

APPENDIX 8



Safety Planning

SAFETY PLAN INFORMATION

This section provides a brief overview of issues for the service provider to consider in the development of an emergency escape plan with an abused woman.

For safety plans which provide detailed information about safety for the abused woman during an explosive incident, when the woman is living apart from the abuser, safety at work, safety in the neighbourhood, or an emotional safety plan, the reader may consider: the Metro Woman Abuse Council's *Safety Planning in Situations of Woman Abuse* and the Peel Committee Against Woman Abuse's *Creating a Safety Plan*. This document is available online, in ten different languages at the YRVAWCC's website, www.yrvawcc.ca.

The purpose of a safety plan is to increase the woman's safety and, if she has children, the safety of her children. Importantly, a safety plan helps the woman increase her sense of control over her situation. Service providers may refer women to "safety plan experts" such as shelter workers, and counselors who work with abused women, who will formulate a detailed plan specific to the woman's particular situation:

Some factors to include when developing a safety plan with the woman are the following:

- Inform the woman of emergency safety and protective housing such as shelters that are available to her and her children;
- Explore with the woman, her plan to take her children with her should she leave the home;
- Ask her if she has friends and/or family that she can trust and stay with temporarily;
- Provide her with a current resource list that includes telephone numbers of police, shelters, counselors and crisis lines, and suggest that she take her address and telephone book;
- Warn her that she and her children may be at an increased risk of abuse when she leaves the abuser, and that it is important for her and her children to maintain diligent safety measures even after they have left;
- Suggest she take all relevant documents, including her and her children's birth certificates, work permits, health cards, passports, bank books, property deeds, mortgage papers, and immigration papers;
- Suggest she keep all the cards and keys that she uses in her daily living in a safe and accessible place. Important cards include her credit cards, bank cards, health cards, phone cards, identification cards, driver's licence, and social insurance

- card. Keys that she should keep accessible include those to the car, house, work, and safety deposit box;
- Help her identify emergency exits in the home and suggest she inform her children of these exits and about the safety plan;
 - Suggest that she save money in a secure place;
 - Suggest that she prepare a suitcase with some essential clothes and comforting items for the children, and keep them in a confidential place, hidden from the abuser;
 - Inform her that woman abuse is a crime and she has legal rights such as calling the police and having them lay charges against the abuser;
 - Suggest she instruct her children, who are age appropriate, on a safety plan when a violent episode occurs. For example, run to neighbours, call 911, retreat to a room in the house that can be locked.

Remind the woman that she may make arrangements to return to her home with a police escort to pick up additional belongings at a later date. It is important that she ***not jeopardize her safety.***