

A Guide to Safety Planning for Survivors of Sexual 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

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**

RWJ University Hospital Somerset, 110 Rehill
Ave., Somerville, NJ 08876: **908-685-2200**

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

Think about keeping a log of any electronic communication related to your sexual assault. This may include texts, emails, social media posts, or other messages sent to or from the perpetrator before or after the assault. Keep these records in a safe place away from the person who harmed you.

If technology is a challenge, consult with someone you trust who is "tech savvy" or seek the assistance of an expert about the items below:

- Does the person who harmed you know your phone number? Email address? Do they know your passwords?
- Have you checked your privacy settings on your social media accounts? Have you reviewed the privacy settings on your devices, Wi-Fi, etc.?
- What information is visible to others? Are you currently sharing anything you wouldn't want the person that harmed you see such as your location? Are you worried about tracking apps or devices?
- Is the person that harmed you part of your social media circle? Do you have mutual friends?



EMOTIONAL SAFETY

The physical and emotional violation of sexual violence can result in many strong feelings. Survivors may feel scared, confused, angry, sad, embarrassed, and numb. It may be difficult for survivors to know where to turn, who to talk to, and how to start.

Emotional safety is important. Think about creating safe spaces and boundaries with your family and friends. Think about to whom you may or may not want to disclose information about your experience and feelings. Give permission to yourself to be vulnerable and do what is best for you.

Our clinical program provides survivors a safe and confidential space for survivors to process their experience and begin to heal. Services are also available for family members, friends, and community members in need of support in the aftermath of a loved one's sexual assault.

Making the decision to seek services is yours.

If you're not sure what you need, what your options are or what step you'd like to take, our advocates are ready to listen, help you explore your options, and plan for safety. Advocates on our 24/7 confidential call and text helpline can provide you with resources, information, and referrals.

WHAT IS A SAFETY PLAN?

Safety plans are unique to each survivor and their individual circumstances. This guide provides important information for different types of safety needs.

The information in this guide is for your consideration, which may or may not apply to you. **What may be safe for one person may not be safe for another.**

If you need help creating a safety plan or connecting to services, Safe+Sound Somerset can help:

Call or text our confidential 24/7 helpline at 866.685.1122

If you feel you are in danger, call 911



If you do not feel safe in your home or community, consider screening for Safe+Sound Somerset's emergency confidential shelter.

24/7 Confidential Call or Text Helpline

866-685-1122

PHYSICAL and MEDICAL SAFETY

If you are in immediate danger, call 911. Our advocates can support you in exploring your options, answer questions you may have, support you in navigating this process, provide hospital accompaniment, and make referrals to community resources that can address your medical and physical safety needs—throughout and at any stage of the process.

Below are some physical safety considerations:

- Do you need to seek medical attention? Do you have any injuries or other health concerns because of the assault? Are you concerned about the risk of sexually transmitted infections or unwanted pregnancy? Is something preventing you from doing so?
- Safe+Sound Somerset can explain your options: Has the assault happened within 5 days? You have the right to have a SART team provide services to you. Do you know what your options are for having forensic evidence collected after a sexual assault?

This is sometimes referred to as a “Rape Kit.” These examinations are conducted by a specially trained Forensic Nurse Examiner (FNE), and you can have an advocate present to provide support. The decision to move forward with a forensic exam is personal.

- Are you considering reporting the assault to law enforcement?

We recognize that for some survivors involving law enforcement may not be an option. We are here to support you with your choice and can help you explore alternatives for safety.

- Did the person that harmed you put their hands around your neck during the assault? Was your breathing restricted in any way? Did you lose consciousness? Seek medical attention if someone has restricted your breathing.

Strangulation is dangerous and may cause serious injuries that are not visible. Some things to look out for: voice changes (coughing, difficulty speaking), trouble swallowing or painful swallowing, breathing difficulties, trouble concentrating, vision changes (loss of vision or blurry/fuzzy vision), hearing changes (loss of hearing or ringing and popping in ears), headaches, loss of strength, restlessness, or hallucinations.

- Do you know the person that did you harm? Do you currently have relationship with them?

There are different orders of protection that you may qualify for under the law. Our Legal Advocates can provide information about your choices and will assist you throughout the court process.

- Have there been any threats of harm towards you? Your family? Friends? Have they threatened to use personal information or private content such as your sexual orientation, immigration status, or private pictures against you?
- Do you have access to a cell phone or other device you can use to call for help?
- Have you considered what you might do in case of an emergency? If you become worried about your immediate safety, do you know whom you would call? Where to go? How to get there?

WORKPLACE, SCHOOL, and HOME SAFETY

- Where and in what ways might you encounter the person that harmed you? Do they know where you live, work, or go to school?

Consider varying your routines, sharing your location with a safe and trusted family member or friend, and possibly travel in a group.

- Does your workplace/school have a policy against sexual assault? Do you know what it is? Are you aware of how to make a police report or a report to your place of employment if you need to?

If you have a temporary or permanent restraining order, consider sharing with your human resources department or school administration. Even if you do not have restraining order, sharing information and a picture of the person who harmed you with your employer, school, local police, or others can be an important safety strategy.

- If you live on campus, do you feel safe in your dorm or other housing? Do you know how to contact campus security? Do you know what their policy on escorting students is?
- Does the perpetrator have access to your residence? What could you do to feel safer where you live?

Some strategies include installing cameras or security systems, sharing information with your property owner or a trusted neighbor, and staying with a trusted friend or family member.

- Keep important documents and a bag of essentials ready to go. Consider where you will go if you need to quickly leave.