



SECTION 5. Making a Safety Plan

Know where to go and what to do if you are experiencing abuse

SECTION 5.

Making a Safety Plan

Abuse can happen at the hands of a spouse, family member, neighbour, service provider, or stranger. The following planning tools are intended for seniors who are able to make and act on their own decisions. They are particularly helpful to individuals who have been living with an abusive partner or family member and who may have to leave the home suddenly if the situation turns violent.

Even if you are not planning to leave your home, it is important to plan ahead in case the violence escalates and you have to get out quickly. Making a **Safety Plan** will help you know what to do and who to contact if you have to leave in an emergency.

A. Elements of an Emergency Safety Plan

Although you do not have control over the abuse, you can choose how to respond to it and how to best get to safety. Keep this plan in a safe place.



- **Find a safe place to go in an emergency:** Know where you can go to be safe, if only to make a phone call. Speak to your neighbours or someone you can trust. Let them know what's going on so they can be watching out for you and call the police if they become concerned. If you have no where to go, consider an emergency shelter.
- **Know how you will get there:** Are you able to walk to safety? Is there someone who can come and get you? Can you take a car, taxi, or bus?

- **Plan an escape route:** Know the safest routes out of the house. Avoid the kitchen or bathroom and rooms where firearms are kept.
- **Program emergency numbers into the phone:** Program your local transition house, a trusted friend or neighbour who can help you, and the police into your phone. If you've been abused before, make sure the police are fully aware of the situation.
- **Contact the local transition house:** Women have the option of calling a transition house and talking to staff. You may want to work out a code word so they know who you are if you have to call them in a crisis.
- **Consider pet safety:** If you are concerned for the safety of your pet, ask a neighbour or trusted friend if you can leave your pet with them. Or, contact the nearest transition house or domestic violence outreach office to arrange to get your pet into a temporary safe haven program for pets.
- **Prepare an Emergency Leaving Bag:** Consider packing an emergency bag in case you need to leave quickly. You can't take everything. Just take what you'll need for a few days. Consider leaving the bag with a friend if you have to hide it. Hide some money away if possible (you may need emergency taxi fare) and a spare set of car keys in order to leave quickly.
- **Know your rights – get legal advice:** It is probably a good idea to get legal and other advice now, even before there is an emergency.
- **Make a list of things to take and where to find them:** In an emergency, you may have to leave quickly so make a list of the important things that you want to take and where they are located.



If you are in danger, get to a phone and call 911 immediately.

Here are some items that I may want to include in my Emergency Leaving Bag:

- Money, bank books, credit cards
- Clothes for a few days
- Any medicine you may need
- House keys, car keys
- Identification
- Medicare card
- Your address/phone book
- Important papers: birth certificates, marriage certificates, social insurance numbers, income tax returns
- Passport, First Nations status card, immigration/citizenship papers
- Copies of your lease, deed or mortgage
- Legal documents such as POAs
- Car registration, driver's licence, car insurance
- Your favourite possessions/books (things that give you comfort)



My Emergency Safety Plan

1. It may not be safe to inform my partner that I am leaving.
2. What are the possible escape route(s) from my home? What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, or fire escapes could I use: _____

3. If I need to leave quickly, it would be helpful for me to have some emergency cash, an extra set of house and car keys and extra clothes. I will pack a bag with the important things I need to take with me. I will leave this bag with _____, or _____.
4. I can keep my purse/wallet and keys handy, and always keep them in the same place (_____), so that I can locate them easily if I need to leave in a hurry. I can also have my own second set of keys made in case my (ex) partner/caregiver takes the first set.
5. It may be helpful to have a code word to use with my friends or other family members if I should need them to call for help. My code word is _____.
6. If it is safe for me, I could tell the following people about the violence and request that they call the police if they suspect that I am in danger. _____

My Emergency Safety Plan

7. Safe places that I can go if I need to leave my home:
 - a. A place to use the phone: _____
 - b. A place I could stay for a couple of hours: _____
 - c. A place that I could stay for a couple of days: _____
 - d. A local transition house: _____

8. During an abusive incident I will try to avoid places in the house where I may be trapped or where weapons are readily available. Bigger rooms with more than one exit may be safer. The places I would try to avoid would be _____

9. The places I would try to move to are _____.

10. Calling the Police can increase safety. Remember, many forms of elder abuse, woman abuse, spousal abuse, etc., are against the law. If your spouse or caregiver is assaulting you, the Police have the authority to lay a charge of assault.

11. I will also contact Social Development at _____ to seek services to help me leave the abuse. (See contact numbers in the **Services and Resources** section.)

My Emergency Safety Plan

12. Given my past experience, other protective actions that I might help me to stay safe are:

13. Things I can do to prepare for Emergency Leaving include:

- a. I will take the time to practice how to get out safely.
- b. I can open a savings account to increase my freedom to leave. I will make sure to alert the bank not to send any correspondence to my home address.
- c. I can get legal advice from a lawyer. I will make certain the lawyer knows not to send any correspondence to my home address.
- d. Abused women can contact a Transition House _____ or Domestic Violence Outreach office _____ (These numbers are listed in the **Services and Resources** section of this guide or in the front of the telephone book with other crisis numbers.). I can seek safe shelter and support by calling this number.

