

A Guide to Safety Planning for Survivors of Domestic Violence



24/7 Confidential Call/Text Helpline
866-685-1122

RESOURCES

Police: 911

Safe+Sound Somerset's 24-Hour Call or Text Helpline: 866-685-1122

Central Jersey Housing Resource Center:
908-704-8901

NJ Child Abuse Hotline: **877-652-2873**

Legal Services of Northwest Jersey:
908-231-0840

NJ Address Confidentiality Program:
1-877-218-9133

NJ State-wide Information and Referral: **211**

Somerset County Division of Child Protection
and Permanency (DCP&P): **800-392-2734**

Somerset County Prosecutor's Office/Victims
Witness: **908-575-3300**

Somerset County Social Services:
908-526-8800

Somerset County Superior Court/Family
Division: **908-332-7700**

St. Hubert's Animal Welfare: **908-526-3330**

Zufall Community Health Center:
908-526-2335

Get in Touch With Us

PO Box 835
Somerville, NJ 08876

908-359-0003
www.safe-sound.org



TOPICS THAT MAY WARRANT SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

TECHNOLOGY/SOCIAL MEDIA

- Change your phone number. Consider an unlisted number.
- If possible, buy a new phone.
- Check your privacy and location sharing settings. Consider turning off location sharing on your cell phone and apps.
- Change passwords on all devices, programs, and apps.
- Be mindful of your social media use. Review the privacy settings on your social media accounts. Consider what information is visible to others? Are you currently sharing anything you wouldn't want the person who has caused you harm to see such as your location?
- Tracking devices and apps can be used to track someone's location without their knowledge. Have your computer, cell phone, and vehicle inspected.
- Check your children's bags for tracking devices when they return from visitation.

DURING PREGNANCY

Pregnancy is a time of change. If your partner is emotionally or physically abusive toward you, it can make these months of transition especially difficult. If you're pregnant, there is always a heightened risk during violent situations.

- If you're in a home with stairs, try to stay on the first floor.
- Get into the fetal position to protect your stomach if you're being attacked.
- Discuss what is happening in your relationship with your doctor. If your partner goes to these appointments with you, try to find a private moment to ask a care provider to come up with an excuse to talk alone.
- Take a women-only prenatal class where you may be able to discuss pregnancy concerns or speak to the instructor about your situation.

PETS

Include your pets in your safety plan. If possible, don't leave pets alone with an abusive partner.

- Ask a trusted family member or friend to care for them.
- Call your local animal welfare center to see if they will care for your pets if you relocate.
- If you are taking your pets with you, bring extra provisions, copies of their medical records, and important phone numbers.
- Your local domestic violence organization can help you explore your options and share information about programs that assist survivors with their pets.

IN THE WORKPLACE

- Save threatening emails or voicemail messages. You can use these to take legal action in the future if you choose. If you already have a restraining order, the messages can serve as evidence in court that the order was violated.
- Park close to the entrance of your building. Talk with security, the police, or a manager if you fear for your safety at work.
- Have your calls screened or remove your name and number from automated phone directories.
- Relocate your workspace to a more secure area.
- Include your workplace on your restraining order and provide a copy to your supervisor, Human Resources, the reception areas and/or security. Provide a picture of the person who has caused you harm to reception areas and/or security.
- Identify an emergency contact person should your employer be unable to contact you.
- Ask security to escort you to and from your car or public transportation.
- Explore alternate hours or work locations.

STAYING WITH THE PERSON WHO HAS CAUSED YOU HARM

If you are staying with the person who has caused you harm, think about:

- What works best to keep you safe in an emergency?
- Who to call in a crisis? Have their contact information accessible. Have a conversation with them about your situation and developing a code word to use to alert them if you need help.
- Is calling the police is an option for you?
- Including your children in safety planning. Set a code word or signal can be used to communicate in a crisis. Talk about who they should call or where they can go if they need help.
- Where to go if you needed to flee? Identify several places to go in a crisis. Write down the addresses and phone numbers and keep them with you
- Escape routes to flee your home if needed.

IF THE PERSON WHO HAS CAUSED YOU HARM LEAVES

If you had the person who caused you harm evicted or are living alone, you may want to:

- Change locks on doors and windows.
- Install a security system. Consider window bars, locks, motion sensors, better lighting, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.
- Teach your children how to call the police.
- Talk to schools and childcare providers about who has permission to pick up your children.
- Find a lawyer knowledgeable about domestic violence to explore custody, visitation and divorce provisions that protect you and your children.
- Obtain a restraining order.

PREPARING TO LEAVE

Violence can escalate when leaving an abusive relationship. Here are some things to keep in mind if you are planning to leave if it is safe to do so:

- Keep evidence of physical abuse such as pictures of injuries and a journal of all violent incidences, giving particular attention to dates, events and threats made. Store in a safe place.
- Talk to someone you trust about what is happening to you. Consider sharing your plans to leave with them.
- Know where to go get help.
- If you are injured, go to a doctor or an emergency room and report what happened.
- Identify a safe place with your children, like a room with a lock or a friend or neighbor's house, where they can go for help. Reassure them that their job is to stay safe, not to protect you.
- Contact your local domestic violence organization to learn more about your rights, options, and the resources available to you – before you must use need them during a crisis.
- If you are able, set money aside or ask friends or family members to hold money for you.

WHEN YOU LEAVE

Our advocates can help you come up with a personalized safety plan for leaving. You may request a police escort when you leave. Consider how you can escape quickly in an emergency.

Use this list as a guide to what you need to bring:

Identification

- Driver's License
- Your and your children's birth certificates
- Social security cards
- Financial information
- Money and/or credit cards (in your name)
- Checking and/or savings account book
- Health insurance cards

WHEN YOU LEAVE (Continued)

Legal Documents

- Temporary or final restraining order
- Copies of any lease or rental agreements, or the deed to your home
- Car registration and insurance papers
- Health and life insurance papers
- Medical records for you and your children
- School records
- Work permits, permanent resident card, and travel visa
- Passport
- Divorce and custody papers
- Marriage license

Emergency Numbers

- Local police and/or sheriff's department
- Local domestic violence program or shelter
- Friends, relatives and family members
- Your doctor's office and local hospital
- County and/or District Attorney's Office

Children

- Several changes of clothing
- Diapers and formula
- Medications
- A comfort item (special toy, blanket, etc.)

Other

- Medications
- Extra set of house and car keys
- Valuable jewelry
- Pay-as-you-go cell phone
- Address book
- Pictures and sentimental items
- Several changes of clothes
- Emergency money



AFTER YOU LEAVE

Your safety plan should include strategies to ensure your continued safety after leaving an abusive relationship. Here are some safety precautions to consider:

- Change your phone number. Consider an unlisted number.
- Call the telephone company to request Caller ID. Ask that your phone number be blocked so that if you call anyone, neither your partner nor anyone else will be able to get your new, unlisted phone number.
- Change your work hours and alternate the route you to take to work.
- Alternate the route to transport children to school.
- Alert school authorities of the situation. If applicable, provide them a copy of your restraining order.
- Keep a certified copy of your restraining order with you at all times. Inform friends, neighbors and employers that you have a restraining order in effect. Provide them with a copy along with a picture of the offender.
- If your restraining order is violated, call law enforcement to enforce the order.
- Review the safety of your childcare arrangements. Consider adding your childcare center to your restraining order.
- Explain your situation to people who take care of your children or drive them/pick them up from school and activities and provide them with a copy of the restraining order.
- Consider renting a post office box or using the address of a friend for your mail. Be aware that addresses are on restraining orders and police reports, and be careful to whom you give your new address and phone number.
- Reschedule appointments that the person who has caused you harm may be aware of.
- Go to different stores and frequent different social spots.
- Alert neighbors and request that they call the police if they feel you may be in danger.
- Conduct a safety assessment of your home and install a home security system.
- Install a motion sensitive lighting system.