



**victim services  
toronto**

**Victim Services Toronto**  
Safety Planning Resources

JULY 2018



## **VICTIM SERVICES TORONTO SAFETY PLANNING**

Whether you are in an abusive relationship, fleeing one, or have experienced one in the past, it is extremely important to focus on the safety of yourself and those around you. While you cannot predict when a violent incident may occur, you can take different steps to help reduce your risk, before, during and after an incident. Victim Services Toronto has created these safety planning materials to help improve safety for you and your family.

In this document you will find:

- [Strategies to Assess your Safety](#)
- [How to Plan your Children's Safety](#)
- [Planning your Safety During a Violent Incident](#)
- [How to Plan your Safety for Leaving](#)
- [Suggestions of What to Take With you When Leaving](#)
- [Suggestions of What to Put in an Emergency Bag](#)
- [How to Plan your Safety Inside the Home](#)
- [How to Plan your Safety Outside the Home](#)
- [How to Plan your Safety with Court Orders, the Police, and the Criminal Justice System](#)
- [General Digital Safety Tips](#)
- [Digital Safety Tips in Abusive Relationships for Yourself and Your Children](#)

For any safety plan to be effective, it is important to tailor the plan to your current situation. It is important to review these safety materials for yourself and with your children (if applicable), and to create a custom plan that fits your situation and your needs. Any safety plan must be frequently reviewed to keep the plan fresh in mind in the event of a dangerous incident. Change your plan as needed to fit the new circumstances of your situation (i.e., no longer living with abuser, abuser no longer in custody, moved homes, etc.)

**If you would like more information on safety planning and would like the support of our Crisis Team please call (416) 808-7066.** We are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Our services are completely confidential and free. If you are more comfortable speaking in your first language please let our Crisis Team know and we will make arrangements for an interpreter.



## **ASSESSING YOUR SAFETY**

Certain factors can help you predict when a violent encounter is likely to take place. Being aware of these factors can help you tailor your safety plan. Ask yourself the following:

### **Does the abuser change just before becoming violent?**

- Look for changes in body language:
  - Changes in eyes
  - Posture changes (fist clenched, stands taller, etc.)
  - Changes in facial expression
- Voice changes (angry, harsh, strained, louder, etc.)
- Nonverbal threats (pretends to hit you / jumps at you) before striking you
- Verbal threats to harm you before striking you

### **Do you notice changes in yourself before a violent incident?**

- **Physical responses before an attack:** stomach pains, headaches, difficulty breathing, pain in chest, etc.
- **Emotional responses before an attack:** anxiety, fear, loss of sleep, loss of appetite, increased nervousness, etc.

### **What circumstances usually exist before a violent incident?**

- Presence or use of alcohol/drugs
- Lack of money
- Pay day
- A specific day of the week
- A specific time of the year (holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, special events)
- When certain people are around
- When certain people are *not* around
- When you are at home
- When you are outside of the home



**Other things to consider when assessing your safety:**

- The abuser expresses fantasies or threats of homicide or suicide
- Pending or actual separation
- Pending or actual serving of court orders (divorce papers, restraining orders, etc.)
- If you are in a new relationship with someone else
- Other dates that trigger the abuser or remind the abuser of diminished control
- Pregnancy
- Children in your home
- Threats of, or actual child abuse
- Children witnessing (hearing, seeing, knowing about) the violence.
- Depression and or psychiatric history
- Prior use of, access, or possession of weapons (guns, knives, ropes, knowledge of martial arts or other fighting techniques, etc.)
- Military or paramilitary (police) training
- Being isolated; where you live, your culture, your race, your religion, your disability, etc.
- Isolation of the abuser; fired or laid off from work, disconnected from friends and family, disconnected from culture, religion, etc.
- Obsessiveness about your connections to friends, family, and co-workers
- Possessiveness and control over you (accuses you of cheating, stops you from speaking to friends and family)
- Demands access to your private information (passwords, bank accounts, social media accounts, e-mails, your phone, etc.)
- Extent and escalation of prior violence (Has it happened before? How often has it happened? What kind of violence took place?)
- Threats of violence to you or to others (children, family, friends)
- Previous police intervention
- Known violence with others (family, friends, past relationships, children, etc.)
- Ignoring or violating court orders
- Pet/animal abuse



## **PLANNING YOUR CHILDREN'S SAFETY**

### **Talk to your children about their safety beforehand**

- Talk to older children about looking out for younger children. Tell them what to do and where to take the other children if they are ever in danger.
- Talk to your children about various scenarios that may happen depending on your history with abuse. Teach them what to do in each scenario.
- Children of different ages will understand the situation differently, be prepared to have different conversations with each of your children.
- For all ages of children, make sure they know their primary responsibility is getting themselves to safety.
- Make sure your children know that it is not their responsibility to protect you or anyone else but themselves. They must always run to safety, even if that means leaving you.

### **Provide your children with a safety plan**

- Teach your children to leave the room or to not come into the room where there is danger.
- Teach your children where they should go if there is danger (a specific room with a lockable door or to a trusted neighbour)
- Develop a code for your children to know that there is danger inside a room or the house so they know not to enter (a specific light turned on or off, blinds or curtains pulled shut, a window open, etc.)
- Provide your children with a phrase or non-verbal cue that tells them to leave the room if you believe an attack might happen
- Let your children know that you might have to leave quickly in order to protect yourselves. Come up with a signal to give when you need to leave suddenly. Practice this signal and your escape plan. Refer to it as a *fire escape plan* so your abuser will not know.
- Practice and role-play safety plans with your children. Make sure they know what to do and where to go if something violent or scary happens. Make this into a game for younger children.



- Tell your children never to answer the door or phone unless you give them permission to.
- Teach your children how to call for help or who to go to (a neighbour, a family member, etc.)
- If there are older children who can legally drive show them where car keys will always be kept so they can take the car and go to help.
- Make sure your children know how to use the phone. If possible, provide your children with a cell phone to be used for emergencies. Make sure children know how to call 911 and how to call you.
- Keep emergency numbers programmed into and listed near all phones.

### **Connect with anyone who is connected with your children**

- Inform your children's school, doctors, and child care provider of your situation and give them a copy of any and all court orders
- Inform these same people about who is allowed to pick up your children or who is to have contact with them.
- Request that they report any suspicious persons or activity to the police and/or to you.
- Talk about safety planning with anyone (friends, family, educators, etc.) who will be alone with your children. Make sure they have a plan of how to get away if the abuser contacts them.
- Communicate a safety plan with adults your children are instructed to seek help from so they know what to do in the event your child approach them for help.

### **Protecting your children from the abuser**

- Ensure that your children are accompanied to and from school and any other places they go
- If the abuser has legal access to your children, talk to a lawyer about the possibility of getting supervised access or having that access denied.



- If the abuser has access to your children develop individual and group safety plans with your children for visits. The plans can include cues they are in danger, escape plans from the location, and who/where they can go to for help.
- Arrangements can be made for transporting your children to visits so that you do not have to be in contact with the abuser. Ask someone you trust to drop your children off and then pick them up.
- Do not pick up or hold small children during an attack. If holding a child when the abuse begins, put that child down somewhere safe so they are not a target.

### **Connect to resources that will help**

- Contact a shelter or 24 hour crisis line to find where programs for child witnesses of violence are located. These programs are very helpful in teaching children and adults about safety.
- Enroll children in before or after school programs to help keep them out of the home for longer periods of time if the abuse is happening at home.
- Teach your children about services for children and youth that could help (Kids Help Phone). Let them know it is okay to ask for help and support.



## **PLANNING YOUR SAFETY DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT**

### **Things you can do ahead of time to prepare for a violent incident**

- Memorize or keep the number of a 24-hour crisis line or shelter.
- If you have difficulty using your hands utilize a voice recognition service or speed dial for emergency numbers on your phone
- Program numbers you don't want your abuser to know about (crisis line, shelter line, etc.) into your phone under a friend or co-worker's name.
- Make and practice a plan to get out of the home or other place(s) where violence might occur
- Develop some excuses to leave the home (need groceries, visiting a friend, etc.)
- Know what doors, windows, elevators, stairways are available for use
- Know the quickest route out of your home
- Determine which rooms are dangerous (i.e., the kitchen has knives)
- Put your kitchen utensils and knife block in a cupboard so they are not as easily accessible
- Know which rooms are safer and offer an escape route
- Keep a phone near you at all times
- Get extension phones so you have phones accessible in multiple rooms
- Get a cell phone, keep it charged and on you at all times
- Keep your cell phone in a pants or jacket pocket so it's easy to access, avoid keeping it in the bottom of a large bag or purse
- Purchase a portable cell phone charger to recharge your phone on the go
- Keep your keys and purse in a place that you can access quickly
- Keep an extra car key in an accessible place





- Back your car into the driveway, making it easier to pull out and leave, and make sure there is always gas in your car
- Keep a doorstopper in every room to secure the door from the inside
- Take a self-defense course

### **Get help from other people**

- Tell a neighbour/co-worker/teacher or someone you trust to call the police if they think you are at risk
- Make arrangements with friends or family who have a place for you to stay in the case of an emergency
- Develop a cover story with any support workers you speak to on the phone so if the abuser uses your phone to call these numbers, the support worker will answer as a friend or co-worker.
- Develop a visual code or verbal code to let others know to call the police
- Keep clothes, money, medications or other things you may need in an emergency bag at a friend or family member's home (see: [suggestions for an emergency bag](#))
- Ask a friend or neighbour for a key to their home in case of an emergency
- Tell those who know your abuser to say they do not know where you are or how to contact you if they are ever asked by the abuser or someone connected to them

### **Ways to protect yourself during an attack**

- Call 911; start by telling the operator the exact address where you are so they can send help even if you get disconnected
- If you do not speak English, tell the operator the language you speak so they can respond accordingly
- If an assault is occurring and you cannot escape, curl up in a ball and cover your head, neck and ears.
- Move out of rooms with items that could be used as a weapon (i.e., kitchen has knives)



- Stay in an area that has an exit and avoid letting the abuser get in between you and that exit.
- Make as much noise as possible so neighbours can call the police on your behalf if you are unable to call yourself



## **PLANNING YOUR SAFETY FOR LEAVING**

- Do not tell the abuser when you are leaving or where you are going
- Take into consideration any mobility / accessibility concerns you or your children have for leaving (accessible transit, help, etc.)
- Contact a shelter or 24-hour line for women to discuss in detail how to leave safely and what resources are available to you
- Request to use an interpreter when speaking to a helpline if you are more comfortable speaking in another language
- Stay at a shelter or have a shelter help you relocate to another city that feels safer stay with a friend or family member that knows about the abuse and can help make their home safe.
- Request police come to your home when you are leaving
- Pack and hide an emergency bag of essentials that you can grab quickly when leaving
- When packing your emergency bag include cash or tokens for transit as debit and credit cards can be easily traced
- If you have to leave quickly, you can ask for a police escort back to your home to pick-up your personal items that you were unable to grab.
- Get a safety deposit box and or a post office box to store important documents and items
- Use a payphone or borrow someone else's cell phone to make calls that you do not want your abuser to know about
- Open up a bank account in a bank the abuser does not know about and arrange for statements to be picked up, sent electronically only, or sent to a friend's home
- Use a trusted friend or family member's address for any mail
- Clear out your phone of the last number you called to avoid the abuser utilizing redial
- If you have a pet that you can't take with you, contact the Toronto Humane Society
- Locate the closest food bank in order to help with groceries for you and your family



- Set aside money for transportation costs for when you leave
- Change the pin and access information to all bank accounts that the abuser knew about
- Email yourself and/or a trusted friend any important phone numbers (shelter, doctor's office, crisis line, employer, etc.)



## **SUGGESTIONS OF WHAT TO TAKE WITH YOU WHEN LEAVING**

### **Identification**

- Social insurance card
- Driver's license and registration
- OHIP card
- Passports
- Immigration papers
- Children's birth certificates and OHIP cards

### **Paperwork**

- Children's school and medical/vaccination records
- Copies of all court orders: restraining orders, peace bonds, bail papers, custody and access agreements, divorce papers, etc.
- Lease/rental agreements, deeds, mortgage agreement, insurance policies and other papers concerning assets

### **Money & Banking**

- Money
- Cheque Books
- Credit cards
- Debit cards
- Bank books and statements

### **Important Items**

- Necessary medications and medical supplies for self and children
- Keys for home, storage, car, work, safety deposit box, .etc.
- Cell Phone, laptop, other electronics and their power cords
- Pictures or other evidence of the abuse
- Address book with all telephone and other numbers you may need



**Additional Items**

- Small, valuable items such as jewelry or electronics
- Children's favourite toys and blankets
- Sentimental items
- Day planner / appointment book
- A list of items you would like to retrieve if given the chance to safely return home



## **SUGGESTIONS OF WHAT TO PACK IN AN EMERGENCY BAG**

### **Necessities**

- Medication for yourself and your children
- Important keys (house, vehicle, office, garage, safety deposit box, etc.)
- Cash – your abuser may be able to trace your activity through your credit and debit cards. If they have access to your accounts they may be able to close/empty the accounts before you can access your money. Have enough money to cover transportation, lodging, and food for a couple of days.
- Use tokens or tickets for transportation – avoid using Presto Card, if your abuser has access to your account they can track where you are utilizing transit.
- Clothing for yourself and your children
- Necessities for children (formula, diapers, etc.)
- Food
- Prepaid phone cards

### **Important Documents and Paperwork (Originals or photocopies)**

- Personalized safety plan
- Current unpaid bills/copies of bills
- Identification for self and children: driver's license, health cards, birth certificates, SIN card, passports, work permits, visas, etc.
- Children's school and medical/vaccination records
- Copies of all court orders: restraining orders, peace bonds, bail papers, custody and access agreements, divorce papers, etc.
- Lease/rental agreements, deeds, mortgage agreement, insurance policies and other papers concerning assets
- Income Tax returns, pay stubs
- Professional licenses, certificates, diplomas, and membership cards (unions, professional organizations, etc.)
- Address books, calendars, etc.



**Other Suggestions**

- Toys/stuffed animals for your children
- Sentimental items (jewelry, photos, etc.)
- Small valuable items that could be sold (phones, cameras, laptops, tablets, etc.)





## **PLANNING YOUR SAFETY IN THE HOME**

### **Regarding your house/apartment**

- Keep bushes and trees trimmed so no one can hide in them.
- Create an emergency room in your home (put a lock on the door and have a phone in that room, prop a chair under the door handle or use a doorstopper if there is no lock)
- If your abuser lived with you previously, rearrange furniture so the home is harder to navigate without making noise, thereby alerting you of their presence.
- Be aware of all entrances and exits to your home or building
- Change your locks and install a deadbolt on each of the doors
- Make sure all windows are locked and that sliding glass doors are blocked with a dowel (wooden block or rod).
- Make sure there are locks available for sliding glass doors that prevent them from being lifted out of the doorframe.
- Make sure your street address is well lit and clearly visible for emergency calls.
- Install a peephole so that you can see who is at your door
- If you come home and something is out of ordinary (i.e., door is ajar) do not go in. Leave or go to a neighbour's and call the police.
- Be very cautious about who you give a new address to
- If you live in a building or complex, remove your name from the residence listing
- If you have an assigned parking space, ask if you can change spots so your abuser does not know where your car will be
- Check the backseat and underneath your car before getting in it
- Do not sit in your vehicle in parking lots or garages for extended periods of time
- If you live in an apartment, be mindful of who is in the hallway when getting out of the elevator. Steer clear of stairwell doorways where someone could jump out of.
- If you live in an apartment have building management disable all FOB (electronic) access that your partner might have if they still have a set of keys
- When leaving the home to do a task outside (i.e. check the mail, take out garbage, etc.) always ensure to lock the doors. If the accused has been watching the home/your movements and knows you're distracted outside this could quite possibly be their way to gain entry.



### **Regarding your phone**

- Ask your telephone service provider what is available for your safety (call block, call privacy, unlisted number, answering service, etc.)
- Change your cell phone number if the abuser knows your current one
- Make sure your home phone is connected before moving into a new place
- Use \*69 to trace hang-up calls or \*57 for the police to trace on your behalf (on landlines only)
- Be very cautious about who you give your new phone number to
- If you have call display on your phone limit the access to your call history / erase your call history so the abuser cannot redial numbers
- Have a prerecorded anonymous voice message system that does not identify you by name

### **Protective measures**

- Get a security system installed (alarm, cameras, etc.)
- Install outdoor lights with a sensor so they will turn on automatically
- Ask the officer in charge of your case if you can have a Special Address System (this flags your address for 911 operators)
- Inform landlord, neighbour, superintendent that the abuser is not residing there and if they see the abuser to call you or the police.
- Always have your home and car keys in your hand or easily accessible in a pocket when you are entering the home or leaving; do not keep them buried at the bottom of a large bag or purse.
- Be careful what you put into the garbage; purchase a shredder for confidential documents with identifying information
- Change your email address and be careful of who you give it out to
- Do not identify your first or last name in your e-mail address



## **PLANNING YOUR SAFETY OUTSIDE OF THE HOME**

- Take a self-defence course that teaches awareness, avoidance, and action
- If you use an elevator, stand by the door near the control panels and keep your back to the side wall, this gives you easy access to call for help
- Change your work or school schedule if possible
- Change your habits; go to different grocery stores, gas stations, pharmacies, etc.
- Travel on different transit routes when going to work or taking your children to school
- If possible change your family doctor, dentist, and other care professionals that you see regularly
- Do not work or study alone or during off-hours
- Change your route to work or school
- Park your car in a secure, well-lit area
- Ask someone to walk you to your car / transit
- Keep your car doors locked and do not get into your car without checking the back seat
- Have your keys in your hand or in an accessible pocket rather than in a purse or bag
- Be aware of your surroundings
- If possible, invest in an alarm system for your car
- If you are using public transit, sit by the driver and stand close to the ticket booths when at the subway so employees can see you
- Avoid secluded areas
- Avoid walking through parks, alleyways, and other poorly lit areas
- Carry a cell phone with you at all times
- If you call 911 tell the operator where you are first so they can respond to your location even if you get disconnected
- Be aware of areas in which you do not get cell service (elevators, subways, underground laundry rooms, parking lots)
- When you are getting ready to leave your home, think about the route you will be taking and where you could go for help if you need it (fire hall, police station, store, etc.)
- Purchase a personal alarm online or from a department store and have it readily available. Personal alarms are typically available as a key chain that can be attached to



house keys or a purse. In the event of a violent incident you can activate this alarm to set off a large siren sound that can alert others and potentially scare off an attacker.

- Change the places you shop, bank, and which gym you go to or change the day and times you use them.
- Think about what you would do if the abuser confronts you; develop an escape plan.

### **Get help from others**

- Inform your boss, security persons, friends, teachers, and/or co-workers about your situation
- Give a picture of the abuser to these people if they do not know what he looks like
- Give these people a description of the abuser's car (make, model, licence plates, colour)
- Request that all visitors and/or phone calls to you are screened



## **PLANNING YOUR SAFETY WITH COURT ORDERS, THE POLICE AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

### **Regarding Court Orders**

- Request to have personal information about you removed from any court orders wherever possible.
- Keep numerous copies of any court orders. Carry a copy with you at all times.
- Give a copy of any court orders to your employer, your school and/or your children's school, or child care provider.
- Advise neighbours, friends, boss, co-workers and teachers that you have these court orders and request that they call the police if they see the abuser
- Provide these people with a picture and/or description of the abuser and his vehicle.
- Contact your lawyer, the police, a shelter or other 24 hour services if you have any questions about the court orders
- Notify police of every violation of a court order and request an occurrence number (reference number) from the police each time

### **Regarding the Police**

- Call 911 or your police emergency number if you need immediate assistance; if the abuser has threatened to hurt you, is hurting you, or you feel that they are going to hurt you
- If the abuser has been arrested, contact the investigating officer, Victim Support Line or Victim/Witness Assistance Program to find out when their bail hearing is and if the abuser has been released, what their bail conditions are. Ask that a copy be mailed/emailed to you at a secure address.
- Ask the police for their recommendations about alarm systems.
- Request that the police put a Special Address System Report on your address. This will include important information describing the abuser and their vehicle, if they use drugs or alcohol, if they have a history of violence or access to weapons.
- Take a support person with you if you are meeting with a police officer or an attorney
- If you are not feeling satisfied with the response from the police you can ask to speak to a supervisor or you can make a complaint with the Professional Standards Section.



**Additional Information**

- Keep a detailed journal of every suspected or known contact from the abuser. Include date, time, what happened and who else witnessed it if there was one
- Ask Victim/Witness Assistance Program to provide you with a copy of the abuser's bail papers. The bail conditions generally outline what the abuser can and cannot do (no direct or indirect contact with the victim, or not to be within 500 meters of the victims address)



## **GENERAL ONLINE SAFETY TIPS**

### **Privacy Settings and Safety Functions**

- Review Terms and Conditions, privacy setting and safety functions prior to using the website or social media application.
- Review privacy setting options & safety functions once a month to keep updated
- Review settings each time you restart your phone or download software updates

### **GPS/ Locator Function**

Turn off the GPS tracking and locators on apps and your mobile device that reveal your location information to the public (where you are at this exact time).

#### **For iPhone Users:**

1. Go into the Settings app
2. Scroll down to Privacy
3. Within Privacy scroll down to Location Services
4. Slide location services OFF
5. Turn OFF when prompted

#### **For Android users:**

1. Open the App Drawer and go to Settings.
2. Scroll down and tap Location.
3. Scroll down and tap Google Location Settings.
4. Tap Location Reporting and Location History, and switch the slider to off for each one.
5. To delete your phone's location cache, tap "Delete Location History" at the bottom of the screen under Location History.
6. Repeat this process for each Google Account you have on your Android device.

#### **For Blackberry users:**

1. On the home screen, swipe down from the top of the screen.
2. Tap image Settings > Location Services.
3. Turn off Location Services.

If you need to use your Location Services for certain apps such as weather or maps consider turning on your location services only when the app is in use.



If you are using an iPhone and will be leaving your Location Services on all the time consider turning off the significant locations settings.

**For iPhone Users:**

1. Go into the Settings app
2. Scroll down to Privacy
3. Within Privacy scroll down to Location Services
4. Within Location Services scroll down to Significant Locations
5. Turn OFF

**Social Media**

- Having a locked profile limits who can view your profile and allows you to have more control of who sees your content and who can find you through search engines and search bars.
- Change privacy setting to limit who can see your shared and tagged posts, photos, statuses, etc.
- Change privacy settings to enable you to approve tagged posts prior to being posted.
- Be aware of geo-filters and tags, they can be seen by anyone who searches that location or who can see your accounts
- Avoid adding extensions that request access to your social media accounts such as games and quizzes

**Passwords**

- 12 characters
- Use a mix of numbers, symbols, uppercase, and lowercase
- Change passwords often (once a month)
- Use the authenticate seal / image pop up during password reset
- Never give out your password to someone else
- Do not give out others' passwords
- Use secure networks that you trust





### **Online Profile**

- If you use social media for your business, employment or school consider having more than one social media account; one public and one private.
- Avoid using your full name or a nickname that is easily identifiable
- Consider using a generic profile name that does not identify you at all
- Consider using a generic profile picture that does not identify you or where you live
- Avoid completing your profile description and consider leaving it blank.

### **Online Posts**

- Be aware of the surroundings in the pictures you post. Avoid posting your school, home, neighbour's home, place of employment, or while wearing your school or work uniform.
- Avoid posting or sharing content that you wouldn't want close family members, parents/guardians, teachers, or employers to see or that you would be embarrassed for others to see
- Consider avoiding using hashtags, especially ones specific to location; the more hashtags you use the more visible your posts and profile become
- If you are using tags consider using generic tags that do not give away your location
- Avoid posting your whereabouts, daily routines and activities. If you need to post about an activity/event consider posting after the event (#latergram)
- Review your friend/follower list on a regular basis in order to know who is seeing your posts. Consider removing anyone you do not recognize or who you have not been in recent contact with.
- Ask friends and family not to tag you in posts or tag you in locations
- Avoid revealing information about your personal identity such as: your name, address, phone number, age, physical description, work/school through your profile or posts.
- Use a search engine to search your name, and your children's names once a month to verify no personal information is readily available. If information is found, contact the website directly to have the information removed.
- Verify that your phone number and home address are not readily available on online whitepages listing websites (canada411.ca, 411.ca, etc.). If they are, contact the service provider to remove your listing.



### **Know Your Friends & Following:**

- Consider only adding individuals whom you have met face to face and have an established relationship. Avoid adding individuals whom you have never met.
  - **Stranger:** *is a person added to your list of friends on a social networking website whom you may hardly know or have never met.*
- Search the profile, posts, pictures and friends/follower lists of the person who has requested to be added to your friend/follower list to ensure the account is legitimate.
- Opt-out of 'suggested profile/friend' services from social media sites
- Look to see if you have friends in common before accepting a friend request.
- Check with the person directly before accepting a friend request to ensure that it is not a fake account.

### **Responding to cyberviolence**

- Take a deep breath and pause; avoid retaliating.
- Continue to practice online safety habits and maintain your positive online identity.
- Take a screen capture of the comments, save private messages, texts, etc. and report to the police, a friend, parent/guardian or trusted adult
- Report the incident to the social media website and be aware that it may take several days for the social media website to respond
- Block, unfriend, or mute the individual
- Mute individual words and conversations on Twitter
- Check your privacy settings and consider locking or setting your profile to private
- After capturing the negative messages and reporting them to police consider taking your mobile device to your service provider to scan for unwanted locator apps and to return your phone to factory settings.
- Consider disabling your social media account for a brief time or deleting your account and starting a new one.
- If you are disabling your account consider changing your password and then disabling the account in case your original password was compromised.
- Reach out for support, tell a trusted friend and/or adult such as a parent/guardian, family member, teacher, social worker, principal, school resource officer or police.
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- If you are receiving online threats, ongoing negative and mean comments, sexualized images or being contacted by someone who is asking for your personal information or for you to do things you feel uncomfortable with report it to police 416-808-222 or anonymously to crime stoppers 1-800-222-TIPS (8477)

## DIGITAL SAFETY TIPS IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

### **Location**

- If using an iPhone turn off “Find iPhone” so your abuser cannot find you by finding out where your phone is
- Make sure your location settings are turned off

### **For iPhone Users:**

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2. Scroll down and tap Location.
3. Scroll down and tap Google Location Settings.
4. Tap Location Reporting and Location History, and switch the slider to off for each one.
5. To delete your phone's location cache, tap "Delete Location History" at the bottom of the screen under Location History.
6. Repeat this process for each Google Account you have on your Android device.

### **For Blackberry users:**

1. On the home screen, swipe down from the top of the screen.
2. Tap image Settings > Location Services.
3. Turn off Location Services.



### Social Media Profile and Posts

- Keep accounts locked and private
- Use a generic name so your abuser cannot search your name to find your account
- Use a generic profile picture (i.e. a sunset)
- Do not post about where you are living/working/going to school
- Use less hashtags; hashtags make your posts more visible and easier to find
- Use less specific hashtags; do not hashtag locations, times, or events
- Do not use geo-tags (locations) on your posts
- Post after attending events and locations, rather than posting where you are at any given time
- Consider using a different city for your location on profiles

### Friends & Followers

- Change the settings so it allows you to moderate each new follower/friend who adds you
- Only add people you know and have met face to face with
- Check with the person to make sure the account adding you is actually them
- Check the profiles of the person adding you to make sure they look legitimate (pictures, posts, friends in common)
- Block/mute/delete any accounts your abuser has access to
- Block/mute/delete any accounts of users who are still connected to your abuser
- If your abuser tries to contact you, block and report the account

### E-mail

- Delete / deactivate e-mail accounts your abuser has access to
- Create multiple new e-mail accounts to use
- Do not use your first or last name for you new e-mail address
- Change the password on your new accounts regularly (once a month)
- Do not utilize old passwords
- Register your social media accounts with your new e-mail address
- Delete/deactivate old social media accounts



### Internet Browsers

- Clear websites from your browser history that you do not want your abuser to see.
- Search in incognito mode on Google Chrome to stop websites from being added to your search bar and search history.
- Use resource websites that have an escape button so you can quickly exit out of the website if your abuser walks in
- Whenever possible use devices that your abuser does not have access to as they might become suspicious or angry about cleared browser histories on your personal devices
- Use public computers (i.e. at the library) to do any safety research and planning you need to do

### Cell Phone

- Go to your cell phone provider and request a new phone number and to return the phone to factory settings
- Delete call history
- Keep supports / resources under a different name in your contacts; create a cover story with your support persons in case the abuser ever calls these numbers
- Have phone bills sent electronically to a private e-mail address or to a friend's house



### Smart Home Devices (Alarms, Surveillance Cameras, Heat Control, Light Control, Digital Locks)

Smart devices allow the users to control different parts of their home using a cell phone application or remote. This can include remotely locking doors, opening a garage door, changing the heat or air conditioning, turning on or off lights, turning on music or other media.

If you have smart technology installed in your home it is important to be mindful, especially if your abuser has access to this technology. Some may use this to manipulate and control another individual, by changing passwords, turning on or off lights, turning up or down the heat, and unlocking doors after they have been locked.

- Be aware of any devices installed in your home
- Be mindful of any video and audio recording devices in your home that can be used to monitor you
- Since smart devices can be used to record you, be mindful of conversations you have regarding safety plans in the home. Consider having safety planning conversations outside of the home.
- If you can, know passwords to the Wifi and all devices and consider changing them
- Keep reset instructions on any devices you install in your home
- Keep instructions on how to disable users
- Consider contacting the service provider to discontinue service
- Consider unplugging or disconnecting the device
- If you are receiving a criminal or family court order ensure it includes Smart home devices.



### Digital Safety Planning with your Children

- Go over the privacy and security settings of all apps before use
- Ensure their social media accounts are private
- Encourage them to use a generic profile picture
- Encourage them to use a nickname instead of their real name on social media
- Instruct your children to not meet up with online friends/followers
- Make sure their social media profiles are locked and private
- Require all new users and friends to be approved before they see your child's profile.
- Have your child show you who is adding them before they add them back.
- Turn off location settings on their phone and in any apps
- Encourage them not to use hashtags; these make posts more visible
- Encourage them to not tag their location
- Encourage them to post after they have attended an event, when they are safe at home
- Tell your children not to post pictures in front of your home, their school, or in their school uniform
- Tell your children to block and report any accounts they think might be the abuser
- Tell your children to tell you if the abuser tries to contact them
- Tell your children not to answer any phone calls or messages without your permission