

## **What is Domestic Violence?**

Domestic Violence is a serious crime. It includes behaviors like pushing, grabbing, poking, pinching, hitting, punching and threats to harm. It includes being touched in any unwanted way. Persons who may be included in domestic violence case are:

- Husband or wife
- Parent of your child
- A family member
- Someone you have lived with as a family

### **If you are abused, what are your options?**

- Call 911 in an emergency.
- File a police report about the violence.
- Consider getting an Injunction for Protection. The Court will order the abuser to stay away from you.
- See a doctor for injuries. Be sure to tell the doctor the cause of the injuries.
- Document the abuse, get pictures.
- Talk to a friend, family member, neighbor or someone else for support and ask for help.
- Call the domestic violence shelter to talk, get information or ideas, or to help you make a safety or escape plan.

### **If you plan to leave a violent relationship:**

It is always best to plan for emergencies – before you leave:

- Plan how you will get away from the abuser or have help come to you.
- Establish a distress code with family and friends.
- Ask a neighbor to call the police if violence begins.
- Hide any weapons.
- Plan where you'll go, if you choose or are forced to leave.
- Plan for the needs of your children and pets.
- Get your escape bag ready.

## **Remember . . .**

- Everyone is different and your safety plan should cover your personal situation.
- Keep your plan in a safe place (at work, a friend's home, etc.).
- Put your important phone numbers together so that they will be handy if you leave.
- Check-off items which will apply to your situation. See what will help you the most and concentrate on those items.
- Update your safety plan often. Review it with a supporter or counselor.
- Share your plan only with those who will absolutely support you.
- **DO NOT share your safety plan with anyone who may tell or “let it slip” to the abuser or friends/family of the abuser.**

## **Signs of Danger**

Domestic abuse is common. Anyone who has experienced abuse needs to know that any of the following means their situation is becoming more dangerous.

- Abuse is more frequent
- There is a gun in the house
- Abuser uses drugs such as cocaine or heroin
- Abuser threatens to kill others
- Abuser talks about suicide
- Abuser is drinking more
- Abuser hurts or kills animals

**When violence does seem close, avoid the kitchen, bathroom and rooms where you can be cornered. Begin action on your safety plan at any sign of trouble.**

## **PACK YOUR ESCAPE BAG**

Keeping these items in a bag or container away from home is best. Avoid using your purse or car.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Identification (driver's license, passport, green cards, work permits)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Birth certificates for yourself and children
- \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security cards for yourself and children
- \_\_\_\_\_ Extra car, house, storage, or other keys
- \_\_\_\_\_ Checkbook, ATM card
- \_\_\_\_\_ Credit cards, bank books, Medicaid card, food stamps, insurance cards, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Car registration
- \_\_\_\_\_ Car, health and life insurance papers
- \_\_\_\_\_ School and medical records
- \_\_\_\_\_ Divorce, custody or injunction papers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Proof of income for partner (check stub, completed income tax form)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepaid long distance card
- \_\_\_\_\_ Copies of bills you owe with your partner
- \_\_\_\_\_ Change of clothes for you and your children
- \_\_\_\_\_ Medicine and prescriptions (extra)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Personal hygiene products (tampons, toothbrushes, deodorant, shampoo, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Diapers, formula, toys, blankets
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pictures of children, jewelry, keepsakes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Picture of abuser to show others
- \_\_\_\_\_ Copies of lease, rental agreement or house deed.

## **Safety Planning at Work**

It is important for survivors of domestic violence to be alert and prepared for possible contacts by the abuser during a work day. A safety plan for work may help you if the abuser calls or shows up.

- Tell your co-worker or boss about the situation and ask them to call the police in an emergency.
- Have a photo of the abuser to show co-workers and security.
- Have a backup person if the first one is not at work or not nearby.
- Ask someone to screen your calls.
- Ask someone to watch out for you.
- Plan your entry and exit each day.
- Keep a copy of your injunction at work.
- Let others know about the injunction.
- Request office or desk to be placed in a safe location.
- Request help from employee assistance program.
- Plan an escape route.
- Have a signal for help, like a whistle or an alarm.
- Drive a different way to and from work each day.
- Find a safe room to use in an emergency. Be sure it locks, has a telephone and window or second door.
- Locate a parking space close to the door and in a well lighted place and walk with a security guard.

## **VEHICLE SAFETY**

- Park your vehicle in well lit areas.
- When you are parked in your residential garage, turn the garage light on.
- Put locking caps on your gas tank.
- Visually check the front and rear passenger areas before entering your vehicle.
- Keep the door locked while your vehicle is in use.
- Be alert for vehicles following you.
- Know locations of police and fire stations.
- Use a different schedule and route each day that you travel.

If you receive calls from the abuser; keep a log of the date, time and contents of the call. Save messages left on your answering machines and keep all letters/cards sent to you by the abuser. If you have an Injunction for Protection and receive calls from the abuser; report this to law enforcement as soon as possible.

## **TELEPHONE SAFETY**

**Using phone services or special devices may play a role in getting help or documenting threats.** Some telephone companies offer services that may help domestic violence survivors. These services may also be used by abusers to harass, stalk, threaten or find survivors. Most require phone company charges. Some of the services include:

**Operator Assistance:** Operators can dial police and other emergency numbers if you can't.

**Voice Mail:** Allows you to have a phone number and get messages without answering the phone.

**Caller ID:** Shows and records the numbers that call your phone.

**Call Block:** Allows you to block selected phone numbers from calling you. However, it will not block cell phones and certain other types of lines.

**Call Trace:** Some areas may be able to check repetitive calls. This allows for outside documentation of violations of protective injunction and stalking.

**Selective Call Blocking:** Prevents your name and number from being displayed on Caller ID devices, one call at a time. Press \*67, listen for the confirmation tone and then place your call. This service works on an individual call basis and once you hang up, the blocking is no longer in effect.

**\*69 Incoming Calls:** Dialing \*69 on a touch tone phone or 1169 on a rotary phone gives you the date, time & number of the last call.

**Collect calls and calls billed to another number:** Use caution when making these calls. They can be traced. If calling the batterer, call from payphone out of your area. Consider buying a “prepaid “ calling card.

## **If You Live in a Rural Area**

Because of small population family ties, and social closeness, it can be more difficult for survivors in rural areas to get help. Many people who live in rural areas cannot leave their home without being noticed or stopped (even for social conversation). When shelters and services are located in larger cities, survivors must travel there to receive help. Staying or returning to a rural area can be safe for many, but domestic violence centers can help you decide and plan.

- \_\_\_\_\_ See if it is safe to stay with friends or family, either locally or out of town.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make a special escape plan because of problems with transportation or timing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Determine if the family car can be taken without being seen or stopped. Have an extra set of keys available.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Get a ride from a trusted friend or family member.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Keep an escape bag at church, a friend’s or relative’s home.
- \_\_\_\_\_ See if leaving and getting away safely can be done without someone alerting the abuser.

## **Preparing for Feelings**

Leaving a relationship, even an abusive one, is very difficult. It is important to know that you may feel sad, lonely, or guilty. Having friends and others to talk to can make a difference.

Please consider:

- Joining a church, synagogue, temple or support group.
- Taking classes, going to workshops or seminars.
- Getting involved with the children’s activities.
- Volunteering – call the United Way or your local domestic violence center.

## **Email Safety**

If an abuser has access to your email account, he or she may be able to read incoming and outgoing mail. Make sure you choose a password he or she will not be able to guess.

If an abuser sends you threatening or harassing email messages, they may be printed and saved as evidence of this abuse. Additionally, the messages may constitute a criminal offense.

**If you know of someone being abused, don't look the other way.** Let them know that you are concerned and offer to listen. Respect their choices, but encourage them to talk with professionals about safety issues.

Offer as much help as you can, but don't take risks with your own safety. Some examples of ways you can help are: providing childcare, transportation, a place to stay, and a job or lending them money.

**Refer them to this site.**

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE ABUSER**

Abuser's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of someone who can reach him/her:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security #: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone#: \_\_\_\_\_

Lawyer: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone#: \_\_\_\_\_

Make of Car: \_\_\_\_\_

Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Color: \_\_\_\_\_ Tag#: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Information (distinguishing marks/scars): \_\_\_\_\_

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