

SAFETY PLANS

FOR ABORIGINAL WOMEN AND CHILDREN

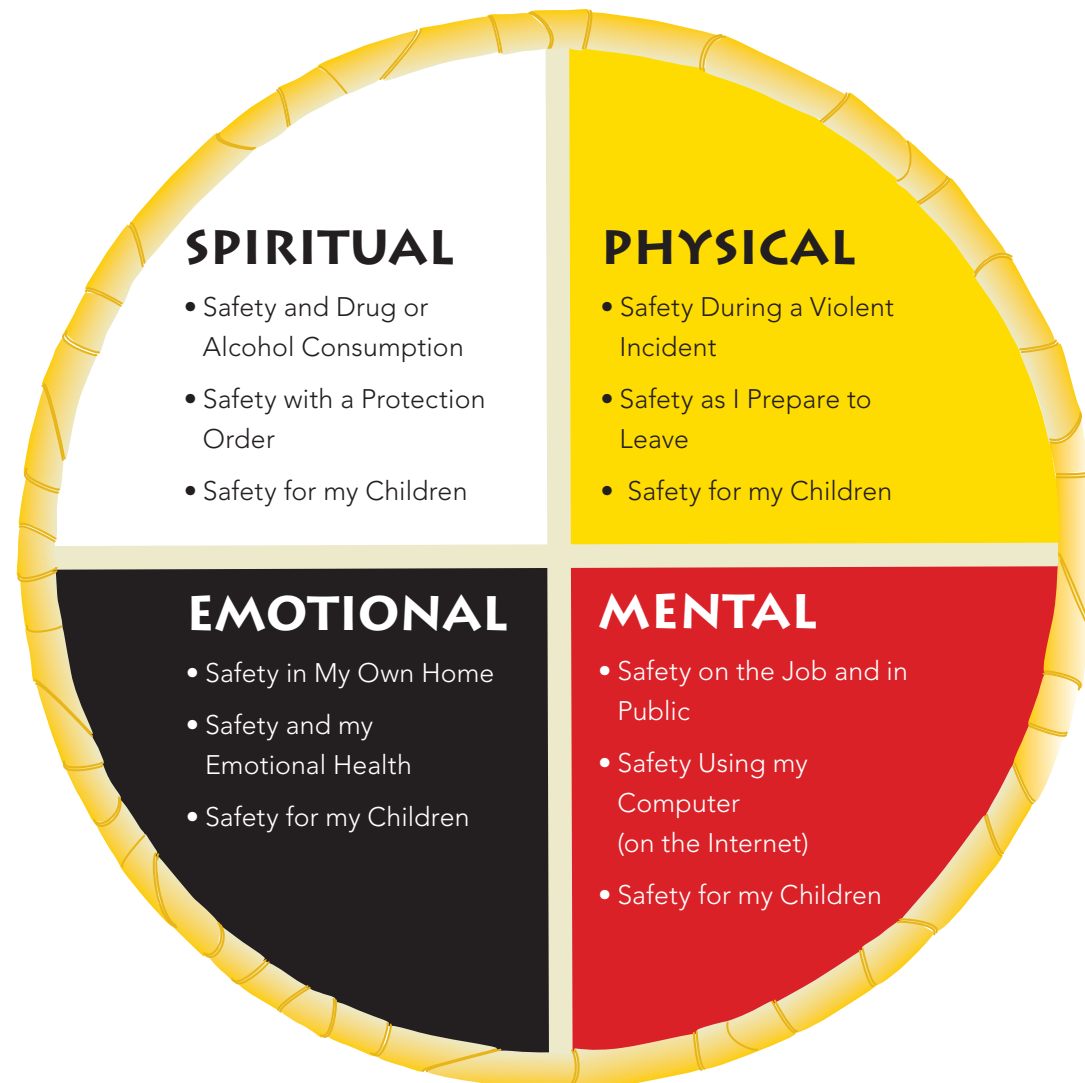


FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

SAFETY PLANS

Safety plans are important tools for abused women and children. A safety plan sets out possible actions you can take to increase your safety and the safety of your children. They can help you prepare for the possibility of further violence. There are many different aspects of safety planning.

The safety plans are presented using the medicine wheel teachings. You can explore safety-planning techniques across a range of elements. Most safety plans deal only with how to escape in a crisis and get to someplace safe. In addition to physical safety planning, the safety plans in this booklet also deal with the emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of being and keeping safe.



You can use the models in this booklet to create your own safety plans. Consider asking someone to help you make your safety plan. Although you will know best what might work for you, hearing another person's suggestions is always helpful. So, go ahead and ask a social worker at the Health Centre, or your local transition house or a friend to go over it with you. You may have to create some, or all, of these safety plans for yourself. If you know someone who is living with abuse, offer to help them to make a safety plan.

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SAFETY DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT

In order to increase safety during a violent incident, abused women may use a variety of strategies. Some strategies for you to consider are:

- 1 What is/are the possible escape route(s) from my home? What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, or fire escapes could I use: _____
- 2 I will take the time to practice how to get out safely.
- 3 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 a second set of keys made in case my (ex)partner takes the first set.
- 4 If it is safe for me, I could tell the following people about the violence and ask them to call the police if they think I am in danger.
- 5 My children's safety is central to my safety plan. I may be able to teach my children a safety plan just for them.
- 6 It may be helpful to have a code word to use with my children or other family members if I need them to call for help. My code word is _____.
- 7 Safe places that I can go if I need to leave my home:
 1. A place to use the phone: _____
 2. A place I could stay for a couple of hours: _____
 3. A place that I could stay for a couple of days: _____
- 8 During an abusive incident it is best to try to avoid places in the house where I may be trapped or where weapons are readily available such as the bathroom or kitchen. 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 In abusive situations, women sometimes say or do things that in they would not do or say if they were in a healthier relationship. For some women this involves survival skills such as claiming to agree with the abuser even when it's not true in order to increase safety. On other occasions, women may retaliate against the abuser with violence; however, be aware that such actions could lead to you being charged with a criminal offence.
- 11 Calling the Police can increase safety. Woman abuse is a crime; it is against the law. If there are reasonable and probable grounds to assume an assault has occurred, the Police are mandated to lay a charge of assault.
- 12 Given my past experience, other protective actions that I have considered/used are: _____

SAFETY AS I PREPARE TO LEAVE

Here are some actions to consider if you are leaving your abusive partner. Even if you are not planning to leave, it is important to have a safety plan in case the violence gets worse and you do have to leave quickly.

- 1 I should just leave without telling my partner because it may be dangerous to say that I am leaving.
- 2 If have to go quickly, I can leave some emergency cash, an extra set of house keys and car keys and some extra clothes with _____, and _____.
- 3 I can keep copies of important documents such as birth certificates, status cards and Medicare cards for myself and my children at _____.
- 4 I can open a savings account to increase my freedom to leave. I should make sure to tell the bank not to send any mail to my home address.
- 5 I can get legal advice from a lawyer who understands woman abuse. But I should make sure the lawyer knows not to send any letters to my home address. If I have call display at my home, I will let my lawyer know to use Call Block *67 when contacting me by telephone (refer to the front pages of your telephone book for information on Call Block).
- 6 I can call my local transition house. I can seek safe shelter and support.
- 7 I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I must be careful if I am using a telephone credit card because my (ex) partner could see the numbers I have called on next month's telephone bill. To keep telephone communications confidential, I can use a pay phone, a friend's phone, or a friend's calling card. If I have call display at my home, and I am concerned about my partner discovering who may be calling me, I should tell anyone who may want to call me how to use Call Block *67 so that their names and numbers will not appear on my home telephone (refer to the front pages of your telephone book for information on Call Block).
- 8 If I have to return home to get personal belongings, I can call the police and ask them to come with me and stand by and keep the peace. To do this, I call 911 and ask the police to meet me somewhere close to my home. They will stay while I pick up my own and my children's personal belongings
- 9 These are people in the community that I could ask for assistance with the following matters:
 - money: _____
 - childcare: _____
 - support attending appointments: _____
 - transportation: _____
 - other: _____
- 10 Telephone Numbers I Need to Know:

For safety reasons it may be necessary to keep these telephone numbers hidden (but accessible!) and/or memorize the numbers:

 - Police Department: _____
 - Other/Local Transition House (see page 2 of telephone book) _____
 - Health/Wellness Centre _____

- Victim Services _____
- Counselling/Mental Health _____
- Lawyer: _____
- Band Office: _____
- Minister/Priest/Elder: _____
- Local Family Violence Prevention Organization: _____
- Other: _____

- 11 I should take important items with me when I leave, if there is time. I will keep them all together in one location or put some of the outside the home. This will make it much easier if a leave in a hurry. Items I may want to take if I leave.
 - identification for myself and my children
 - birth certificates for myself and my children
 - status cards for myself and my children
 - protection order papers/documents
 - social insurance cards
 - school /vaccination records
 - jewellery
 - money
 - chequebook, bank book/cards
 - credit cards
 - keys - house/car/office
 - driver's license and registration
 - medications
 - passports
 - health cards
 - medical records
 - divorce/separation papers
 - address book
 - pictures/photos
 - children's favourite toy/blankets
 - items of special sentimental value
 - certificate of possession/deed to property

SAFETY IN MY OWN HOME

Following are some suggestions for safety measures in your own home. (Some of these safety measures cost money.)

- 1 If possible I could:
 - change the locks on my doors and windows (if you are renting you should check with your landlord, or if you own your own home, you should get legal advice before changing the locks)
 - install a peep hole in the door
 - replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors
 - install window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic alarm system
 - purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows
 - install smoke detectors and buy fire extinguishers for each floor
 - install a motion sensitive lighting system outside that lights up when a person is coming close to my home
 - leave the lights on

2 If we are arguing over custody and access of the children, I can tell the people who look after my children about who has permission to pick up my children and who does not. I can give them copies of the family court orders and a picture of the abusive partner. The people I will inform about pick up permission include:

- school: _____
- daycare staff: _____
- babysitters: _____
- Sunday school teacher: _____
- teacher: _____
- other: _____

3 I could inform: _____ (neighbour),
_____ (Band Office),
_____ (friend)
_____ (landlord / other)
that I am separated and they should call the police if they see my (ex)partner near my home.

4 Other things that I am already using or that I might use: _____

SAFETY WITH A PROTECTION ORDER

Protection orders are legal restrictions on movement and actions that come in different forms: peace bonds, restraining orders, bail conditions, parole conditions, child custody access orders, etc. Many abusers do obey protection orders, but one can never be sure which violent partner will obey and which will violate protection orders. It is often necessary to ask the police and the courts to enforce a protection order. The following are some steps that I can take to help support the enforcement of my protection order.

- 1 It is important to know the specifics and limitations of my protection order. I will find out the conditions and what they mean for my safety.
- 2 I can call the police station to ensure that the protection order is registered on CPIC (the police computer system).
- 3 If my (ex)partner violates the protection order, I can call the police and report the violation. Depending on the type of protection order, I can also contact my (ex) partner's parole/probation officer, and/or my lawyer. (It is important to report to the police every violation of the order).
- 4 If the police do not help, I can call the shift supervisor immediately at the police station and express my concern. I can also contact my (ex)partner's parole officer or my lawyer, as well as filing a complaint with the police.
- 5 I will keep my protection order document(s) (originals, if possible) in/at _____ (location). It is beneficial to keep the document(s) on or near me. It may also be helpful to keep a copy in a second safe location also.

- 6 If my (ex)partner destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the courthouse, my lawyer, or _____.
- 7 If it is safe to do so, I can inform my employer, my friend _____ and _____ that I have a protection order in effect.
- 8 I can call the Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick for more information about protection orders (506) 453-5369).

SAFETY ON THE JOB AND IN PUBLIC

Each abused woman must decide if and/or when she will tell others that her partner has abused her and that she may be at continued risk. Friends, family and co-workers may be able to help protect women. Each woman should consider carefully which people to recruit to help secure her safety.

I might do any or all of the following, if I feel comfortable and safe doing do:

- 1 I can tell my boss or supervisor and _____ at work about my situation.
- 2 I can ask _____ to screen my telephone calls at work and keep a record of them.
- 3 I could discuss the possibility of having my employer call the police if I am in danger from my (ex)partner.
- 4 I can use the following safety suggestions for arriving or leaving work:
 - let someone know when I'll be home
 - walk with someone to my car
 - look around the parking lot
 - if my partner is following me, I can drive to a place where there are supportive people, such as a friend's home or the police station
 - If I am walking, I can take a route where there are lots of people
 - I can take different routes home
 - If I see my partner on the street, I can go to a public place, e.g. store
 - I can buy a whistle or a personal alarm to call attention to myself and ask for help if I am being harassed..
- 5 I can use different grocery stores/shopping malls and shop at different times than I did before to reduce the risk of contact with my (ex)partner.

*It is important to have a safety plan
in case the violence gets worse*

SAFETY AND DRUG OR ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Sometimes a victim of abuse will drink alcohol or take mood-altering drugs to hide their pain. Some of this use is legal and some is not. Victims should know how this could affect them, for example,

- If you and the abuser have both been drinking it may be hard for the police to get an accurate statement about what happened.
- The abuser may use alcohol or other drugs as an excuse for violence.
- After being abused, you may be more likely to lash out at others, like your children, if you are drinking or using drugs.
- The use of any alcohol or other drugs can reduce your awareness and ability to act quickly to protect yourself from the abusive partner.
- A victim who is a parent could be at a disadvantage in legal actions with the abusive partner over custody and access of the children if she/he is known to use illegal/legal drugs.

SAFETY AND MY EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Being abused is exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of surviving requires much courage and incredible energy. To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to support myself in hard emotional times, I can do some of the following:

- 1 If I have left the relationship and I am experiencing loneliness or manipulative tactics from my abusive partner, I can take care of myself by _____.
- 2 When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can emotionally prepare by _____.
- 3 When I face potentially difficult times like court cases, meetings with lawyers and such, I can prepare by _____.
- 4 I can call _____ and _____ as other resources to support me.
- 5 I can find out about and attend workshops and support groups in the community by calling agencies and services such as the Health/Wellness Centre, Mental Health Centre, the Band Office, family services, family resource centres, a transition house in my area, or local family violence prevention organizations (for contact information for such organizations, please refer to the Resources and Networks booklet in The Healing Journey toolkit, or check out the website at www.thehealingjourney.ca).

SAFETY ON THE INTERNET

The Internet, including MSN Messenger, chat rooms and email, are wonderful tools for communicating with people near and far, sharing information and getting information. For a victim of abuse, however, using email and finding resources on the Internet can put you at increased risk for harm if your activities are being monitored by the abuser. And monitoring another person's activity on the Internet is not that difficult to do. Internet browsers record a history of recently visited web sites for fast reloading on your next visit. Your safety could be jeopardized if your abuser were to check this history. There are some things you can do to hide your Internet use. It may be safer to access information on the Internet from a friend's house, your workplace, a library or Internet cafe.

Service providers should advise a person in abusive personal relationships, such as an abused woman, about these risks and provide them with information on how to keep safe when surfing the net and using email.

The safest way to prevent an abuser from monitoring a partner's/spouse's Internet and email activity is to use a computer that no one in the family has access to. Some suggestions might be to use a computer in a library, community access centre, at work, or at a trusted friend's house. Sometimes it is possible to get an email address from a web-based email program, which will only be accessible with a password. Even when using a community computer, be sure to delete your "history" or the addresses of the sites you visited from that computer.

If you do not have access to an outside computer, then you should take extra care to delete the computer trail you have left behind in case someone is monitoring your activities. There are many different ways to erase your history depending on your computer (MAC or PC), your software and even the browser that you are using (Netscape, Explorer, etc.) Here are a few tips, but you should read your own computer manual on how to do this or use the Help function. **It is important for service providers to remind women that safety plans, even on the Internet, do not guarantee absolute safety.**

YOUR INTERNET ACTIVITIES CAN BE DISCOVERED

It may not be safe for you to access sites for information about family violence from your computer. Your abuser could discover what sites you have visited. To hide your Internet activities you need to clear the computer's memory of the most recent pages you have accessed on the Internet. This memory is the browser's cache. By emptying your computer's cache, your recently visited sites will be deleted. It is a good idea to access some sites on other subjects after you have cleared the cache so that it will have some items in it. For instance, check out the sites of newspapers, government, or entertainment.

If you use Internet Explorer:

Pull down the tools menu, select *Internet Options*. Choose the *General* tab, under *Temporary Internet Files*, click on "Delete Files". Under *History*, click on "Clear History" then click "OK".

If you use Firefox:

Pull down the Edit menu, select *Preferences*. Under *Privacy*, select *History* and click on the "Clear Browsing History Now" button. Then select *Cache* and click on "Clear Cache Now".

If you use Netscape:

Pull down the Edit menu, select *Preferences*. Under *Navigator*, click on the "Clear History" button. Then double click on *Advanced*, select *Cache*. Click on "Clear Disk Cache".

If you use AOL:

Pull down My AOL, select *Preferences*. Click on the WWW icon under *Temporary Internet Files*, click on "Delete Files". Under *History*, click on "Clear History".

If you do not know which browser you are using, pull down the *Help* menu, and click on *About*.

SAFETY FOR MY CHILDREN

Strategies for developing a safety plan with your child(ren) should include their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being. It is important to help children and youth learn ways to protect themselves. Children exposed to family violence can be profoundly affected. It is very traumatic to be faced with violence directed at them or someone they love. Personal safety is extremely important and safety planning is always necessary for children whose families are experiencing violence.

CRISIS SITUATION

Your child witnesses or is exposed to parents or caregivers who make threats of violence, cause injury, or damage to property or pets . . .

- Have your child identify a safe room/place in the house, preferably with a lock on the door, and a phone. The first step of any plan is for the children to get out of the room where the abuse is occurring.
- Teach the child how to call for help. It is important to ensure that the child know they should not use a phone that is in view of the abuser. This puts them at risk.
- Teach them how to contact police or band constables and their emergency numbers, or to call 911.
- Ensure that the child knows his or her street address and his or her full name
- Rehearse what they will say. In the case of young children it should be simple yet specific, i.e. "someone is hurting mommy".
- It is important for children to leave the phone off the hook after they are finished talking. The police will call the number back if the child hangs up. This could create a dangerous situation for yourself and the child.
- Teach the child about safe places to go such as a neighbour's or a relative's home.
- Make sure your children know that they should not feel responsible for the abuse. It is not their fault.
- Make sure your children know they should get to safety and that it is not their responsibility to distract the abuser or to get involved in the abusive episode.
- Make sure your children know that the most important thing they can do for their mothers and their families is to get out of the way!
- Make sure your children know that they are not expected to stop the abuse – other adults can do that.
- The most important thing for a child to know is that you love them and want them to keep themselves safe.
- Make sure the children know that knowing who to call and how to get help is the best way for children to help a parent who is being abused.
- There are people who can talk to them to help them deal with the pain of seeing their mother or others being abused.

KEY MESSAGES FOR CHILDREN

- 1 You are not to blame for the abuse.
- 2 You must not put yourself in danger.
- 3 Abuse is very dangerous, and it is against the law.
- 4 If you have a safe place, go there when the abuse is happening.
- 5 You are not responsible for your mother's safety, but you may be able to get help.
- 6 If you can get to a phone in your own house, a neighbour's house, or a pay phone, you can call for help.

HERE'S WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU CALL FOR HELP:

Dial: 9 1 1.

They will say: "POLICE, FIRE, AMBULANCE"

You answer: Police

Then say:

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 _____.

It may not be safe for you to stay on the phone. If it is not safe tell the person that. Then just put the phone down. **DO NOT HANG UP.** If you hang up, the police may call you back.





WWW.THEHEALINGJOURNEY.CA