



Lorain County Safe Harbor

a collaborative community effort to provide a responsive system of care for victims while also raising awareness about domestic violence

Safety Plan - Returning to Abuser

with Children

If you are considering or need to return to an abusive situation with children, safety planning is critical. This guide provides practical steps to protect yourself and your children, including strategies for staying as safe as possible, securing important documents, identifying safe contacts, and planning for emergencies. Your safety and well-being matter—use this plan to navigate your situation with care and support.

DETAILED PLAN INSIDE



*Complete according to individual's situation. Not all will apply.

Safety Plan – Going Back (with children)

It may help you, your children, and your pets stay safe if you develop a plan for your safety ahead of time. If you need some help working out your personal safety plan, you may want to ask a trusted friend, another survivor of abuse, or call **Genesis House at 440-244-1853, option 1**. The design of a safety plan is an ongoing process. It is a good idea to review it periodically, so you will be prepared to use it. Keep it in a safe place where your abuser is not likely to find it or give it to a trusted person for safe keeping.

Know that doing what you need to do to be safe in the moment, such as placating your partner's needs or giving in to what they want does not mean that you are "accepting the abuse." You need to do what you can to survive.

The following steps represent your plan for increasing your safety and preparing in advance for the possibility of further violence. Although you do not have control over your partner's violence, you do have a choice about how to respond to your partner and how to best get yourself and your children to safety.

Planning to stay in the relationship or return to the home. For my safety, I can use some or all of the following strategies:

1. I have a support network in my life that I can talk to about my situation. My support network includes: _____
2. I can tell _____ (neighbor/friend) about the violence and ask them to call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.
3. I will devise a code word to alert my children, family, friends, and neighbors to the need for police intervention. My code word is: _____.
4. I will practice getting out of my home safely. The best doors, windows, elevators, or stairwells to use are _____.
5. If I have to leave home, I will go _____. I realize I need to make a plan even if I don't think I will need to get out.
6. I will pack an overnight bag (see **Safety Bag** below) and keep it at/in _____. (friend or relative's home or an easily accessible place your abuser won't find it)
7. If I need to leave, I can stay with _____.
8. _____ might be able to lend me some money if I need it.
9. I will keep Genesis House hotline close at hand (**440-244-1853, option 1**) or I can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **800-799-7233**.
10. If possible, I will safely remove weapons from the home. I may be able to turn them in to law enforcement for safe keeping.
11. I will review my safety plan often so that when it comes time to leave, I will know exactly what to do.



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Safety Plan – Going Back (with children)

12. I will teach my children:

- a. Not to get in the middle of a fight.
- b. How to get to safety. They can run to _____ or hide _____ if a fight breaks out.
- c. To call for help: 911 or a neighbor, friend or family member who you trust. These people include and their numbers are _____

- d. An escape route. They can get out by _____

Safety During an Explosive Incident

1. I know my abuser is about to get upset when _____
_____.
These red flags let me know I need to plan for my safety.
2. If an argument seems unavoidable, I will try to have it in a room that can be easily exited. I will stay away from the bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, garage or any other room likely to contain a weapon or dangerous or sharp objects. I will also avoid rooms without access to an outside door or window. Rooms I need to avoid are _____
_____.
3. I will use my instincts and judgment. If the situation is very dangerous, I will give my abuser whatever they want to help calm them down. This does not mean I accept the abuse or think I deserve it. I have the right to protect myself until I am out of danger. I will always remember; I don't deserve to be hit or threatened.
4. I will go to a room with a phone or keep my cell phone on me at all times.
5. If I need to get out of the house, I can say I need to go _____.
If this happens at night, I can say I need to go _____.
I can find a believable reason to leave if I need to.
6. I will plan an easy escape and identify windows or doors you can use quickly and safely. These windows and doors are _____
7. I know I can go _____ to call for help.
8. If I call the police, I will:
 - a. Get the responding officer's name and badge number.
 - b. Show my injuries to the police officer. If my injuries appear worse in the next few days, I will go to the police station to get them photographed and/or photograph them myself.
 - c. I will ask for the case number or incident number.
 - d. If an Emergency Protective Order was not offered and I want one, I will ask for one.
 - e. I will tell the reporting officer in detail what happened and what was said. It is important for them to know if **threats of any kind** were made and if there are **weapons of any kind** in the house. If there are firearms, the police officer may remove them for safe keeping.



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- f. If I don't want to call 911 I can call the non-emergency dispatch and ask for an officer to come to my house to take a report. The non-emergency number is _____.
- g. I can also go to the police station to make a report.
- h. I will keep my own records of when I made my report and to whom.

Planning to leave: I know that leaving is the most dangerous time. I must act carefully and plan ahead as much as possible.

- 1. If I feel safe doing so, I will tell a trusted family member or friend. I can trust _____ to know about my situation.
- 2. I know my situation best and I can decide when the best time is to leave. Every situation is different. Possible times I can leave are:
 - a. When my abuser is at work or away for an extended period
 - b. When I need to leave the house for another reason (doctor/work/taking children to school), I will go to _____ (predetermined safe place) to let someone know I need help.
 - c. I will find a reason to go to the emergency room and tell them what's going on. Some excuses I can use are _____.
- 3. I will keep a phone in a safe room that I can lock from the inside or try to have my cell phone on me at all times.
- 4. I will keep in mind that if I use my cell phone, the next month's bill might tell my abuser numbers that I called after I left. I could ask to use _____'s phone or I can buy a burner phone.
- 5. Some important numbers I need to write down and memorize are _____.
_____. I
This is important in case my phone gets broken, lost, or destroyed. I will also email them to myself so I can access them anywhere.
- 6. I will make a list of available resources. Genesis House is available 24/7 at **440-244-1853, option 1**. Other resources are _____.
- 7. Every chance possible, I will put money away. If I use my abuser's debit or credit card to purchase groceries for example and they don't check receipts, I can get cash back at the register or purchase prepaid debit cards and put them in my safety bag. Other ways I can save and hide money are _____.
_____.
- 8. If my abuser suspects that I am planning to leave, they are likely to use the following tactics to control me and keep me from leaving: _____

_____.
To counteract this, I will _____

_____.



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Preparing My Children to Leave:

1. I will let my child's teacher and principal know enough about the situation so they can be prepared in case of a crisis. The school phone number is _____
2. I can safely pick up my kids from school by _____

3. I will inform people who take care of my children who has permission to pick them up and that my partner is not permitted to do so. The people I need to inform about pick-up permission may include:
 - i. School _____
 - ii. Day Care Staff _____
 - iii. Baby-sitter _____
 - iv. Faith leader _____
 - v. Others _____

Preparing My Pets to Leave:

- A shelter or boarding facility my pet can go to is: _____
and their contact information is: _____.
- A friend/family member who can keep my pet is: _____.
Their phone number is: _____.
- I will keep these items in an easily accessible location:

extra food	
medications	
pet carrier	
collars	
leashes	

Safety Once I'm Away from My Abuser:

- If I am able to remain in the house:
 - After my abuser has left, I will change the locks on my doors and secure my windows with additional locks and safety devices.
 - I will install a motion detected outside lighting system.
 - I will install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.
 - I will tell my neighbors and/or building manager that my partner no longer lives with me and they should call the police if they are seen near my home.
 - I will call my local domestic violence shelter or the National Domestic Violence Hotline to find out if there is funding to help me with these costs.
 - These tips can also be applied if and when I move into a different residence.
- I will discuss a safety plan my children can use when I am not with them. Our plan is



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- I will let your children's school and daycare know that only _____ has permission to pick them up.
- I can take a self-defense class.
- If I need to escape from my home, my plan is: _____
- I will change my routine, for example I will go to a different grocery store, mall, or gym.
- I will take a different route home from work and work to home.
- I will try to never travel by myself.
- To increase my independence, I will open a savings or credit card account in my own name. I will cancel any accounts shared by or accessible to my abuser. The phone number to cancel my current account is _____.
- My account number is _____.
- I will have my cell phone with me at all times and keep it charged. I will keep a charger with me at home, in my car, and at work.
- I will save all threatening voicemails and emails.

Safety With a Protection Order

- I will keep my protective order on me at all times. I will give a copy to a trusted neighbor or family member as well as my employer.
- I will call the police immediately if my abuser breaks the protective order.
- Protective measures I can take while I wait for the police to arrive are: _____
- I will inform family, friends, neighbors, and my healthcare provider that I have a protective order in effect.

Safety Planning at Work

- At work, I will inform _____ of my situation. I will also tell my supervisors, security personnel and human resources. I will provide a copy of my protective order and a picture of my abuser so they know who to look for.
- Every time I leave work, I can ask _____ to escort me to my car or bus and wait with me until I am safely en-route. I will vary the ways I travel from work to home.
- I can ask _____ to help screen my calls at work or route my calls through the office receptionist.
- I will lock the door to my office or department if possible.
- I can commute to work with _____.



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- Changes I can make at work may include:
 - My phone number or extension
 - Asking to move to a different department, desk, shift, or work site.
 - I can ask to vary my work hours.
- I will ask my employer if there are policies that may be able to help me. Policies I can ask about are: paid or unpaid leave, disability, collective bargaining agreements, sexual harassment, and/or domestic violence or workplace violence policies.

Safety with Technology and Social Media

- I am aware that my location can be tracked in several ways. These include:
 - My cell phone location
 - My child's cell phone location
 - Social media locations and check-ins
 - Apps that me and/or my child use on our phones
 - Tracking devices on my vehicle
- I will turn off my location permissions on my apps and my location on my phone.
- I may consider purchasing a burner phone to use for the time being or open a new cell phone account, separate from my abuser. My current phone company and their contact information is _____. My account number is _____.
- I will sign out of my email on all devices and change my password so that my abuser can not access my email and all of my accounts connected to that email address.
- I will open a new email account and either close or stop using my previous email account.
- I will sign out of all my social media accounts on all devices and change my passwords.
- I will block my abuser. Other people I should block that are connected to my abuser or that I can't trust with my safety include: _____

- I will change the privacy settings on all my social media accounts.
- I will limit my time on social media until I feel more confident in my new situation and safe from my abuser.
- I will limit the information I choose to share and who I am sharing it with.
- If I find a recording or tracking device, I will consider my safety before removing it. If I'm still in the relationship with my abuser, I understand that removing it or letting it be known that it was discovered may put me in further danger. I may choose to leave it for the time being and remove it at a time that is safer for me. Knowing it is there can help me know how to behave safely and it is possible that it can help me collect my own evidence.
- A toolkit is available at **techsafety.org** that can help me further with technology safety.



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- To find information on how to check my devices for rooting and jailbreaking (meaning someone has been able to get into and monitor my devices and change settings), I can visit <https://www.techsafety.org/rootjailbreakcheck>.
- I will document everything!
 - I can create a secret email account, unknown to my abuser. I can send evidence to myself via email, or save in the cloud or google drive. I will remember to always sign out of this email on devices shared with or accessible to my abuser.
 - I will take screenshots of text messages as well as social media messages and posts. I can print these screenshots, save them in a document, email them to myself, save them in a cloud, etc. I will find a way to save them!
 - I may also record videos, including screen recordings.
 - I can record and save voicemail messages by making an audio recording on my phone.
 - I will remember to include times and dates of the screenshots and recordings if possible, as well as names and phone numbers or social media accounts.
 - I will document all incidents of abuse. I will take pictures of any injuries or destroyed property caused by the abuse.

Safety and Drug or Alcohol Consumption

- If I am planning to consume alcohol or drugs, I will do so in a safe place and with people who understand your situation and are committed to your safety. These people include: _____.
- If my partner is consuming drugs or alcohol, I can plan ahead and stay safe by _____.
It's possible to go to a safe room, such as _____ or I can leave the house and go _____.
- I can safeguard my children by _____.
They may be able to stay with _____ for the night.

Emotional Safety

- If I am thinking of returning to a potentially abusive situation, I will discuss my options with _____.
- If I must communicate with my partner, the safest way to do so is by _____.
- I will maintain positive thoughts about myself. I know that I am _____.



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- Books, articles, and poems that help me feel stronger are _____
_____.
- I can call _____ for support and to talk
freely about my feelings and my situation.
- I plan to attend a support group with Genesis House.
- Family and friends that I would like to strengthen my relationships with and gain
support from are _____.
- I will seek out other survivors of intimate partner violence to gain support and
understanding.



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Safety Bag

- I will pack a “safety bag” and store it in a place where my abuser will not find it. A place I could store it is _____. I could also give it to _____ for safe keeping.

A list of important phone numbers such as _____	
Money or debit/credit cards to pay for food, gas, and other necessities.	
A phone charger	
Copies of important keys – house/office/storage/car	
Medications or copies of prescriptions	
Sentimental items such as _____	
An extra set of clothes for me and my children	
Extra prepaid cell phone	
Originals or color copies of important documents like:	
Social Security cards	
birth certificates	
passports	
immigration paperwork	
School and medical records	
Identification, driver's license	
Car registration	
Lease or rental agreement	
Banking information	
Insurance cards	
Abuser's social security and license numbers	
Public benefits cards	
Work permits	
Green card	
Divorce papers	
Custody papers	
Medical records	
Any other important personal papers such as _____	
Important documents for pets. Examples include:	
Proof of ownership such as animal license or adoption papers	
Proof of vaccinations	
ID tags	
Vet records	
Medications	
<i>Care instructions</i>	