

# **PERSONAL SAFETY PLANNING**

*Information provided by Texas RioGrande Legal Aid*

## **SAFETY DURING AN EXPLOSIVE INCIDENT**

- If there is an argument, try to be in a place that has an exit. Avoid the bathroom, kitchen or any room that may contain weapons.
- Practice how to get out safely. Know what doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, or fire escapes you would use.
- Keep purse and car keys readily available.
- Identify a friend or neighbor you can tell about the violence and ask them to call 911 if they hear a disturbance coming from your house.
- Arrange a code word to alert your children, friends and family that you need help.
- Plan where you will go if you have to leave home & a back-up place (even if you don't think you are going to need it).
- In a dangerous situation, appease the abuser if possible to keep him or her calm. You have the right to protect yourself until you are out of danger.

**Remember: You don't deserve to be hit or threatened!**

## **SAFETY FOR YOUR CHILDREN**

- Talk to your children about a safety plan when you are not with them.
- Tell your children's school and/or daycare who has permission to pick up the children.
- Teach your children how to dial 911 for police and fire assistance.
- Practice your escape plan with the children, if appropriate.

## **SAFETY WHEN YOU ARE PREPARING TO LEAVE**

- Abusers are more violent when they believe that the person they have abused is leaving the relationship. This is the time to be most cautious.
- Get your own post office box so that you can receive checks and mail.
- Open a checking or savings account in your own name at a different bank and try to get a credit card in your own name, to increase your independence.
- Leave money, an extra set of keys, copies of important papers, extra clothes and medicine with someone you can trust so you can leave quickly.
- Keep change for phone calls on you at all times. Using a calling card is not safe!
- You can seek shelter and help by calling 1-800-799-SAFE. Figure out who would be able to let you stay with them or lend you some money.
- If you have pets, make arrangements for them to be cared for in a safe place.
- Review your personal safety plan often.

## **SAFETY AND YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH**

- The experience of being battered and verbally degraded by partners is usually exhausting and emotionally draining.
- If you are thinking about going back to your abusive partner, talk to someone you trust about your options.
- Have positive thoughts about yourself and be assertive about what you need.
- Plan to attend a support group.
- If you have to communicate with your partner, take someone with you for moral support & meet in a public place.

## **SAFETY IN THE HOME**

- Use different banks, grocery stores and shopping malls. Shop at hours different from those you used when residing with the abuser. Change your routine!
- If you stay in your home:
  - Change the locks. Buy additional locks for the windows, and don't forget the patio door.
  - Tell your neighbors that the batterer no longer lives there, and to call the police if they see the batterer near your home.
  - Screen your calls.
- If you move:
  - Never call the abuser from your home, or tell them where you live.
  - Request an unlisted number from the phone company.

# **MORE ABOUT PERSONAL SAFETY PLANNING**

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## **SAFETY AT WORK OR IN PUBLIC**

- Carefully decide who you will inform at work about your situation.
- Inform your supervisor, building security officers, and/or co-workers of your situation. If possible, provide them with a photograph of your abuser.
- Arrange to have someone screen your calls, whether it is the receptionist, voicemail or a co-worker.
- Have a safety plan to use when you leave work:
  - Ask someone to escort you to and from your vehicle or bus.
  - Park in a secure, well-lit area.
  - Use a variety of routes to come and go from home.
  - Think of what you would do if something happened on the way home.
  - Avoid isolated roads.

## **CHECKLIST: ITEMS TO TAKE WITH YOU**

### **IDENTIFICATION**

- Driver's license
- Birth Certificate
- Children's birth certificates
- Social Security cards
- Welfare Card
- Health Insurance/HMO cards

### **FINANCIAL**

- Money/Credit/ATM cards (in your name)
- Checking/ Savings account books

### **LEGAL PAPERS**

- Protective Order
- Lease, rental agreement, house deed
- Car registration and insurance papers
- Health and life insurance papers
- Medical records for your family
- School/vaccination records

- Work permits / Green Cards
- Income Tax / IRA's
- Passport / Visa
- Divorce and custody papers
- Marriage license
- Mortgage / Loan payment books

### **OTHER**

- Medications
- House, car, and office keys
- Jewelry
- Address book
- Pictures of you, children & abuser
- Sentimental items
- Change of clothes
- Children's favorite toys/blankets
- Toiletries/diapers

**REMEMBER: DON'T RISK YOUR LIFE OR YOUR CHILDREN'S LIVES FOR ANY OF THESE ITEMS.  
MATERIAL THINGS ARE REPLACEABLE... LIVES ARE NOT!!**

## **IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS**

### **POLICE & SHERIFF:**

Emergencies 911

### **HOTLINES:**

First Call for Help 1-800-HELP-555  
National DV Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE  
Suicide Prevention 1-800-SUICIDE  
Child & Elderly Abuse 1-800-252-5400  
Rape Abuse & Incest National Network  
1-800-656-HOPE

### **LEGAL SERVICES:**

Women's Advocacy Project 1-800-374-HOPE  
Lawyer Referral Service 1-877-9TEXBAR

### **COUNSELING & SUPPORT SERVICES:**

TX Council on Family Violence 1-800-525-1978  
Child Support Division 1-800-252-8014  
Crime Victim's Compensation 1-800-983-9933

## **SAFETY WITH A PROTECTIVE ORDER**

- If you or your children have been threatened or assaulted, you can request a Protective Order from the County Attorney.
- Always keep your protective order with you. Call the police if your abuser violates the Protective Order.
- Give copies of the order to family members, friends, schools and neighbors.