

Plan For Safety

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October is Domestic Violence Awareness month and in recognizing that domestic violence still happens in households across America, men and women need to keep themselves as safe as possible. Remembering that domestic violence is about power and control, victims need to be able to attempt to regain control and independence in as subtle manner as possible.

1. Remain safe: When an explosive event occurs, stay out of the bathroom, kitchen, and any room that contains a weapon. These rooms are typically the most dangerous rooms in the house.
2. Give the abuser what he/she wants to calm them down if the situation warrants for your safety and the safety of the children.
3. Tell your neighbors: Make sure your neighbors know to telephone the police if they hear suspicious sounds from your home (i.e. yelling, screaming, items being thrown, etc.).
4. Teach your children to use the telephone to dial 911 for police, fire department and/or ambulance. Teach them to also call or run to a neighbor if necessary.
5. Have a code word. Set up a code word with the neighbor and/or with your kids to let them know when it is unsafe.
6. Plan for your escape: Leave a set of keys, extra money, and bag of clothing with a neighbor in case it is necessary to escape. Look throughout your house for a safe escape route, such as a back bedroom window. Plan where you will go after you leave. Have a back up plan in case it is necessary or the location is compromised. The toll free number to the local safe house is (877) 871-7551. It can also be reached at (609) 871-7751
7. Think of two or three people who can loan you money in the event of an emergency escape.
8. Keep your personal belongings ready i.e. wallet, keys, money, cell phone, etc. in a location near your escape route.
9. Clear the cache on your computer. Internet websites show up in a computer's history. Learn as much as you can about erasing a computer's history.
10. Pack away precious items. Many times a violent offender will destroy a victim's personal belongings for more control of a situation.
11. Teach escape strategies to any children in the household who are old enough to understand. Understanding also comes at a young age in many domestic violence situations.
12. Use spare change to make telephone calls at pay phones. Use cash whenever possible. Telephone invoices and credit card statements have telephone numbers printed on them. Credit card statements can also give away your location after your escape.
13. Important papers to take with you: ID cards, birth certificates-yours and your children's, passports, social security numbers for the entire family, ATM card, checkbook, credit cards, keys, driver's license and registration, medications, medical records, divorce and/or custody agreements, school records, vaccination records, lease/mortgage payment book, address book, insurance papers, photos, jewelry, children's favorite items (toys and blankets), anything small that you can sell for money to survive.
14. Open a bank account in your own name, without the abuser's knowledge. Have the statements sent to an alternate address.

If you recently separated from the abuser, statistically there can be even more of a potential for threat of violence. The previously mentioned safety plan should continue to be used in addition to the following:

1. Obtain a protection order. This can be done through your county courthouse during duty hours, or at your local police department after hours. If you work and live in separate counties, file in both counties and carry a copy of the order with you at all times.
2. Change the locks on the windows and doors and install a steel door to replace any wooden doors. If you rent, explain any issues to your landlord and ask if the landlord will replace the door for you or work out a shared payment plan.
3. Purchase rope or fire ladders to escape from second story windows.
4. Install a security system or additional locks, bars on windows, etc.
5. Install smoke detectors on each floor.
6. Install motion sensitive outdoor lighting.
7. Ensure children remember the code word and it is used when you cannot pick them up from school, daycare, and activities. Change the codeword when necessary.

The domestic violence 24-hour hotline for this area is 1-877-871-7551. The national domestic violence hotline is 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). **Fort Dix also has a 24-hour crisis hotline. That number is 609-694-8724 and I am the person who will answer that phone. Call me. I want to help.** I can provide confidential services to you, help you get medical care and counseling, help you get legal services and protective orders if and when you are ready. My name is Kimberly Henne and I am the Installation Victim Advocate.