or co-workers call the police if I am in danger from my abuser/harasser. **Employers are mandated until Health and Safety Legislation to provide support to abused/harassed women.**
- Some safety suggestions regarding arriving or leaving work or being in the community include:

- ◇ Arrange check-ins with co-workers or friends/family throughout your shift or when you return home. You may wish to use a code word so that your support person(s) can call for help in an emergency without arousing suspicion if your abuser is present
- ◇ Walk in pairs or groups
- ◇ Scan the environment you are going into, i.e., parking lots, cars
- ◇ If your abuser/harasser is following you, drive to a place where there are people to support you, i.e., a friend's home, police station
- ◇ If you are walking, take a route that is populated
- ◇ Take different routes home
- ◇ If you see your abuser/harasser on the street, try to get to a public place, i.e., store
- ◇ You can also call attention to yourself and request help
- ◇ Avoid clothing that could be used to choke you, i.e., scarves, long necklaces
- ◇ Purchase a personal alarm device, use a personal alarm application on your smartphone or wear a whistle
- ◇ Wear shoes you can run in, or that you can slip off easily
- ◇ If possible, always carry a charged cell phone
- ◇ To reduce contact in the community with my abuser/harasser, I can plan to access different community services, grocery stores or other public venues and/or access public venues at various and different times than I did before

Safety and substance use

The London Abused Women's Centre recognizes the link between trauma, mental health and substance use. The agency recognizes that many individuals in society use substances to self soothe. The use of substances may reduce a woman's awareness and response to act quickly to protect herself from her abuser. Additionally, women must be aware that the disclosure of illegal/legal substance use may be used against a woman by her abuser in matters of custody and access or other court cases. If you are interested in speaking with someone about your substance use, please advise your Advocate/Counsellor and she will assist you with a referral.

Safe use of technology

Abusers/pimps/traffickers/harassers are increasingly using technology to stalk, harass, and abuse women and girls. You may want to incorporate changes to your technology use into your safety planning.

- ◇ If the abuser/harasser does not have any access to your smartphone, you may want to consider downloading a safety app e.g., the **YWCA Safety Siren app** which you can use to set off an alarm if you are at risk and automatically send an SOS and your location to the safe contact you have set up.
- ◇ If you suspect your abuser/harasser is monitoring your cellphone or computer activities via spyware, use a different computer/phone, i.e., a friend's, public library; however, if you

access your Facebook/social media/email accounts from another computer this still may be accessed by the abuser/harasser/trafficker

Note: It is never safe for a sex-trafficked woman or girl to use her social media without the permission of her pimp/trafficker. If you are being trafficked you must assume your trafficker is monitoring all your social media apps. You can also assume your trafficker is monitoring all calls made and received. Trafficked women and girls MUST NOT use their apps on any computer or cell phone because your activity can be accessed. Do not try to reach out to family, friends, police and/or service providers through your social media. If you use a pay telephone or a stranger's phone to call anyone, be sure to tell them it is not safe for them to use your social media acknowledging your call.

- ◇ Be aware that abusers/pimps/traffickers /harassers can use different apps to contact you anonymously – changing their voice, hiding the number they call from/ showing a fake number – and also record their call to you
- ◇ Abusers/pimps/traffickers/harassers can distribute/post (or threaten to distribute) on-line intimate images of you to try to shame, intimidate or coerce you into staying with them or into unwanted sexual activity or to sexually exploit you. You can try to keep your intimate images private and not share them electronically; however, abusers/pimps/traffickers/sexual harassers may take your pictures secretly or without your consent. Distributing such images without your consent is illegal and you have the option of contacting police for them to investigate and to try to have the pictures removed although that is difficult if the site is outside Canada
- ◇ Abusers/pimps/traffickers/harassers may try to target you if you are younger to try to get you to do something sexual (like sexting or sending them your intimate sexually-explicit picture) that you are not comfortable with. You can block them and seek help by telling a safe adult or [contact Kids Help Phone](#) for support.
- ◇ Abusers/harassers may post intimate pictures and information about you (including your name and address) on revenge porn sites or on sites like Craigslist and Backpage.com to try to hurt/shame you and put you at risk of being harassed or contacted by people who will try to sexually exploit you. If you can do so safely, you can contact the police if your intimate pictures are posted/distributed without your consent and police have a better chance of getting the pictures removed although this is still difficult if the site is outside Canada
- ◇ Be aware that abusers/harassers may try to hack into your social media accounts i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, email to monitor your activity, track you (accessing your gps locator) or to use the information against you. It is difficult to secure your social media even if it is safe for you to use the following strategies: use restrictive privacy settings, create new accounts, use strong passwords and change your passwords frequently, turn off your webcam, use anonymous email/social media accounts and turn off your gps locator. If you are a parent you may want to assist your children by monitoring their social media and trying to enhance their cyber-security. For further cyber-safety tips click here <https://www.yrp.ca/en/crime-prevention/using-social-media-safely.asp>
- ◇ Save/document/take screen shots of all harassing emails, texts, photos, and phone messages if you can do so safely. They may be used as evidence should you pursue a criminal harassment charge against your abuser/harasser/pimp/trafficker.

- ◇ If your ex-abusive partner/pimp/harasser doesn't know your address, don't give your real address to service providers (e.g., doctors). Sign up for a post office box to give to others for mailing purposes.
- ◇ Don't add someone to your 'friends' list if you do not know who they are, if you have not met them in person, or are not sure of their identity. Sometimes sexual predators, who are most often adult men, try to contact girls and pretend to be someone they are not so that they can trick you into a relationship or to sexually abuse or exploit you.
- ◇ To reduce your abusers/pimps/traffickers/harassers likelihood of tracing what you have been looking at on the internet, if it is safe for you to do so, you can erase the list of sites/files you have recently visited on the internet; for further information click <http://www.awhl.org/social-media-web-security>
- ◇ **Seek support if you are being subjected to cyberviolence;**
Contact the provincial Assaulted Women's Helpline 1-866-863-0511;

FEM'AIDE (Ligne de soutien pour femmes violentées) 1-877-336-2433; or

Click here for the Kids Help Phone live chat line at

<http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/teens/askusonline/chat-counselling.aspx>

Safety and my emotional health:

Being subjected to woman abuse and violence against women including sexual exploitation and sexual harassment has emotional and psychological impacts on us. Healing from the impact of abuse and trauma takes time and energy. Self-care is part of healing from the impacts of trauma and abuse. Here are some strategies to promote my emotional well-being:

- I can seek support through counselling and support groups specifically for women and girls who have been subjected to abuse and violence against women. I could contact the London Abused Women's Centre or _____.
- When it is possible – recognizing it is not always possible – I can look after my physical health and well-being by getting enough sleep, finding a form of exercise that I enjoy, and eating as regularly and healthily as possible and _____.
- I can build a support system with safe people including _____.
- I can explore what self-care means to me and work to bring those things into my life. Things which promote self-care, a sense of well-being and comfort for me include: _____.

- ◇ One of the impacts of being subjected to abuse and trauma can be having thoughts of

suicide, feelings of loneliness, hopelessness or feeling you cannot keep yourself safe. If I am trying to cope with these feelings and need support, I can reach out for support from the Assaulted Women's Helpline 1-866-863-0511; Reach Out Mental Health Crisis Line (24 hours) at 519-433-2023; Police 911 or call _____.

- When I recognize that I am facing a challenge to my emotional safety/well-being such as contact with my (ex) abuser/harasser/pimp/trafficker because of a court case, I can look after my emotional well-being by reaching out to my support system, calling a friend, help-line, counsellor or _____.
- I can find out about and attend workshops and support groups in the community by calling the Assaulted Women's Helpline 1-866-863-0511; Abused Women's Help Line 1-800-265-1576; the London Abused Women's Centre 519-432-2204 or _____.