

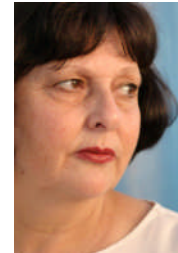


Women's Resource Center

Serving Victims of Family Violence and Sexual Assault



Safety From An Abuser



Your safety is dependent upon your ability to recognize potentially dangerous trends and situations. Good planning on your part is critical. By reviewing the following information, you can find out some of the various precautions you can take to protect yourself.

Safety with an Abuser

- Your abuser may have patterns to his abuse. Know how violent your abuser tends to get. Know any signs that show he's about to become violent. Know how dangerous a situation may be for you and your children.
- If it looks like violence may happen, try to leave if you can.
- Know things that your abuser can use as a weapon. He may use sharp or heavy objects, like a hammer or an ice pick, to hurt you. Choking is particularly dangerous and can be life threatening.
- Know where guns, knives, and other weapons are. If you can, lock them up or make them as hard to get to as you can.
- Figure out "safe places" in your home - places where there aren't weapons. If it looks like your abuser is about to hurt you, try to get to a safe place. Stay out of the kitchen, garage, or workshop. Try to avoid rooms with tile or hardwood floors.
- Don't run to where the children are. Your abuser may hurt them too.
- If there's no way to escape violence, make yourself a small target. Dive into a corner and curl up into a ball. Protect your face and put your arms around each side of your head, wrapping your fingers together.
- If you can, always have a phone you can get to.
- Know the numbers to call for help. Know where the nearest pay phone is. Know your local battered women's shelter number. Don't be afraid to call the police or 911.
- If you need help in a public place, yell "FIRE". People respond more quickly to someone yelling "fire" than to any other cry for help.
- Let friends and neighbors you trust know what is going on. Make a plan with them for when you need help. Have a signal, like flashing the lights on and off or hanging something out the window, to tell them you need help.
- Teach your children how to get help. Tell them not to get involved if your abuser is hurting you. Plan a code word to let them know that they should get help or leave the house.
- Practice how to get out safely. Practice with your children.
- Plan for what you will do if your children tell your partner about your plan or if your partner finds out about your plan some other way.
- Make a habit of backing the car into the driveway and having a full tank of gas. Keep the driver's door unlocked and others locked -- for a quick escape.
- Try not to wear scarves or long jewelry. Your abuser could use these things to strangle you.
- Create several reasons he'll believe for leaving the house at different times of the day or night.
- Call a domestic violence hotline from time to time to talk about your options and to talk to someone who understands you.
- Tell your children that violence is never right, even when someone they love is being violent. Tell them that the violence isn't their fault or your fault. Tell them that when anyone is being violent, it is important to keep safe.
- Keep any evidence you can of physical

abuse. Make sure to keep this evidence in a safe place that your abuser will not find. This might include:

- Any pictures you have of bruises or other injuries. If you're taking pictures of your injuries, try to have these pictures dated.
- Any household objects that your abuser tore or broke.
- Any pictures that show your home is destroyed or messed up after violence happened.
- Any records that you have from doctors or the police that document the abuse.
- Keeping a journal about the abuse. Write down how he abused you, any way that he threatened you, and when these things happened.
- Anything else you think could help show that you've been abused.
- Tell someone you trust what is happening to you.
- If you are hurt, go to a doctor or an emergency room. Tell them what happened. Ask them to make a record of your visit and what happened. Get a copy.
- Plan with your children. Figure out a safe place for them to go. This might be a room with a lock or a friend's house where they can go for help. Make sure they know that their job is to stay safe, not to protect you.
- Contact your local domestic violence organization or battered women's shelter. They can tell you about laws and other resources available to you before you have to use them during a crisis.
- Try to set money aside. You can ask friends or family members to hold money for you.
- Make a plan for how you are going to leave and where you're going to go. Make a plan for leaving if you have time to prepare. Make another plan for leaving if you have to leave in a hurry.
- A worker at a domestic violence organization can help you make a plan to leave as safely as you can. Also, www.leavingabuse.com "Leaving Abuse Safely" can help you think of ways to leave safely.
- If you're going to leave secretly, plan ahead and cover your tracks. A domestic violence worker and www.leavingabuse.com "Leaving Abuse Safely" can help you come up with plan.
- You can ask the police to escort you out of the house as you're leaving. You can also ask them to be "on call" while you're leaving.
- Put aside as much emergency money as you

can.

- Hide an extra set of car keys in a place you can get to easily.
- Get a bag together with:
 - spare car keys;
 - money;
 - phone numbers for friends, relatives, doctors, schools, taxi services, and your local domestic violence organization;
 - a change of clothing for you and your children;
 - medication that you or your children usually take;
 - copies of your children's birth certificates, social security cards, school records and immunizations;
 - copies of legal documents for you and your abuser. This may include social security cards, passports, greencards, medical records, insurance information, birth certificates, marriage license, wills, and welfare identification information;
 - copies of financial documents for you and your abuser. This may include pay stubs, bank account information, a list of credit cards you hold by yourself or together with your abuser;
 - the evidence you've been collecting to show that you've been abused; and
 - a few things you want to keep, like photographs, jewelry or other personal items.

Hide this bag somewhere he will not find it. Try to keep it at a trusted friend or neighbor's house. Avoid using next-door neighbors, close family members, or mutual friends. Your abuser might be more likely to find it there

If you're in an emergency and need to get out right away, don't worry about gathering these things. While they're helpful to have, getting out safely should come first.

As you are leaving

As you're leaving, grab the bag you hid, your driver's license, any checkbooks, and credit cards if you can. If there's time, take the originals of documents you might need - like birth certificates, social security cards, legal documents and financial documents. If you are

in an emergency and need to get out right away, leave them. While they're helpful to have, getting out safely should come first.

Create a false trail. Call motels, real estate agencies, schools in a town at least six hours away from where you plan to go. Ask them questions that will need to be answered by them calling you back. Give them your old phone number.

Safety when going to court

If you are going to court for a final protective order, your abuser may also be coming to court. Here are some ideas on keeping safe in court.

Getting to court:

- Plan on getting to court an hour or more before your hearing. That way, you may get to court before your abuser does. This can make it safer for you to get into the building.
- Try to get a domestic violence worker to go with you. It can really help with safety. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE) to find help near you.
- Bring a friend or family member with you.
- See if your police department or sheriff's department will take you to the courthouse. Ask them to meet you **away** from the courthouse. Ask the officer to walk you inside. Have the officer wait with you until the bailiff or courthouse security is around.
- Have a friend drive you. It's best to get someone whose car your abuser doesn't know. Ask your friend to drop you off at the courthouse entrance, instead of having you walk in from the parking lot.

If you have to drive yourself, try to keep your abuser from recognizing your car. If you can, borrow or rent a car that your abuser doesn't know.

Once you're inside the courthouse:

- Travel in a group with the people who came with you. Pick a person who will only pay attention to the surroundings and safety considerations.
- Find someone who knows the court well - like the domestic violence worker or someone who works at the court. Ask them about safe places you can hide inside the court. Some safe places to hide might be witness rooms or where courthouse security is. Ask them where all the exits are, in case you have to leave in a hurry. Besides the main exit, there may be exits

through the courtrooms, side exits, or exits through the judges' chambers (their offices).

- Let the bailiff or courthouse security know if your abuser sits next to you or tries to harass you. Ask the bailiff to keep your abuser away from you.

Leaving the courthouse:

- At the end of your hearing, ask the judge to "detain" your abuser - to hold him until you can leave.
 - If the judge doesn't detain your abuser, think about letting your abuser leave first. Then wait a long time before leaving.
 - Have a police officer or sheriff walk out with you.
- Have a friend pick you up at the exit.

After Leaving the Abusive Relationship

If you are getting a restraining order and your abuser is leaving:

- Change your locks.
- Put dead bolt locks on your doors.
- If you can, replace any wood doors with steel or metal doors.
- If you have the money, think about installing a security system.
- Try to make sure that the outside of your house is well-lit. Think about getting a lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to the house (motion sensitive lights).
- Keep bushes, trees, and other plants around your house well-trimmed. That way, you'll be able to see more of what is happening outside.
- Change your phone number. Tell the phone company to not list your new phone number.
- Call the telephone company to request caller ID. Ask that your phone be blocked so that if you call, neither your partner or anyone else will be able to get your new, unlisted phone number.
- If you can, change the hours that you work. Take different routes to work. Avoid the route you took when you and your abuser were together.
- When you're taking the children to school, take different routes. Avoid the route you took when you were with your abuser.
- Tell anyone who takes care of your children who is allowed to pick up your children. Explain your situation to them. Give them a copy of

your restraining order.

- Take a different route to the grocery store, hardware store, restaurants, and any other place you go on a regular basis. Use different places if you can.
 - Try not to travel alone. Stay in public and well-lit places as much as you can.
 - Avoid walking or jogging alone.
 - Keep a certified copy of your restraining order with you at all times.
 - Let friends, neighbors and employers know that you have a restraining order in effect;
 - Give copies of your restraining order to your employers, neighbors, and schools. Also give them a picture of your abuser.
 - Tell people you work with about the situation. See if a receptionist or someone else can screen your calls.
 - Call law enforcement if your abuser violates the order.
 - Carry a cell phone if you can, but don't count on it too much. Cell phones may not get good service in some places, and batteries do run out. Ask your local domestic violence organization if they give out cell phones. Have emergency numbers on speed dial.
 - If you need help in a public place, yell "FIRE". People respond more quickly to someone yelling "fire" than to any other cry for help.
 - Stay in touch with your local domestic violence organization for support.
- Get a full check-up with your doctor to see if you need medical treatment. Keep in mind that your abuser may not have been faithful. Consider getting tested for sexually transmitted diseases.

Internet Security

Computer usage can be monitored by an abuser and is impossible to completely hide. There are ways that an abuser can access your email and also find out where you have been on the internet. It is impossible to hide all your tracks.

There are many ways that a computers records everything you do on the Internet. If you are in danger, please try to use a safer computer that someone abusive does not have direct access, or even remote (hacking) access to. You can go to a public terminal at a library, community center, or domestic violence organization.

For additional information and assistance, please go to The National Center for Victims of Crime page on **Cyberstalking**:
[www.ncvc.org/src/main.aspx?dbID=DB Cyberstalking814](http://www.ncvc.org/src/main.aspx?dbID=DB%20Cyberstalking814)

The information below provides some ways that you can cover some of your tracks. Please be aware that you cannot cover all your tracks. It is not possible to delete or clear all computer "footprints".

E-MAIL: If an abuser has access to your email account, he or she may be able to read your incoming and outgoing mail. Be sure to check your "Sent Mail" folder and delete any messages you do not want your abuser to see. If you believe your account is secure, make sure you choose a password he or she will not be able to guess.

If you send an email from a computer you share with someone, make sure that when you click on an email link, the return address on the email is yours. If you are not sure about the return address, it is safer to write an email directly from your account as you usually do and then copy and paste (or type) your email address into the address line.

If an abuser sends you threatening or harassing email messages, they may be printed and saved as evidence of this abuse. Additionally, the messages may constitute a state or federal offense. For more information on this issue, contact the District Attorney in your county or your local United States Attorney's Office.

HISTORY/CACHE FILES: If an abuser knows how to read your computer's history or cache file (automatically saved web pages and graphics), he or she may be able to see information you have viewed recently on the Internet. You can clear your history or empty your cache file in your browser's settings.

After you've cleared your history or emptied your cache, you should visit a few "innocent" websites, like your local weather page, a website about kid's activities, a recipe list, or any websites your abuser already knows you routinely visit. This will make it less obvious that you've recently cleared your History or Cache.

Here's how to clear your History/Cache files:

Netscape: Pull down EDIT menu, select PREFERENCES. Click on NAVIGATOR and choose 'CLEAR HISTORY'. Click on Advanced then select Cache. Click on "CLEAR DISK CACHE".

On older versions of Netscape: Pull down OPTIONS menu. Select NETWORK OPTIONS, Select CACHE. Click on "CLEAR DISK CACHE". Additionally, make sure that the "USE INLINE

AUTOCOMplete" box is NOT checked. (If checked, this function will complete a partial web address while typing a location in the address bar at the top of the browser.)

Internet Explorer: Open the TOOLS menu, choose INTERNET OPTIONS, then choose the GENERAL tab at the top. In the section called "Temporary Internet Files," click on "Delete Files" to clear your cache. On the same screen, in the section called "History," click on the "Clear History" button to erase your history list. In Internet Explorer, clearing the cache and history will automatically clear the address bar on your browser.

Additionally, make sure that the "USE INLINE AUTOCOMplete" box is NOT checked. (If checked, this function will complete a partial web address while typing a location in the address bar at the top of the browser.) Click on the "TOOLS" icon at the top of your Internet Explorer Page, then click on "INTERNET OPTIONS", and then click on the "ADVANCED" tab. About halfway down there is a "USE AUTOCOMplete" box that can be checked and unchecked by clicking on it. Make sure it is unchecked.

AOL: Pull down MEMBERS menu, select PREFERENCES. Click on WWW icon. Then select ADVANCED. Click on PURGE CACHE.

Additionally, make sure that the "USE INLINE AUTOCOMplete" box is NOT checked. (If checked, this function will complete a partial web address while typing a location in the address bar at the top of the browser.)

TEMP FILES: In some cases, your computer will automatically save certain pages in your TEMP folder, which is usually located at c://temp or c://windows/temp. If you view any forms or other PDF files, these will probably be stored in this folder. Be sure to go to this folder and delete any files you do not want your abuser to know you viewed. Sometimes these files are automatically deleted when you turn off and re-start your computer.

NOTE: This information may not completely hide your tracks. Many browser types have features that display recently visited sites. The safest way to find information on the Internet, would be at a computer that your abuser cannot access. Try a local domestic violence organization, a local library, a community center, a friend's house, or at work.

For more information and assistance, please go to The National Center for Victims of Crime page on

Cyberstalking:

[www.ncvc.org/src/main.aspx?dbID=DB Cyberstalking814](http://www.ncvc.org/src/main.aspx?dbID=DB%20Cyberstalking814)

FOR INFORMATION IN NORTH SAN DIEGO COUNTY ON CRIME PREVENTION, HOME SECURITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAMS, CALL:

LAW ENFORCEMENT:

Carlsbad Police Dept (760) 438-5511
 Oceanside Police Dept (760) 439-7296
 Escondido Police Dept (760) 741-4721
 Sheriff's Dept
 Vista (760) 758-6401
 Encinitas (760) 753-5591
 Poway (858) 748-7400
 Fallbrook (760) 728-1115

FOR COUNSELING, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EDUCATION AND PREVENTION CALL:

Women's Resource Center
 1963 Apple Street
 Oceanside, California 92054
 (760)757-3500
 (760)757-0680 Fax
 Email: wrcemail@aol.com

