



# ***Safety Planning with Children***

## **Safety Planning in the Home**

*A safety plan should include ways that your children can stay safe when violence is happening in your home. It's key to remember that if the violence is escalating, you should avoid running to the children because your partner may hurt them as well.*

- Teach your children when and how to call 911.
- Instruct them to leave the home if possible when things begin to escalate, and where they can go.
- Come up with a code word that you can say when they need to leave the home in case of an emergency - make sure they know not to tell others what the word means (this technique works well with older children).
- In the house: Identify a room that they can go to when they're afraid and something they can think about when they're scared.
- Instruct them to stay out of the kitchen, bathroom, and other areas where there are items that could be used as weapons.
- Teach them that although they want to protect their parent, that they should never intervene.
- Help them to make a list of people that they are comfortable talking and expressing themselves to.
- Enroll them in a counseling program.

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### **Planning for Unsupervised Visits**

*If you have separated from an abusive partner and are concerned for your children's safety when they visit your ex, developing a safety plan for while they are at their home can be beneficial.*

- Brainstorm with your children (if they are old enough) to come up with ways they can stay safe using the same model as you would for your own home. Have them identify where they can get to a phone, how they can leave the house, and where they can go.
- If it's safe to do, send a cellphone with the children to be used in emergency situations - this can be used to call 911, a neighbor, or you if they need.

### **Planning for a Safe Custody Exchange**

- Avoid exchanging custody at your home or your ex-partner's home.
- Meet in a safe, public place such as a restaurant, bank/other area with lots of cameras, or even near a police station.
- Bring a friend or relative with you to the exchanges, or have them make the exchange if its safe.
- Perhaps plan to have your ex-partner pick the children up from school at the end of the day after you drop them off in the morning - this eliminates the changes of seeing each other.
- Emotional safety plan as well - figure out something to do before the exchange to calm any nervous feelings, and something after to focus on yourself or the kids, such as going to a park or doing a fun activity.



### Planning for After You Leave

- Alert anyone you can about the situation: school authorities like a counselor, receptionist, teachers, principal, sports instructors, and other care takers.
- Talk to these people about what's going on: if you have a protection order or restraining order, who is allowed to pick them up, etc.

### How to have these conversations...

Let your child know that what is happening is not their fault and they didn't cause it. Let them know how much you love them and that you support them no matter what. Tell them that you want to protect them and that you want everyone to be safe, so you have come up with a plan to use in case of emergencies. It's important to remember that when you're safety planning with a child, they might tell this information to the abusive partner, which could make the situation more dangerous, (ex. "Mom said to do this if you get angry.") When talking about these plans with your child, use phrases such as, "We're practicing what to do in an emergency," instead of, "We're planning what you can do when dad/mom becomes violent."

## If you are experiencing domestic violence, we are here to help...

740-382-8988

800-232-6505

**turningpoint6.org**

text **tphelp** to 20121

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