

# What Is a Safety Plan?

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A Safety Plan is a set of actions you can take if you stay with the abuser, while preparing to leave the abuser, and/or after you have left.

## ❑ IDENTIFY SERVICE AND SUPPORT OPTIONS

- Find out what domestic violence services are offered in your area, and what their phone numbers are. There are over 40 LGBTQ anti-violence programs (AVPs) across the country.

## ❑ START A DATED JOURNAL OF YOUR ABUSE

- Include threats, stalking, and destruction of property. Add photos if you can.
- Begin recruiting supporters and develop code words.
- Transgender people may need to think very carefully about who they know who they can trust to keep confidential information from the abuser. Begin sharing your situation and ask them specifically if they would be willing to help you if the situation got worse.

## ❑ STOCK YOUR WALLET AND ITS BACKUP

- Keep your wallet with important identification, credit cards, and other material with you at all times.
- It is common for abusers to become angry and increase the level of violence when their partner leaves, even if they intend to come back. Begin planning for this eventuality by developing two useful habits.

## ❑ BECOME AWARE OF YOUR ELECTRONIC TRAIL

## ❑ DEVELOP HABITS THAT REGULARLY TAKE YOU OUT OF THE HOME

### ❑ STAYING SAFE AT HOME

- Scout out your home.
- Sometimes when it's not possible to avoid a peak violent episode, a victim can still maneuver that outburst to a safer spot.

### ❑ YOU WANT TO AVOID

- Being cornered in closets, small spaces, or bathrooms;
- Rooms where weapons (guns) or potential weapons (knives, fireplace tools, or fire extinguishers) are stored; and
- Stairways, unless you are using them to flee the home.

### ❑ YOU DO WANT

- Rooms with a phone and/or a door or window you can escape out of.

## ❑ RECRUIT YOUR NEIGHBORS

- While some trans and gender non-conforming people do not feel like calling the police is helpful, others do. If you do want the police called when you are in danger, consider talking to trustworthy neighbors and asking them to call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from your house

## ❑ EMERGENCY SAFETY BAG

- This bag should be stored in a safe and easily accessible place, such as a friend's or family member's home, at work, in a car trunk, or any place to which the abuser will not have access.

## ❑ FINANCIAL PLANNING

- Many transgender people are living paycheck (or benefits check) to paycheck and find it extremely difficult to put aside money that can be used in an emergency. Whatever you can put aside, however, even if it is just the change from your pocket every day, will increase your options should the abuse you have experienced gets worse.
- If possible, open a new account that does not have your abuser's name on it, and have the statements sent to an address you do not share with the abuser (such as a post office box).
- Given how few transgender people are protected by marriage and/or community property laws, allowing any asset to be held only in your abuser's name may mean you will lose whatever equity you put into the asset

## ❑ SAFE HAVENS

- Transgender people who experience domestic abuse have fewer options for finding safety than most non-transgender (female) victims. If you live in an area with an LGBTQ anti-violence program, contact them first, as they may know who might serve you and will advise and advocate for you no matter what other services you may be able to access.

## ❑ SAFETY IN YOUR NEW PLACE

- Consider getting a restraining order.
- Recruit allies
- Revisit your safety plan and repack your emergency safety bag.
- Install home security measures.
- Stop your electronic trails.
- Screen incoming and outgoing calls.
- Keep records of the abuser's attempts to contact you.

## ❑ SAFETY ON THE JOB AND IN PUBLIC

- Abusers commonly come to the workplaces of victims who have left them. If your company or building has security personnel, give them a photograph and name of the abuser and tell them you are not interested in speaking with them/zir/him/her.

## ❑ CREATE A WORKPLACE SAFETY PLAN

## ❑ VARY YOUR ROUTE TO AND FROM WORK

## ❑ ORDERS OF PROTECTION

- All states permit some people to obtain a legal order of protection against someone who threatens them
- Although procedures for obtaining an order of protection vary from state to state, they all involve contact with the court and, possibly, law enforcement, and some trans people therefore do not wish to try to obtain one
- Most LGBTQ anti-violence programs can provide advocates and/or advice on how to file for a protective order in your jurisdiction.

## ❑ PROTECTING CHILDREN AND PETS

- If you have children living with you, they are almost invariably already aware of your partner's anger and/or abuse. They will most likely be less afraid, not more, if you teach them what they can do when you are abused and/or they are afraid.
- Therefore, teach them not to get in the middle of a fight between you and your abuser. Develop a signal you can use if you want them to summon help or call 911.
- If you have pets, you will need to make plans for them in case you need to or decide to leave. Some shelters will temporarily board the pets of people who are fleeing domestic violence, so call your local shelter ahead of time to find out if this is a possibility for you.

## ❑ EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

- A common hallmark of domestic violence is that the victim has become isolated from other people. It is important to recognize that everyone needs other people, and that if you are isolated, you need to take steps to bring more people into your life. Remember... 1 in 4 people have been in a situation similar to what you are experiencing. You are not alone, and you need others' input to help you stay safe and sane if you are living with an abusive partner or have just left one.

## ❑ DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS AND LGBTQ ANTI-VIOLENCE PROGRAMS OFTEN HAVE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES AT NO COST