



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.