

## Creating My SAFETY PLAN

This is my plan to prepare for the possibility for future violence. Although I do not have control over my partner's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to him/her, and how best to get myself and my family to safety.

### STEP 1: Safety during a violent incident.

Victims cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, victims may use a variety of strategies.

#### I can use some (or all) of the following strategies:

- If I decide to leave, I will \_\_\_\_\_. (Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes would you use?)
- I can keep my purse or bag and car keys ready, and put them (place)\_\_\_\_\_ in order to leave quickly.
- I can tell \_\_\_\_\_ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.
- I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and the fire department.
- I will use \_\_\_\_\_ as my code for my children or my friends so they can call for help.
- If I have to leave home, I will go \_\_\_\_\_. (Decide this even if you don't think there will be a next time.) If I cannot go to the location above, then I can go to \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
- I can also teach some of these strategies to some/all of my children.
- When I expect we are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as \_\_\_\_\_. (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons, or in rooms without access to an outside door.)
- I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my partner what he/she wants to calm him/her down. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

**STEP 2. Safety when preparing to leave.** Victims frequently leave the residence they share with the battering partner. Leaving must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. Batters often strike back when they believe that their victim is leaving the relationship.

#### I can use some (or all) of the following safety strategies:

- I will leave money and an extra set of keys with \_\_\_\_\_, so that I can leave quickly.
- I will keep copies of important documents or keys at \_\_\_\_\_.
- I will open a savings account by \_\_\_\_\_, to increase my independence.
- The Hillsborough domestic violence program hotline number is (813) 247-7223, and I can seek shelter and support by calling this hotline. The Florida Domestic Violence Hotline number is 1-800-500-1119.
- I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use my credit card, the following month the telephone bill will tell my batterer the numbers that I called after I left. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I must either use coins or I might get a friend to permit me to use their telephone credit card for a limited time when I first leave. I can also use a pre-paid calling card to ensure confidentiality.

- I will check with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to see who would be able let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- I can leave extra clothes with \_\_\_\_\_.
- I will sit down and review my safety plan every \_\_\_\_\_ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. \_\_\_\_\_ (domestic violence advocate or friend) has agreed to help me review this plan.
- I will rehearse my escape plan. I will practice it with my children when appropriate.

**STEP 3: Safety in my own residence.** There are many things that a victim can do to increase safety in his/her own residence. It may be impossible to do everything at once. But safety measures can be added step by step.

**I can use some (or all) of the following safety strategies:**

- I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
- I can use keys that cannot be duplicated without my permission
- I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- I can install security systems, including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, electronic system, etc.
- I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.
- I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.
- I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to \_\_\_\_\_ (friends/minister/other) in the event my partner takes the children.
- I will tell people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick up my children, and that my partner is not permitted to do so. The people I will inform about pickup permission include:

\_\_\_\_\_ (School),

\_\_\_\_\_ (Daycare staff),

\_\_\_\_\_ (Baby-sitter),

\_\_\_\_\_ (Sunday school teacher),

\_\_\_\_\_ (Teacher),

\_\_\_\_\_ (and),

\_\_\_\_\_ (others)

- I can inform \_\_\_\_\_ (neighbors), \_\_\_\_\_ (pastor), and \_\_\_\_\_ (friend) that my partner no longer resides with me and they should call the police if he or she is observed near my residence.

**STEP 4: Safety with a Protective Order.** Many batterers obey protection orders, but one can never be sure which violent partner will obey, and which will violate protection orders. I recognize that I may need to ask the police and the court to enforce my protection order.

**The following are some steps that I can take to help the enforcement of the protective order:**

- Always keep a copy of the order with you. If you change purses, that's the first thing that should go in.
- I will also keep a copy of my Protective Order \_\_\_\_\_ (location) next to my telephone in case I need to call the police. I will give my protection order to the police department in the communities where I usually visit family or friends.
- I will inform my employer, my minister, my closest friend and \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ that I have a protection order in effect.
- If my partner destroys my protective order, I can call the Clerk of the Courts at 276-8100 to get another one. It is best to make several copies. Always keep one copy with you, and others in safe places.
- If my partner violates the protective order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.
- If the police do not help, I can contact my advocate or attorney and he or she will assist me with getting help.
- There are some cases in which I can file charges against my batterer for violating a protective order. I will document all the crimes that he commits in violating the order, such as stalking, harassment, and any other activity. I can talk to a Family Justice Center staff person who can help me contact legal services.

**STEP 5: Safety on the job and in public.** Each victim must decide if and when they will tell others that their partner has battered them, and that they may be at continued risk. Friends, family and co-workers can help to protect the victim. Every victim should consider carefully which persons to invite to help secure their safety.

**I might do any (or all) of the following:**

- I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and \_\_\_\_\_ at work of my situation.
- I can ask \_\_\_\_\_ to help screen my telephone calls at work.
- When leaving work, I can  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- When driving home, if problems occur, I can  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- If I use public transportation, I can  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- I will go to different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business, and shop at hours different from those I used when residing with my battering partner.
- I can use a different bank and take care of my banking at hours different from those I used when residing with my battering partner.
- I can also  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**STEP 6: Safety and drug or alcohol use.** Many people in this culture use alcohol. Many use mind-altering drugs. Much of this use is legal, and some is not. The legal outcomes of using illegal drugs can be very hard on a victim. It may hurt his/her relationship with children. Drug use can put him/her at a disadvantage in other legal actions with the battering partner. Therefore, victims should carefully consider the potential cost of the use of illegal drugs. Even more important, alcohol or other drug use can reduce a victim's awareness and ability to act quickly to

protect him or herself from the battering partner. Alcohol or other drug use by the batterer may give him/her an excuse to use violence. A victim needs to make specific safety plans about drug and alcohol use.

**If drug and alcohol use has occurred in my relationship with the battering partner, I can enhance my safety by some or all of the following:**

- If I am going to use, I can do so in a safe place and with people who understand the risk of violence, and are committed to my safety.
- I can also \_\_\_\_\_.
- If my partner is using, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- I might also \_\_\_\_\_.
- To safeguard my children, I might \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

**STEP 7: Safety and my emotional health.** The experience of being battered and verbally degraded by partners is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life for myself takes much courage and incredible energy.

**To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to avoid hard emotional times, I can do some of the following:**

- If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- I can try to use "I can . . ." statements with myself and to be assertive with others.
- I can tell myself, " \_\_\_\_\_ " whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.
- I can read \_\_\_\_\_ to help me feel stronger.
- I can call \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ as other resources to be of support to me.
- Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- I can attend workshops and support groups at a domestic violence program, or \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ to gain support and strengthen my relationships with other people.

**STEP 8: Items to take when leaving.** I will use the Checklist to plan my possible leaving. I will keep this document in a safe place and out of the reach of my abuser.

Review date: \_\_\_\_\_