



# Wind Haven Foundation

## Domestic Violence Strategy Guide

### Bug-Out-Bag

Depending on your situation, you may have time to prepare and pack, or you may need to leave quickly when the opportunity presents itself. You should consider packing a domestic violence go-bag. We have compiled a list of things to consider grabbing and packing before you leave – the intention is to make sure you have everything, so you don't need to go back or go through the extra stress of getting them later. You can use this list when making a safety plan to leave your abuser, listing important items you don't want to leave behind!

We have tried to provide an all-inclusive list and have attempted to prioritize by immediate needs and “how hard will it be to replace or get this later?” Feel free to organize your personal list however you see fit. **And please remember that your life and your children's lives are always more important than stuff.** We hope to help you think ahead, but if you are in danger and have a safe place to get to, just go.

## The most important items you will need to leave in a hurry are:

- Yourself and your children.
- Keys.
- Cash or individual (not joint) credit/debit cards.
- Phone & charger – Preferably a burner and a new number, especially if you have a joint phone account with location-tracking services.
- Prescription medications.

## If you have any time to prepare, this is where a prioritized go-bag/luggage/laundry hamper/trash bag/box(es) comes in handy:

- A change of clothes for everyone that is leaving.
- PJs for everyone that is leaving.
- Comfortable shoes and flip-flops make good shower shoes for a hotel or shelter.
- A week's worth of undergarments & socks.
- Travel toiletries kit.
- Deodorant.
- Toothbrush & toothpaste.
- Important documents (an accordion file folder is easy to grab.)
  - IDs, social security cards, birth certificates, passports.
  - Credit cards, debit cards, EBT cards, and checkbooks.
  - All insurance cards.
  - Marriage license(s), divorce decree(s).
  - Police reports.
  - Proof of education, and kids' school records.
  - Vaccination and medical records.
  - Financial account statements.
- Irreplaceable Items
  - Meaningful photos
  - Valuables, heirlooms, jewelry
  - Children's special teddy bears, blankies, dolls, toys, etc.
- Firearms & permits. Deeds of sale.
- Snacks & drinks. Protein snacks & water are recommended.

- Cups with lids.
- Cooler & bag of ice.
- Blankets & pillows.
- Entertainment devices, coloring books, crayons, etc. Travel entertainment for kids.
- Bible & books.
- Laptops, tablets, earbuds, headphones, chargers/external batteries, camera, etc.
- Printed directions & map to your destination.
- GPS device separate from your phone.
- Notebook & pens. (Include a written list of important contacts & phone numbers.)
- Car maintenance – oil change, tire check/rotation, fluid check, brake check, filter check, windshield wipers, etc.
- Roadside assistance.
- Gas can, spare tire, jack, vehicle tool kit, jumper cables, travel air compressor, flashlight, batteries, and clear nail polish (for windshield cracks).
- Cigarettes, lighters, matches. (NO JUDGMENT HERE!)
- Gum/hard candy.
- Pets – food, water & bowls, kennels/carriers, leashes & collars, vet records.
- Infants – Baby carriers, playpen, diapers, wipes, rash cream, bibs, burp rags, pacifiers, spare bottles, formula, baby food packets, stroller(s).
- Tylenol/ibuprofen, allergy, Neosporin, Band-Aids, baby gas drops, kids' allergy, kids pain relief/fever reducer, cold & cough medicine (kids), puke bag, scissors, rubbing alcohol, peroxide, sunscreen, after-sun care/aloe cotton balls Q-tips, bug spray, Kleenex.
- Contacts, solution, case, sunglasses, eye drops. Eyeglasses/case/cleaner.
- Hand sanitizer, wipes, and face masks.
- Nail kit, make-up, hair products (hairbrush).
- Towels & washcloths.
- Windex, paper towels, TP.
- Multi-tool. Pocket knife.
- Laundry soap (pods recommended).
- Spare bag, trash bags, duct tape, paper plates/bowls, plastic ware.

# Safety Plan

Whether you are in an unhealthy relationship, experiencing abuse, thinking about leaving or planning to leave you should develop a personalized safety plan that will give you practical knowledge on how to act in a specific situation, empowering you to know how to react and avoid dangerous situations.

A safety plan can increase your chances of escaping a violent or dangerous situation, and it can help you create a solid plan to leave permanently with everything you need to file charges and not have to come in contact with your abuser again.

*A safety plan is not a replacement for calling 911, filing for an order of protection or contacting a lawyer. In many cases, a safety plan involves some of those steps.*

**SAFETY ALERT:** The Safety Plan requires you to enter information into a computer. If you don't want to save this document to your computer, you can print a physical copy.

## Keep in Mind:

For this safety plan to work for you, the information you fill in must be honest and accurate.

Once you complete your safety plan, be sure to keep it in an accessible but secure location. You should also consider giving a copy of your safety plan to someone that you trust.

If you don't feel safe keeping the printed safety plan with you, then you can still use the safety tips. Try to memorize at least one phone number of someone you can call at any time.

You know your situation better than anyone else; trust your judgment and weigh your options before taking any steps.

Adapted from [TheHotline.org](https://www.thehotline.org)

## What is a Safety Plan?

A safety plan is a set of actions that can help lower your risk of being hurt by your partner. It includes information specific to you and your life that will increase your safety at school, home, and other places that you go on a daily basis.

## How Do I Make a Safety Plan?

Take some time to go through each section of this safety planning tool. You will be asked a series of questions to help you identify your safety options. You can use this tool on your own, or you can use it with a friend or an adult you trust.

At the end of the process, you will have a printable version of your personalized safety plan that you can reference whenever you need it. You can read it online, print it immediately, or have a link sent to your email.

## Tips for Creating a Safety Plan

If you are in a situation and feel you need a safety plan, you've come to the right place. You may be planning to leave or in the process of leaving, or maybe you've left already. Even if you have a family member or friend who is experiencing abuse, you can help support them and assist them with a safety plan. A safety plan should be tailored to the individual's needs at the present time.

Think of your safety plan as a life preserver. If the abuse happened once, it will happen again.

## Before You Leave:

Keep any **evidence of abuse**, such as pictures of injuries, texts, emails, etc.

Keep a journal of all violent incidences, noting dates, events, and threats made, if possible. Keep your journal in a safe place.

Know where you can go to get help. Tell someone what is happening to you.

If you are injured, go to a doctor or an emergency room and report what happened to you. Ask that they document your visit.

If you have children, identify a safe place for them, like a room with a lock or a friend's house where they can go for help. Reassure them that their job is to stay safe, not to protect you.

If you need a safe place to stay, contact your local shelter and find out about laws and other resources available to you before you have to use them during a crisis. [WomensLaw.org](http://WomensLaw.org) has state-by-state legal information.

Acquire job skills or take courses at a community college as you can.

Try to set money aside or ask friends or family members to hold money for you.

Get your Bug-Out Bag ready with all your important items, documents, etc.

## After You Leave

Change your locks and phone number.

Call the telephone company to request the caller ID feature. Ask that your phone number be blocked so that if you call anyone, neither your partner nor anyone else will be able to get your new, unlisted phone number.

Change your work hours and the route you take to work.

Alert school authorities of the situation.

If you have a restraining order, keep a certified copy of it with you at all times, and inform friends, neighbors, and employers that you have a restraining order in effect.

Call law enforcement to enforce the order and give copies of the restraining order to employers, neighbors, and schools along with a picture of the offender.

Consider renting a post office box or using the address of a friend for your mail (be aware that addresses are on restraining orders and police reports, and be careful to whom you give your address and phone number).

Reschedule appointments that the abusive partner is aware of.

Use different stores and frequent different social spots.

Alert neighbors and request that they call the police if they feel you may be in danger.

Tell people you work with about the situation and have your calls screened by one receptionist if possible.

Tell people who take care of your children or drive them/pick them up from school and activities. Explain your situation to them and provide them with a copy of the restraining order.

Source: <https://www.loveisrespect.org/>

## Ready to Create a Safety Plan?

**Collect evidence.** If it is safe to do so, keeping a journal of abusive incidents (date, time, details), including threats, as well as copies of threatening or abusive emails, text messages, police reports, and doctor or hospital records will be helpful if and when you file for an order of protection or press charges against an abuser. Keep this evidence outside of your home, like at a workplace, a friend's house, or a safety deposit box.

**Stash a Bug-out Bag** This bag, which you should, again, keep somewhere where the abuser can't find it, such as a friend's house, your workplace, or a neighbor's house, will contain important documents such as your driver's license, passport, birth certificate, social security cards, copies of financial records, your lease or deed, health insurance information, prescriptions, marriage license or divorce papers, and all similar paperwork for your children, if applicable. It should also include, if possible, some cash you are able to save in case the abuser cancels credit cards or blocks you from accessing bank accounts. See our Bug-Out-Bag PDF list for everything you should consider trying to pack depending on your situation.

**Decide where to go.** When it's time to leave—it could be while the abuser is at work, the next time you feel in danger, exactly two weeks from now or whenever you deem the best time—you need to plan where to go. Consider an emergency shelter (which will need advance notice, so contact an advocate there), a friend or family member's house that the abuser doesn't know the location of or is far enough away that it will be difficult for the abuser to get to you, or, if affordable, a hotel or apartment that you pay for with cash so the abuser cannot track you there. Keep in mind that if you have a cell phone, the abuser may be able to trace your location, so consider getting a pay-as-you-go temporary phone and leaving your cell behind.

**Plan for all possibilities.** You know your partner best. You know what abusive tactics he or she is most likely to use. Make sure you think about that as you get ready to leave. The abuser may feel like something is different in your demeanor and may become more controlling. When an abuser feels like they are losing control, it is often the most dangerous time for a survivor. Prepare for this by thinking out different scenarios that could happen and what you will do. For example, if an abuser always shuts the bedroom door to close you in before he or she becomes violent, can you unlock a window ahead of time, given you're on the ground floor and exit through it when this starts? If an abuser threatens to keep or harm your children or pets if you leave, can you make sure they're in a safe place before you leave, such as taking them to a trusted relative's house? Can you create a code word that, if you say it in front of your children, they'll know to run next door to the neighbor's house and call 911?

**AFTER YOU LEAVE... Stay vigilant.** *After you leave an abuser, or after an abuser is forced to leave your home, you'll want to take safety precautions to keep yourself and your family safe. This should include considering an order of protection, alerting your place of employment and your children's school what is going on, and giving them a photo of the abuser so they can alert*



*you if he or she comes around, using a different route to get to and from work or school, changing your schedule, taking a break from social media so the abuser is less likely to track or harass you, and changing your phone number and making it unlisted.*

Adapted from [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org)

## Create Your Safety Plan

Adapted from [TheHotline.org](https://www.TheHotline.org)

Name:

Who Do You Live With?

Family  Roommate  Alone  My Partner

What School Do You Attend?

Middle School  High School  College/University  Not in School

Do You Have a Job?

Yes  No

Do You Have Children?

Yes  No

If Yes, How Many Children?

Are You Currently Pregnant?

Yes  No

Do You Identify As:

Straight  LBGTQ+  Other

Gender

Male  Female  Transgender  Other

Have You Told Someone in Your Family About Your Relationship?

Yes  No

What Word or Phrase can you use as a code in a phone call, text, or instant message to ask family, friends, neighbors for help without your partner knowing?

During Times You are Home Alone, Who Can You Stay With If You Don't Want to be Alone? Write this person's phone number on an emergency card and keep it in your wallet or another safe place. This way you can reach your friends and family even when you do not have your cell phone. This is especially important if your partner has ever threatened or tried to take or break your cell phone

Name

Phone Number

Address

If you are not comfortable at home, where can you go to stay safe?

If you need to leave your home in an emergency, what is a safe public place you could go? \*This can be a nearby police station, a store, a McDonald's, or any other place that's open and has people around.

If you need to leave your house in a hurry, what items would you need to take with you? (Bug-Out Bag)

- Identification (e.g., driver's license, school ID, military ID, immigration documents)
- Cell Phone
- Cell Phone Charger
- Medication (e.g., asthma inhaler, insulin, Epi-Pen)
- Wallet
- Cash
- ATM Card
- Credit Card
- Checkbook
- House Key
- Car Key
- Change of Clothes
- Comfort items (e.g., favorite stuffed animal or photograph)
- Baby supplies (formula, diaper, wipes, change of clothes)
- Copy of Protection/Restraining Order

Child's Birth Certificate  Social Security Card(s)  Health Insurance Card(s)  Other

List OTHER Items Here

  
  

Do you have a Protection Order against your partner?

Yes  No

Is there an alternate route you can take to work or school to avoid your partner and get there safely? \*This should be a different route than you usually take.

  

Have you told anybody at work/school about your relationship?

Yes  No

Does your partner work or go to school at the same place?

Yes  No

If you need to leave work or school immediately, who can you call to pick you up or meet you? \*Write this person's phone number on your emergency card and keep it in your wallet or another safe place.

Do You Have & Use a Cell Phone?

Yes  No

Has your partner ever checked your call log, text messages, instant messages, or internet browsing history on your phone, computer, or other device?

Yes  No

Do you use social networking sites?

Yes  No

Have you shared passwords, or do you share any online account with your partner? \*Be sure to think about all your online accounts, such as Facebook, email, blog, instant messaging, and online banking.

Yes  No

Has your partner ever sent you an abusive e-mail, text message, or voicemail?

Yes  No

Does a trusted friend or family member have access to your online accounts?

Yes  No

Has your partner ever pretended to be you or anyone else online?

Yes  No

Have you ever sent your partner private photos of yourself?

Yes  No

Who could you call or text to let them know where you are going with your partner? \*Write this person's phone number on your emergency card and keep it in your wallet or another safe place. Write this person's phone number on your emergency card and keep it in your wallet or another safe place.

If you were stranded and needed a ride home, who could you call to pick you up or meet you? \*Write this person's phone number on your emergency card and keep it in your wallet or another safe place.

If you decided to end your relationship, where can you do it safely? \*This should be a populated public space where can talk with your partner.

Whom can you call to talk with afterwards? \*Write this person's phone number on your emergency card and keep it in your wallet or another safe place.

Who could watch your children if you needed childcare in an emergency? \*Write this person's phone number on your emergency card and keep it in your wallet or another safe place.

Do your children know how to call 911?

Yes  No

What is a word or phrase you could say to your children to let them know they need to go call for help?

Where is a safe place your children can go if they are in danger? \*This can be a room in your home, a neighbor's home, or the local police station. It should be somewhere that your children can safely go by themselves.

Does your partner say or do things that make you feel down or bad about yourself?

Yes  No

What are some activities that you enjoy doing?

When you are feeling down, who can you call to cheer you up? \*This should be someone other than your partner. Write this person's phone number on your emergency card and keep it in your wallet or another safe place.

Does your partner threaten to reveal information about you in a harmful or embarrassing way? \*For example, your gender identity, your HIV status, or a disability.

Yes  No