



Safety Planning with Children

These safety planning tips and suggestions should be adapted to meet your child's age and ability. Be aware when you safety plan with children that they may disclose information or plans to your partner. To further insure that your children don't give important information to your abusive partner, you may want to tell your children that you are practicing what to do in any emergency, rather than what to do if your partner is violent.

If You Live with an Abusive Partner:

- If violence is escalating, avoid running to the children because your partner may hurt them as well.
- Teach your children how to get help. Plan a code word to signal to them that they should leave the house.
- Tell your children that violence is never right, even when someone they love is hurting them. Tell them that neither you nor they are at fault for the violence and that when anyone is being violent, it is important to keep safe.
- Practice how to get out safely out of the home with your children. Plan a code word to signal to your children that they should leave the home for their own safety.
- Identify a safe place for your children, for example, a room or a friend's house where they can go for help.
- Help your children identify someone they can talk to when they are afraid or sad, a place they can go when they are afraid, and something they can think about when they are scared.
- Instruct your children not to get involved in the violence and reassure your children that they are not responsible for protecting you or for what happens.

Protecting Your Children if You Leave:

- Alert school authorities of situation.
- Consider changing your children's schools.
- Tell people who take care of your children which individuals are allowed to pick them up. Explain your situation and provide them with a copy of the protective order or restraining order if you have one.
- Find out about temporary custody rights and laws in your state.

Safe Custody Exchanges:

- Avoid exchanging custody at your home or your batterer's home. Meet in a public place, such as a restaurant.
- Bring a friend or relative with you to exchanges.
- Ask your local domestic violence program if there is a supervised custody exchange site in your community.
- If not, ask the police department if you can make arrangements to exchange custody at their station.

Helping Your Children Safety Plan for Unsupervised Visits:

- Talk to your children about the layout of the home where they will stay. Have them identify where they can get to a phone, how they can get out of the house, and where they can go for help.
- Teach your children their phone number, the police number (if different from 911), and a neighbor, friend or relative's number.
- Send them to the visits with "security objects", such as a special stuffed toy or blanket.
- Let them know that they need to make their safety their top priority, even if they have to pretend to agree with an abusive parent.
- Discuss how they might respond if they see signs that their other parent has been drinking or if they see other danger signals.

For more support and information, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or TTY 1-800-787-3224.