

Safety planning Workshop

PCWESA- 2020

What is a safety plan?

- ▶ A safety plan is a personalized, practical plan that can help you avoid dangerous situations and know the best way to react when you are in danger.
- ▶ This plan includes ways to remain safe while in the relationship, planning to leave, or after you leave.
- ▶ Safety planning involves how to cope with emotions, tell friends and family about the abuse, take legal action, and more.
- ▶ We safety plan with victims, friends and family members — anyone who is concerned about their own safety or the safety of another.



In creating a safety plan, it is important to remember that:

- ▶ You are not to blame for the abuse or for your children's exposure to it.
- ▶ You are not responsible for your (ex) partner's abusive behaviours.
- ▶ You cannot control your (ex) partner's abuse, but it may be possible to increase your own safety as well as the safety of your children.
- ▶ The safety of you and your children is always the most important thing.
- ▶ **You are not alone.** There are resources available in the community to provide support in several ways (e.g., counselling, housing, financial assistance, etc.)





Why is having a safety plan essential?

- ▶ There's going to be another abusive incident. Be it a degrading shouting match, intimidating threats or an outright attack, you know in your gut that it's going to happen again.
- ▶ Think of your safety plan as a life vest. You put it on before you fall off the ship, knowing it will keep you afloat when you land in the water.

What a safety plan can do:

- ▶ A safety plan can increase the chances for you to safely escape a threatening, frightening, or abusive encounter with your abuser.
- ▶ It may help guide you to leave prepared with information you need to file charges if you so choose and start a new life without having to contact the abuser again.
- ▶ A safety plan does not mean you need to leave your home forever. In the plan, you will think about where you can go temporarily to be safe and consider your best options and next steps. These next steps may include legal procedures such as acquiring an order of protection that forces the abuser to leave your home, obtaining parenting orders, breaking a lease or initiating divorce proceedings.
- ▶ For some survivors, leaving the home they share with their abuser is often the safest option, but remember, it's all up to you and what you think is safe and the best decision for you and your family.



What a Safety Plan is NOT

- ▶ A safety plan is **not**: a replacement for calling **911**, filing for an **Order of Protection** or contacting a **Lawyer**. In many cases, a **Safety Plan** involves some of those steps.

If you are living with an abusive person

- ▶ Tell someone you trust about the abuse, tell neighbors, if they hear 'fighting at your residence', to call 911.
- ▶ If a conflict arises, have a safe area in your home where you can go with your children and use the phone to call for help.
- ▶ Important phone numbers for you and your children:
 - ▶ **RCMP**
 - ▶ **Crisis line**
 - ▶ **Friend you trust**
 - ▶ **A local Emergency Shelter**
- ▶ Ensure that your children know their address and phone numbers in case they are the ones needing to call for help.
- ▶ Plan a way to get out of your home safely and practice with your children. Have a safe meeting point outside the home in case you and your children need to escape.
- ▶ Stay away from the bathroom, kitchen, rooms without windows, space to run out, or any room that may have items that can be used as weapons.

Our vision is for all people in Southwestern Alberta to be safe in their homes and safe in their communities.



Always remember:

- ✓ Hide your safety plan where an abuser can't find it
- ✓ Examples of places:
- ✓ Fold it up and put it in a lip stick case
- ✓ Inside of a coat pocket
- ✓ In a make up lid



Safety planning with your kids

- ▶ **Babies, toddlers and preschoolers:** These children aren't old enough to participate in or understand a safety plan. Make sure you do assure them that they are safe. Bring comfort items from home.
- ▶ **Elementary school age:** You can involve them but with little detail. Remember little children aren't good at secrets. Teach your child a code word that you will use to indicate for them to call for help. The code word can signal to call 911. E.G. "Banana"
- ▶ **Middle school and older kids:** Middle aged children should be included in safety planning for their family, so they have a sense of control and autonomy regarding their situation. Remind older kids it's not their job to protect you.

When you are ready to leave

- ▶ Contact the Police or the local Women's Shelter, update them on the situation.
- ▶ If you are injured, go to the doctor and inform them of the situation so they can keep a record of the incident.
- ▶ Keep a journal of violent incidents and include dates, events, outcomes.
- ▶ If you are able, stash away some money in a safe place or open a bank account in your name.

You and Your Children Need a safe place. Your safety is the most important factor.



Stash a get away bag

- ▶ **Important things to include:**
- ▶ Birth certificates and social security cards for yourself and your children
- ▶ Driver's license and/or passports
- ▶ Marriage, divorce and custody papers
- ▶ Legal protection or restraining orders and records of any police reports you have filed
- ▶ Health insurance cards and medical records
- ▶ Financial records and bank account numbers
- ▶ Apartment rental agreement or lease, or house deed
- ▶ Car title, registration, and insurance documents
- ▶ Baby Formula, extra diapers and any medications, bring specific items for childcare such as a favorite toy, blanket, soother, and change of clothing.
- ▶ **Tip:** Keep photos of these documents in a secure digital file. In some cases, photos will be sufficient proof of documentation, and in other cases, the photos will make it easier for you to replace the document if you need to leave without it.

Where to leave this bag?


- ▶ Leave your get away bag with a friend, neighbor, at a local Women's Shelter, or at your safe meeting point.
- ▶ Remember that you may not get to go back to your residence. **Pack what is essential.** Identification cards, picture ID, legal documents, health care numbers, and medications are essential items.
- ▶ If you have a vehicle leave a spare set of keys with someone you trust so your abuser can't take your keys.



Leaving the abuser

- ▶ You can request a police escort when leaving or you can ask a friend to accompany you.
- ▶ Going to a Women's Emergency Shelter might be safer temporarily if the abuser knows the place that you plan to go.
- ▶ Do not tell your abuser you are leaving and leave quickly.
- ▶ Have a back up plan in case your abuser finds out where you are.





Emotional Safety plan

- ▶ After leaving a partner or an abusive situation, starting fresh can bring relief as well as stress and disorientation.
- ▶ A period of shock takes place and it takes time to adjust.
- ▶ You have just made one of the most courageous decisions in your life. Moving forward is a lifetime healing journey and is different for each person.

4 steps to an emotional safety plan

- ▶ **Step 1: Understand emotional safety**
- ▶ Emotional safety means feeling accepted. Survivors have reported unrelenting psychological attacks are more damaging than a physical beating.
- ▶ Try This: Find a space where you can feel emotionally safe and speak to a professional within a Women's Emergency Shelter, doctor's office, or counselling agency.
- ▶ **Step 2: Address the trauma** (acknowledge what has happened)
- ▶ Trauma can make it difficult processing information, talk to your doctor about your situation, as well as seek mental health counselling. Attend an Elders' group within PCWESA, or access other supports that shelters have to offer. Healing needs to take place. It can be a process of Grief and Loss.

► **Step 3: Understand your mixed feelings**

- You may be relieved to get away from abuse however, you can still miss the partner or parent that was left. You need to find your strength and self worth apart from your partner, and this is an ongoing process.
- When a child talks about missing the other parent it can make feelings of guilt and regret even stronger for you. This is a normal occurrence.
- Listen to your children express their feelings and be supportive of their feelings.
- Try this: Learning more about your trauma and your behaviors will help you reach a place of understanding about your situation. Be aware of events that may trigger you to return to unhealthy relationships and lifestyle.

► **Step 4: Reach out for support if needed.**

- You may feel alone, afraid, and isolated. Be kind to yourself.
- Try this: Work with your local Women's Shelter and Community Services. Be open to suggestions when it comes to working with other professionals. You do not have to do this alone.

SPEAK



OUT!

Emergency Protection Orders and Restraining Orders

- ▶ EPO stands for Emergency Protection Order. You can obtain one with the help of your local RCMP.
- ▶ An EPO is a legal document stating your abuser is not to contact you or come near your home, work or school. If they should do so, document the incident and report to police, as this is a violation of the Court Order, subject to enforcement.
- ▶ If you are interested in getting an EPO, shelter staff can assist you with this. If you are afraid your partner/family member will hurt you or your children, you can request a Restraining Order from a Judge in Family Court.
- ▶ A Restraining Order can include a list of restrictions the abuser must obey. It can be general or specific and can be legally enforced.
- ▶ You will need documented evidence of the abuse to get a restraining order. If you want to obtain one, let staff in the shelter know and we will help you with contact information. If you cannot afford a lawyer, Legal Aid may represent you.
- ▶ If you relocate to another town or community, file your legal documents with the local police department to let them know you are in danger. This will facilitate a faster response to a potential 911 call.

Let's complete a safety plan specific to your situation:

- ▶ Identify who you can tell and discuss how they can help (code words, store important documents and items to leave your abuser).
- ▶ Rehearse escape plan with children. Daycare and school staff must be aware of who can take your children.
- ▶ Open separate bank accounts if possible.
- ▶ Hide money and spare change.
- ▶ Find places in the neighborhood, open 24 hours, 7 days a week.
- ▶ Take the children with you.
- ▶ Get a Police Escort if you fear violence or need to return to your home.
- ▶ Enlist assistance from your local Women's Shelter where you will be safe.
- ▶ Avoid all contact with abuser.
- ▶ Document any attempts your abuser makes to contact you.
- ▶ Utilize all online safety tips (change important passwords, turn off any location settings on your mobile device)
- ▶ Tell your employer and a work colleague that you trust, about your situation, so they can follow up with an unexplained absence from work and assist you to safely leave your workplace.



Contact numbers

- ▶ Emergency: 911
- ▶ Fort Macleod RCMP General: (403)553-4406
- ▶ Pincher Creek Detachment: (403)627-6010
- ▶ Blood Tribe Police: (403)737-8800
- ▶ Cardston RCMP (403)653-4932
- ▶ Crowsnest Pass RCMP (403)562-2867
- ▶ Piikani RCMP: (403)965-2001
- ▶ Pincher Creek Women's Shelter: (403) 627-2114
1-888-354-4868
- ▶ Kainai Women's Wellness Lodge: (403) 653-3946
1-888-653-1909



Questions