



Women's Shelter of York Region Inc.

Safety Plan for Women

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 your 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 travel bag packed and ready to go in an undisclosed, but accessible place where you can get it quickly. Remember to take your wallet, medications, prescriptions, medical cards, bank books and charge cards.
- Identify which door, window, stairwell, or elevator offers you 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 them to call the police if they hear a disturbance.



Women's Shelter of York Region Inc.

- Try to save some money, and hide it, along with extra car keys, and give these 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, email or phone number as the bank statements may come to your home. Can you use a friend or family member's contact information?
- Try to have change for phone calls with you or access to an easily reachable phone 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 it is 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 an 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.



Women's Shelter of York Region Inc.

- Avoid wearing headphones while walking outdoors, as you may not be able to hear anyone approaching you.
- If you think 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 up 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 at 911.
- Keep the shelter's number with you at all times.

SAFETY PLAN FOR WOMEN USING PUBLIC TRANSIT OR TAXI SERVICES

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 the driver. Do not disclose any information about why you're there 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 the driver asks or continues to ask personal questions and refuses to respect your privacy, ask the 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. Let him know if he continues with his questions, you will notify his 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.



Women's Shelter of York Region Inc.

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 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 abusers photograph so that they can recognize him or her.
- Try to install a peephole 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 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 your abuser may track you down there.
- Keep your emergency escape plan items with a friend or 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.