



# safety planning guide

for **survivors** of domestic violence

**24 HOUR HOTLINE**

**269.965.SAFE** (7233)

888.664.9832

All services are free and confidential.

**[safeplaceshelter.org](http://safeplaceshelter.org)**

**s.a.f.e.**  
**PLACE**  
secure area family environment



# you are not alone

you are **not** to blame

you do **not** deserve to be abused

you are **not** responsible for stopping the abuse or getting your abuser to change

But sometimes there are steps that may be taken to help keep yourself safe. This guide includes ideas for you to consider. You are the best judge of which safety ideas are best for you. Trust your instincts. You can call SAFE Place any time day or night, 365 days a year.

## 24 HOUR HOTLINE

**269.965.SAFE** (7233)

888.664.9832

We would be honored to help you plan for your safety and share our resources with you. We offer counseling, support groups, shelter, and numerous services including help in attaining a personal protection order from your abuser. All services are free and confidential.



# safety

## during a violent encounter

Consider the following ideas to increase your safety during a violent encounter with your abuser. Remember, it is NOT your fault if your abuser chooses to be violent.

- Know where the exits are in your home and places you visit.
- Avoid rooms with no doors to the outside.
- Try to move to safer rooms where there are no weapons during arguments.
  - Avoid rooms like the kitchen and bathroom where there are potential weapons (knives, cords, etc.)
- Hide or relocate potential weapons (kitchen knives, scissors, etc.)
- Hide an extra set of car keys.
- Be aware of surroundings.
- Trust your instincts.
- Brainstorm reasons or excuses to get out of the house (taking out the trash, go to the store, walking the dog, etc.)
- Where can you go to let things cool down?
- Set up a code word with neighbors and/or family to call the police. (Only if you have neighbors and/or family who you trust.)
- Ask neighbors or family to call police if they hear yelling and/or violence.
- Keep your cell phone charged and with you if you have one.
  - If you do not have a cell phone, free 911 phones are available at SAFE Place.
- Keep an old cell phone charged to call 911 should your cell phone be taken.
- Think about things you can say to try and calm your partner down.
- Teach children to get to a safe place and call 911 if violence is occurring.

# safety

## planning with children

Developing a safety plan with your children is important in order for them to know what to do should your abuser become violent.

Remind children that the abuse is NOT their fault.

- Explain to your children how and when to call 911.
- Obtain a 911 phone for children to carry (free 911 phones available at SAFE Place.)
- If children are school-aged, talk with school/daycare about the situation.
  - Notify school/daycare if a PPO is in place, provide the school a copy.
- Teach children that their job is to keep themselves safe and to not get involved.
  - Identify a safe place for children to go.
- Identify a neighbor's house to go to during a violent incident.
- Come up with a code word with the children that you can say to them to get them to leave the house.
- Practice an escape plan.
- Make a list of people who your child feels comfortable talking with.
- Consider getting children into counseling.
- If you are in hiding, talk with children about not telling their other parent where they are living/staying.





# safety

## with your emotional health

Being in or leaving an abusive relationship is difficult, scary and takes a toll on you emotionally. It is important for you to take care of yourself. Below are some ways to improve your emotional well-being.

- Try to stay mentally & physically healthy. Go to the doctor for a checkup or any physical health issues. If you don't have a doctor, call 211 to see what alternate resources are available.
- If you are feeling down & lonely, is there someone you can talk to? If not, consider calling a domestic violence hotline. The number to SAFE Place is 269.965.7233.
- Remind yourself of your best qualities.
- Consider attending domestic violence support groups or counseling. At SAFE Place, all services are free and confidential!
- Consider other options to build a support system, learn skills & coping mechanisms such as local churches, AA meetings or Alanon meetings. Read books & safely search websites.
- Surround yourself with things & people that make you feel good about yourself.
- Avoid watching TV programs with violence & arguments. This will help you from thinking this behavior is normal.

Living in a rural setting can increase the level of danger due to lack of available resources and assistance nearby.

The following safety suggestions are designed for those who live in a rural area.

# safety

## planning with rural living

### **Phone counseling is available 24/7 through SAFE Place—**

- If leaving home is too dangerous or not an option, you can schedule a time that is safe for you to call in to talk to a domestic violence counselor weekly. The counselor will not call you so you do not have to worry about your abuser finding out.
- Our crisis phone line is answered all day and night, every day.
- A SAFE Place advocate can meet with you at a public place near your home.

### **If you have a car and cell phone—**

- Make extra car keys and hide them somewhere that is easily accessible.
- If you have a cell phone, keep it on your person at all times.

### **If you don't have a car, cell phone, or your abuser might take your keys—**

- Create a code word or phrase with a trusted friend that you can use if you need them to call police.
- Create a code word or phrase with a trusted friend that you can use if you need a ride.
- If you don't have a trusted friend, think of a church or organization you can contact to see if they can set you up with someone willing to be a contact for you should you decide to call police or need a ride.
- SAFE Place can provide you with a free 911 phone that can call police when it's charged.

### **If you can get out of the house—**

- Think of a public place like a nearby school, church, organization or store that you could go to if you decide to leave home—somewhere you can stay until help arrives.
- Arrange with a neighbor to go to their house until help can arrive.
- If your abuser often locks you out of the house, hide an extra key somewhere outside.

### **If you can't get out of the house—**

- Think about the places in your home where there are not weapons (knives, guns, tools, etc.) If you think your abuser is going to hurt you, try to move to a weapon free place.
- Try to stay out of the kitchen, bathroom, garage, barn, workshop, etc if you think your abuser is going to hurt you.



# safety

## planning with pets

Abusers will often abuse pets and/or threaten to get rid of pets as a way to control you. Consider the following for your pet whether you are living with your abuser, planning to leave, or living on your own.

### **If you are planning to stay—**

- Try to keep emergency funds for your pet.
- Obtain the phone number to the nearest 24 hour veterinary clinic.
- Establish ownership of your pet by creating a paper trail of documents.
  - Obtain a license.
  - Have veterinarian records put in your name.

### **If you are planning to leave—**

- Obtain safe emergency shelter for your pet somewhere undisclosed to your abuser.
  - Make arrangements with a family member or friend.
  - Talk with vet about having your pet fostered while you find permanent housing.
- Pack a bag for your pet that includes:
  - Food, medicine, and leash
  - Documents of ownership
  - Health documents (vaccination records)
  - ID and rabies tag, if you have a dog or cat (these also help establish ownership)
- If you must leave without your pet, consider leaving food, bedding, litter, etc.

### **If you have left and taken pets with you—**

- Keep pets indoors if possible.
- Do not let the pet outside alone.
- Pick a safe route and time to walk your pet.
- Do not exercise/walk your pet alone.
- Change your veterinarian.
- Personal Protection Orders (PPO's) have provisions to keep your pet safe.





# safety

## in pregnancy

Pregnancy can increase the likelihood of being abused.

It is important for you to try to keep yourself and your unborn baby safe.

Consider the following ideas if pregnant.

- If you are in a home with stairs, try to stay on the first floor in case your abuser becomes violent.
- Get into the fetal position around your stomach if you are being attacked.
- Consider talking with your doctor about your situation and the safety of your unborn child.
  - If your partner goes with you to your appointments, try to find an opportunity to speak with the doctor or nurse alone.
- Ask your provider if a women's-only prenatal class is available and participate.



The background of the page is a vibrant blue watercolor wash, with darker shades on the left and lighter, more ethereal tones on the right, creating a sense of depth and movement. The text is overlaid on this background.

# safety

## when substance use is involved

While substance or alcohol use does not in itself cause abusive behavior, it can increase the likelihood and level of abuse. The abuser may offer it as an excuse. Drugs and alcohol are **NEVER** an excuse for violent or threatening behavior. Abuse is a **CHOICE**.

- If you know that your partner is using/drinking, think about a safe place for you and your children to stay for that night.
- Develop a plan for when your partner returns after using/drinking if you cannot leave.
- Consider your own substance and alcohol use and how that may affect your ability to reach out for help should a violent situation occur.
- Know that the use of any alcohol or drugs may reduce your awareness and ability to act quickly to protect yourself from the abusive partner.
- Look at how and when you use alcohol or substances. Identify safe places and people to surround yourself with while consuming these substances.
  - Is there a safer place to drink or use?
  - Who can I call for help if things start to escalate?

# safety

## when preparing to leave

Leaving an abusive relationship can be extremely dangerous. Developing a plan beforehand can increase your safety when you do leave. If you need assistance developing a plan for leaving, call SAFE Place. We can help you find your way.

- Have a packed bag of personal belongings, medications, important items and documents hidden or with a trusted family member or friend you consider safe.
- Determine the safest opportunity to leave that will allow you time to pack and remove your belongings without your abuser being present.
- Memorize/keep a list of important phone numbers some place safe in case your abuser takes your phone.
- Consider changing your phone number and password.
- Keep your cell phone charged and on you at all times.
  - If you do not have a cell phone, free 911 phones are available at SAFE Place.
- Obtain a post office box to receive mail.
- Open a bank account in your name only.
- Try to save money and hide it in a safe place.
- Have an extra set of car/house keys made and hidden.
- Travel different routes/change your routine.
- Plan for the safest mode of transportation to leave.
- Plan who you can stay with or where you can go to be safe.
  - This may be a shelter; call beforehand to check for availability of a room.
- If you need to return to the house, have someone go with you or call 911 to request a peace officer to come with you.
- **Practice your plan!**





## Examples of documents and items that should be packed or hidden in preparation for leaving safely

- ID
- Social security cards for you and your children
- Birth certificates for you and your children
- Bank statements
- Checks and ATM cards
- Credit cards, money
- Keys
- Medications for you and your children
- Health insurance cards
- Children's school and vaccination records
- PPO, divorce papers
- Medical records
- List of important phone numbers
- Jewelry or other valuables/meaningful family heirlooms

# safety

## with technology and social media

Abusers will often demand passwords, download tracking apps to your devices, and/or monitor your phone calls and messages. The following guidelines can help protect you as you use social media and technology.



- Change passwords often.
- Be aware that your abuser can monitor your social media handles without you knowing.
- Abusers can impersonate someone else to get in contact with you on social media.
- Turn off all location settings on all social media apps.
- Turn off GPS usage on cell phone.
- Remember everything you post is not always private; change privacy settings on all social media handles.
- Do not “friend” anyone you don’t know.
- Encourage your children not to use social media but if they do, make sure they aren’t posting where they are, taking pictures of the location, or checking in at places.
- Open a private email account that your abuser cannot access.
- Consider buying a pay as you go phone (911 phone) to have on you at all times in case your abuser takes your phone (free 911 phones are available at SAFE Place.)
- Set boundaries with the personal information you put on social media; do NOT include:
  - Phone numbers, address, email, birth date, school, job.
- Ask friends and family not to tag you in posts, photos, or checking in at places.
- Think about downloading safety apps on your phone.
  - **Aspire** is set up like a news app but has options to set up safety plans.
  - **One Love My Plan** assesses safety of relationship and gives options to find safety.
- Have a professional check your computer for tracking devices.
- Start your own phone plan if you are currently on the same plan as your abuser.
- Eliminate tracking apps that your abuser may have secretly downloaded on your phone by doing a Master Reset. Each phone is unique so see your provider or Google for instructions.



# safety

## while in shelter

If you are staying at a shelter, consider the following to increase your safety. Remember, leaving an abuser is often the most dangerous time for you and your children.

- Keep your plans and location of the shelter limited to trusted friends/family.
- Be aware of surroundings when outside of shelter.
  - Knowledge of nearby businesses and hours of operation.
  - Be ready and know where you can run for help.
  - Be aware of faces in the crowd.
- Avoid using normal routes and/or visiting usual places that your abuser would know to look for you.
- Always have your cell phone charged and with you (free 911 phones available at SAFE Place.)
- Set up a safety plan with a shelter advocate.
- Utilize shelter resources to assist in planning for your future.
- Avoid wearing hooded clothes or scarves that are easy to grab/yank while outside of shelter.
- Keep children close and aware of what to look for.
- Keep belongings organized and as secure as possible (be ready to relocate quickly.)



# safety

## in your own residence

If you are not living with your abuser, consider the following to increase safety at home.

- Change locks and make sure all windows and doors lock.
- If windows or doors don't lock, wedge something in the window so that it cannot be opened (if you have a sliding door, a broom handle works well to wedge the door shut.)
- Consider getting a pet that would alert you if someone were trying to get in.
- Obtain a security system, motion lights/detectors, etc.
- Alert landlord or neighbors about your situation and potential danger.
- Always have your cell phone charged and with you (free 911 phones available at SAFE Place.)
- Have a code word to alert friends/family to call the police.
- Identify a friend/family member who could stay with you (or you could go stay with) when you do not feel safe.
- Keep shelter phone numbers on hand.
- Be aware of surroundings whenever outside.
- Talk with children about not telling their other parent where they are living/staying.
- Set mouse traps, place barbed wire or pop cans around windows/doors.
- Keep car keys next to your bed so you can set off car alarm to alert neighbors.

# safety

## with a personal protection order



The following points offer additional security suggestions once you have obtained a PPO.

- Avoid initiating contact with your assailant.
- Call 911 if your PPO is violated.
- Keep a log of all violations of the PPO, hang-ups, harassing telephone calls, and texts.
  - Keep track of times, dates, what happened, if the police were called and if there were any witnesses.
- If the police are unable to arrest your assailant after a PPO violation, contact the PPO coordinator and discuss doing a “Show Cause” hearing.
- Keep a copy of your PPO on you at all times. If you lose it, contact the Circuit Court Clerk’s Office where it was issued for a new copy.
- Give a copy of your PPO to your employer and/or security office at work.
- If you work in a different county than where you live, give a copy to the local police department of the town in which you work.
- If you feel it is safe, inform friends, neighbors, employer and/or school that you have a PPO and ask them to call 911 if they see your assailant violating the PPO.
- Always have your cell phone charged and with you (free 911 phones available at SAFE Place.)
- About 6 weeks before your PPO expires, contact the PPO coordinator if you wish to have the expiration date extended (do NOT wait until the last day.)
- Be truthful in all statements you make to the court.
- The phone number for the Calhoun County PPO Office is 269.969.6921.



# safety

## on the job and in public

Abusers often know what a typical day involves for you and where you work. Consider the following ideas to increase safety when at work or out in public.

### **Safety during the work day—**

- Take a different route to work.
- Try to carpool with coworkers, family or friends.
- Park close to the entrance of the building, in view of a security camera if available.
- Have a coworker escort you to and from your car every day.
- Try to switch shifts so that your abuser does not know when you will be working.
- Keep personal information confidential.
- Notify supervisor or security of a PPO if you have one and provide a copy.
- Provide list of emergency contacts and pictures of abuser to your supervisor/security.

### **Safety while out in public—**

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Always have your cell phone charged and with you. (Free 911 phones available at SAFE Place.)
- Avoid distractions (including looking at phone) in order to be alert to what is around you.
- Try to travel with someone whenever possible.
- Avoid going out alone at night.
- Stay in well lit areas where there are a lot of people around.
- If you have a vehicle, park in well lit parking lots close to buildings.
- Carry car keys in hand with your finger on the car alarm button.
- If you do not have a vehicle, determine/utilize the safest mode of transportation for you.
- Carry keys between your fingers to use for protection if needed.



# safety:

## when you're not ready to leave

Below are safety and planning suggestions for those living in a home with an abuser.



### **Get informed about what is happening—**

- If it is safe to do so, look up information on websites about intimate partner violence, power and control, warning signs, and the reasons why the abuse is NOT your fault. (Be sure to delete the search history from your browser.)
  - [safeplaceshelter.org](http://safeplaceshelter.org)
  - [thehotline.org](http://thehotline.org)
  - [ncadv.org](http://ncadv.org)
- If it is NOT safe to look up information on your computer or phone, consider using a computer at the library or a friend/family member's house.
- If you do NOT have safe internet access, you can call SAFE Place at 269.965.7233 and speak to an advocate any time day or night to learn about domestic violence and safety planning.

### **Take care of yourself physically, emotionally & psychologically—**

- Brainstorm self-love messages to replace abusive messages meant to break you down.
- Reach out to family or friends who you connect with and feel safe talking to.
- Find joy wherever you can.
- Call SAFE Place and talk to an advocate or set up a free appointment with the counselor.
  - Counseling is available at SAFE Place, over the phone, or out in the community.
  - Support groups are also available.
- Attend doctor's appointments regularly, eat healthy, exercise, get enough sleep, etc.

### **Make a plan—**

- Hide an extra set of car and house keys outside in case you get locked out of the house or have to flee quickly.
- Set up a code word with a trusted neighbor, friend or family member to use if you are in danger.
- Always have your cell phone charged and with you. (Free 911 phones available at SAFE Place.)
- Practice your plan.
- Revisit your plan often in case you need to make any changes.



# resources

## **Calhoun County Resources**

Albion Police	<b>517.629.3933</b>
Battle Creek Police	<b>269.966.3363</b>
Bronson Battle Creek Hospital	<b>269.966.8000</b>
Calhoun County Sheriff	<b>269.781.0880</b>
Community Resource Directory	<b>211</b>
Circuit Court Clerk's Office	<b>269.969.6518</b>
Community Healthcare Connections	<b>269.969.6494</b>
Department of Health & Human Services	<b>269.966.1284</b>
Emmett Township Police	<b>269.968.9303</b>
Grace Health	<b>269.965.8866</b>
The Haven	<b>269.965.1148</b>
Inasmuch	<b>269.660.2945</b>
Legal Services of South Central Michigan	<b>269.965.3951</b>
Marshall Police	<b>269.781.2596</b>
Michigan State Police	<b>269.558.0500</b>
Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi Police	<b>269.729.5222</b>
Oaklawn Hospital—Marshall	<b>269.781.4271</b>
Personal Protection Order Office	<b>269.969.6921</b>
Prosecutor's Victim's Unit	<b>269.969.6944</b>
SAFE Place	<b>269.965.7233</b>
Sexual Assault Services	<b>269.245.3925</b>
Summit Pointe	<b>269.966.1460</b>

## **Barry & Eaton County Resources**

Barry County Circuit Court _____	<b>269.945.1286</b>
Barry County Prosecuting Attorney _____	<b>269.945.4850</b>
Barry County Sheriff _____	<b>269.948.4805</b>
Eaton County Circuit Court _____	<b>517.543.4335</b>
Eaton County Prosecuting Attorney _____	<b>517.543.4801</b>
Eaton County Sheriff _____	<b>517.543.3512</b>
Eve Inc.—Lansing _____	<b>517.372.5572</b>
Green Gables—Hastings _____	<b>269.945.4777</b>
MSU Sexual Assault Program _____	<b>517.372.6666</b>
SIREN/Eaton Shelter—Charlotte _____	<b>517.543.0748</b>



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f 269.966.2503

P.O. Box 199

Battle Creek, MI 49016-0199

All services are free and confidential.



[safeplaceshelter.org](http://safeplaceshelter.org)

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