



Women's Shelter of York Region Inc.

## WOMEN'S SAFETY PLAN

### **SAFETY PLAN DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT**

#### ***Recommended Safety Tips:***

- If you have been sexually assaulted, and if you choose to get medical assistance, **DO NOT** bath or shower. Go directly to a hospital where a trained professional will examine you and be able to collect evidence.
- If an argument seems unavoidable, try to move to a room or area with easy access to an exit.  
(Avoid entering a bathroom, kitchen, or anywhere near possible weapons)
- Never let the abuser come between you and your exit out of the house. If you are able to leave safely, run to a neighbour and call 911.
- Consider giving the abuser what he or she wants in order to defuse a dangerous situation until you are able to leave safely.
- If you have the opportunity, call the shelter and use your code words.
- You have every right to protect yourself when you are in a dangerous situation. You **DO NOT** deserve to be hit or threatened.
- Try to make as much noise as possible (Set off the fire alarm, break things, turn up the stereo or TV). By doing any of these things, there will be a higher chance that the neighbours may call the police for you, if you are unable to do so yourself.

### **SAFETY PLAN PRIOR TO ENTERING THE SHELTER**

#### ***Recommended Safety Tips:***

- Keep all of your important papers and documents (passports, birth certificates, immigration papers) at a friend or neighbour's home.
- Keep a bag packed and ready in an undisclosed, but accessible place where you can get it quickly. Remember to take medications, prescriptions, wallet, medical cards, bank books and charge cards.
- Identify which door, window, stairwell, or elevator offers the quickest way out of the home. Try to practice your route as many times as possible.
- Find neighbours that you can tell about the violence and ask that they call the police if they hear a disturbance.



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- Try to save some money, and hide it, along with extra car keys, and give to a family member or a friend.
- Decide where you will go if you have to leave, even if you do not think it will come to that.
- Try to come up with a code word that you can use with your children, family, and friends when you need the police.
- Plan carefully before you leave. Your partner may try to strike back if he or she thinks you will leave and they are losing control of you.
- If possible, open your own bank account so you have some money of your own. When you open it, remember not to use your home address or phone number or the bank statements may come to your home. Can you use a friend or family member's address?
- Try to have change for phone calls with you or easily reachable at all times. Remember if you use a calling card or credit card, the numbers you call will be on your telephone bill. If you need to keep your phone calls confidential, use coins or ask a friend if you can use their phone.
- Try to review and rehearse your escape plan often to make sure you have planned the safest way to leave quickly. Practice it with your children. Talk to a domestic violence advocate or a friend and review the plan with them.
- Always try to take your children with you when you leave.

## **SAFETY PLAN FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN STAYING IN THE SHELTER**

### ***Recommended Safety Tips:***

- Make a safety call to the police if you feel that is it necessary. If you do not own a cell phone, an emergency phone will be provided to you by the shelter, which you may keep with you at all times until your discharge date.
- In addition to the emergency cell phone, a personal alarm may also be provided to you by the shelter. In case of an emergency, pulling the string on the alarm triggers a high pitch noise, which could scare off your abuser by surprising them, and will attract the attention of others in the area.
- Try to travel in pairs whenever possible.
- Keep your cell phone charged and with you at all times.
- Avoid taking shortcuts.
- Travel in well lit, populated areas, especially at night.



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- Avoid wearing headphones while walking outdoors, as you may not be able to hear anyone approaching you.
- If you think that you are being followed, trust your instincts and take action. Try to cross the road and turn to see who is behind you. If you are still being followed, try to cross the road again. Try to keep moving and make your way to a busy area, and report to anyone who may be able to help you.
- If a vehicle pulls suddenly alongside you, turn and walk in the other direction (you can turn much faster than a car).
- If you are trapped or in danger, try to yell or scream. Your voice is your best defence. If possible, call the police (call 911).
- Keep the shelter's number with you at all times.

## **SAFETY PLAN FOR WOMEN USING PUBLIC TRANSIT AND/OR TAXI**

### ***Recommended Safety Tips:***

- Always try to be in the back seat, not in front seat next to the driver.
- It is best not to give personal information or discuss your personal business with driver. Do not disclose any information about why you're here or your story (have good boundaries) or anyone else you meet at the shelter (never give any names).
- Try to have a code word to be used when you are not feeling safe in the taxi. You can phone frontline or **911** with your cell to get help. If you do not own a cell phone, you can call **911** by using the emergency cell phone that will be provided to you by the shelter.
- If driver asks or continues to ask personal questions and refuses to respect your privacy, ask driver to let you off at nearest public place (e.g. gas station, etc.).
- Make sure you have the driver's name, physical description, etc.
- Show self confidence that if he continues with his/her questions, you will notify his/her supervisor.
- Notify someone (friend, family or frontline staff) that you have arrived safely at your destination.
- Trust your own instincts! If you feel that something is wrong go with your gut feeling.
- Familiarize yourself with the vehicle; does the door have locks at the front, window locks/master locks?
- Never be afraid to roll down the window and yell for help if you have to.



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## **SAFETY PLAN FOR WOMEN DISCHARGING FROM THE SHELTER**

### ***Recommended Safety Tips:***

- Keep your cell phone charged and with you at all times, and carry a personal safety alarm.
- Provide frontline staff with a code word in case you are in danger, and keep the shelter's phone number with you at all times.
- You may want to change the locks and put bars on the windows if you think that your abuser has a key. You may also want to install a security system, smoke detector, and an outside lighting system.
- Keep copies of any court orders with you at all times. Also, give copies of these orders to school, daycare, and work, and ask them to contact you if they see your abuser. Give these people copies of your abuser's photograph so that they can recognize him/her.
- Try to install a peephole that you and your children can use.
- You can get features such as call blocking, call display, and speed dial to increase your safety.
- You can make sure that your name is not on your mailbox or in an apartment directory.
- You may want to change your doctor, dentist, or other professional services if you think that your abuser may track you down there.
- Keep your emergency escape plan items with a friend or a family member.
- If you move to another town or district, notify the local police of the court order, your new location, and your abuser's history or violent behavior.
- Try to remember that you have been through a lot and may be feeling exhausted and emotionally drained. Know that building a new life free of violence takes a great deal of courage and requires a lot of energy.



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## SAFETY PLAN FOR YOUTH

### **FINDING A SAFE PLACE DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT**

#### ***Recommended Safety Tips:***

- Figure out ahead of time a safe place you can go to inside your home when there is fighting, arguing, and/or loud voices that make you feel scared or worried.
- A safe place in your home is anywhere where the fighting, loud noises and arguing are not happening.
- Going to your safe place does not mean that you have to hide. It just means getting away from the fighting. Stay there until the fighting stops.
- If there is a lock on the door of a room, this might be good place to choose because you can lock the door.
- While keeping yourself out of the way of the fighting, you might want to do something that makes you feel better, like:
  - Listen to music.
  - Watch television.
  - Write, draw pictures, or play a video game.
  - Be with any of your brothers/sisters and talk or play a game together.
  - Remember to give yourself positive messages and use techniques you have learned to help keep yourself calm such as breathing techniques (take a deep breath and count to 10) and going to a space/room that makes you feel calmer.
  - Call the Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 and talk to someone if it is safe to do so.
- If you think you might be safer outside of your home during the fighting, think ahead of time about some safe place(s) to go to. Talk with your mother/ caregiver about where that safe place will be so you can meet up together after the fighting, when it is safer. Figure out how you will get there: Walk, ride your bike, take a bus, call someone for a ride, or call a taxi.
- Try to keep some money in your pocket, purse, or room, for things like making a call from a public pay phone if there is one, or buying a bus ticket.
- Getting in the middle of the fighting could be dangerous for you. Although you may feel conflicted about the fighting and may want to stop the fighting yourself, it is safer for you



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and your mother/caregiver, if you do not get involved. If you need or want to stay close by, stay out of sight, and if possible, have a phone nearby.

## **CALLING FOR HELP**

### ***Recommended Safety Tips:***

- You are not responsible for keeping your mother/caregiver safe, but you may be able to get help. Talk to your mother about a code (special) word that only the two of you will know, that she can say out loud to let you know when you should call for help.
- You could also talk with your mother/caregiver about a signal that only the two of you will know that she can use to let you know something is going on. (For example, if you are not at home when the fighting is starting, your mother and you could agree that, if possible, she will turn on the porch light, or close certain window blinds to let you know to go somewhere safe).
- Know how to phone to get help from emergency services if you think someone is getting hurt, you don't feel safe, or if you hear your mother say the code word.
- Try to use a phone that is not in the room where the fighting is happening or use a cell phone. Even if your cell phone minutes are used up, you can still dial 911 and get through. If it is safe to do so, go to a neighbour's house and use the phone there, or to another safe place, such as a local store, to make a call.

## **THIS IS HOW YOU MAKE AN EMERGENCY CALL:**

- Push the buttons 9-1-1 on the phone for emergency services.
- The people who answer will say, "This is emergency services. Do you need police, fire, or ambulance?" You say: "Police" You say: "My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am \_\_\_ years old.
- You tell them the problem: "I need help. Send the Police. Someone is hurting my mother."
- You say: "I am calling from (give complete address) \_\_\_\_"
- After you have said these things, the best thing for you to do, if you can, is to stay on the phone. The person on the phone might need to ask you some more questions, or you might want to talk to them some more. If you do hang up the phone, the 911 operator may call back, which could make it dangerous for you and your mother/caregiver.



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- If you cannot stay on the phone because you do not feel safe, tell the person on the phone you are just putting the phone down without hanging it up, until the police arrive.
- No matter what, the fight is not your fault, even if you hear your name in the fight or if you are worried the fight is because of you, for example because you did not clean up your toys or get a good grade in school.
- Adults have many ways to solve conflict/problems but violence should never be one of them.
- You cannot make a person behave violently or be abusive; how a person behaves is their choice, and you are not to blame for their behaviour.
- Violence against women is dangerous and people can get hurt.
- It is against the law to hurt someone.



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## SAFETY PLAN FOR CHILDREN

If someone is hurt  
or in  danger,

I will  911



Sometimes I need to  
talk to someone. I know  
I can talk to



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

**If there is a fight, do not try to stop the fighting! The best way you can help is by getting help!**

- Run to your safe place. Your safe place is \_\_\_\_\_.
- CALL 911 - an operator will answer "POLICE, FIRE, AMBULANCE"
- Then you say "POLICE!"
- My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old. I need help.
- Send the police. Someone is hurting my mom.
- The address here is \_\_\_\_\_. The phone number here is \_\_\_\_\_.
- **REMEMBER DON'T HANG UP!**





# Sandgate

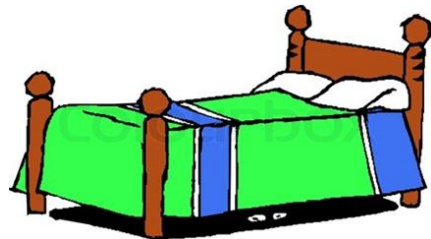
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If there is fighting in the house, try to go to a safe place. Some safe places for you to go to are:

**In the closet**



**Under the bed**



**In the bathroom**



**In the backyard**



**At the neighbours house**

