

## Safety Planning Considerations

*This document provides ideas and suggestions for advocates to use while safety planning with victims of domestic violence. Each safety plan should be customized to meet the needs of individual victims and should include a conversation regarding successful and unsuccessful strategies used by the victim. Considerations highlighted in this document should be discussed with every victim but emphasized and prioritized in **High-Danger** cases. These considerations are highlighted due to their connection to questions on the Danger Assessment and MNADV Lethality Assessment Screen and had situational relevance in homicides cases historically.*

Safety Planning Strategy	Example Questions	Considerations
<p><b>Identify Warning Signs</b></p> <p>Help victims identify warning signs of future abuse. Help victims determine if there is a pattern to the abusive incidences.</p>	<p>Can the victim identify any warning signs or patterns that an abusive incident is imminent? If so, what actions can (s)he take to attempt to mitigate the abuse?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building tension,</li> <li>• Escalation of minor incidents,</li> <li>• Verbal threats increasing in frequency or severity,</li> <li>• Typical behaviors before abuse,</li> <li>• Review past instances of abuse,</li> <li>• Create a calendar of abusive incidents.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consider Location</b></p> <p>Encourage victims to move to safer locations before abusive incidences.</p>	<p>Is there a safer location that a victim can attempt to move to during an abusive incident?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beware of kitchens, garages and bathrooms (knives, dishes, hard surfaces, small appliances),</li> <li>• Avoid rooms where guns are stored,</li> <li>• Avoid rooms with limited or no exits and no phones.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Access to Phone</b></p> <p>Assist victims to obtain quick and easy access to a phone.</p>	<p>Does the victim have access to a phone? If so, how can 911 or other emergency contacts be accessed safely? If not, is there a local program that can provide a phone?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-set emergency call functions into phones (911, police, family),</li> <li>• Obtain a “911” cell phone from domestic violence programs,</li> <li>• Add “911” to the contact list under a different name.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social Media/Technology</b></p> <p>Review any social media or technology that victims use for vulnerabilities.</p>	<p>Has the victim managed her/his privacy settings on social media?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disable “location services” on social media sites,</li> <li>• Avoid photos with location “stamps” or recognizable backgrounds,</li> <li>• Review privacy settings for social media sites,</li> <li>• Change passwords and security questions on any log-in sites.</li> </ul>

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<p><b><i>Establish a Support System</i></b></p> <p>Encourage victims to create a support system and reduce their isolation.</p>	<p>What social spaces and community connections and resources can a victim utilize to build her/his support network?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain employment or new job skills,</li> <li>• Join a community association or club,</li> <li>• Explore or revisit spirituality or religion,</li> <li>• Call a domestic violence hotline periodically and develop a connection with staff and resources,</li> <li>• Reconnect with family or friends,</li> <li>• See a therapist or counselor.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Establish Signals</i></b></p> <p>Explore options with victims for establishing alert signals.</p>	<p>Can the victim identify safe people in her/his life with whom they can establish a code or signal for help?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flashing porch lights, loud noises, and/or a certain code word or phrase,</li> <li>• Danger code phrases via text (e.g., "Can you get diapers for me?").</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Involving Children</i></b></p> <p>Engage children in the safety planning process but explore children's involvement with safety planning cautiously, taking into account the children's age and relationship with the abuser.</p>	<p>What skills and strategies can be developed to empower children to be engaged in safety planning?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call 911 or a trusted adult to alert them to the danger,</li> <li>• Teach children not to intervene in an altercation but to go for help,</li> <li>• Learn escape routes or places to hide,</li> <li>• Run to a neighbor's house for help,</li> <li>• Assist in gathering other children and pets,</li> <li>• Pull the fire alarm when escaping,</li> <li>• Safe Exchange/Supervised Visitation Centers,</li> <li>• Provide a copy of the protective order to school/daycare.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Documenting Abuse</i></b></p> <p>Encourage the victim to document abuse.</p>	<p>Can the victim identify a safe way to begin documenting abuse in case (s)he decides to leave or take legal action?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep documents in a safe place and save emails,</li> <li>• Note any police activity including officers' names and badge numbers,</li> <li>• Log threats to self, children, and others using a journal or screen shots from a cell phone or computer,</li> <li>• Photograph injuries,</li> <li>• Document abuse in medical reports,</li> <li>• Consult an attorney.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Important Documents</i></b></p> <p>Review what is considered an "important document" with victims.</p>	<p>What essential documents and accounts would a victim need in order to relocate, seek legal action, or to get access to financial, social, legal and medical services?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Driver's License,</li> <li>• Passport,</li> <li>• Social Security Card,</li> <li>• Birth Certificates for the victim and her/his children,</li> <li>• Prescriptions,</li> <li>• Documentation of abuse,</li> <li>• Immigration papers/green card,</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cash/credit cards/debit cards/bank account documents,</li> <li>• Health insurance card.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Storage Space</b></p> <p>Assist victims in coming up with creative solutions for safe storage.</p>	<p>Are there important and/or valuable items that a victim can safely remove and store in a safe place?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rent a storage space,</li> <li>• At homes of trusted friends, family or neighbors,</li> <li>• At victim's place of employment,</li> <li>• In victim's car,</li> <li>• Rooms in the house the abuser does not frequent.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Considering Safety while Leaving or after Leaving the Relationship</b></p> <p>Provide continued support to victims while leaving or after the relationship has ended.</p>	<p>When planning to leave, can the victim identify opportune times to take action?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leave when the abuser is not at home or with a Law Enforcement escort,</li> <li>• Some days are more "high risk" (court dates, anniversaries, separation dates, and child visitation exchanges),</li> <li>• Involve only trusted individuals in the safety plan,</li> <li>• Change all passwords including non-financial accounts (Netflix, cell phone unlock),</li> <li>• Disable all GPS technology (EZ Pass accounts can be used as a GPS tracker),</li> <li>• Prepare children for changes in routine,</li> <li>• When a home is purchased, the address is a public record,</li> <li>• Address Confidentiality Program/changing of identity,</li> <li>• Witness Protection Program.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Safety Considerations outside the Home</b></p> <p>Assist victims in maintaining their safety while out in public or other areas.</p>	<p>Can the victim identify other native places to frequent and do errands? If not, what strategies can (s)he use if the victim encounters the abuser?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public spaces may be safer than private,</li> <li>• Note exits and escape routes,</li> <li>• Let someone know when going out alone,</li> <li>• Check in and around car for the abuser,</li> <li>• Variations in routine can throw off the abuser,</li> <li>• Take a self-defense course,</li> <li>• Look out for GPS tracking and spoofing<sup>1</sup>,</li> <li>• Back vehicles into parking spaces to make pulling out easier.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Spoofing in the technology arena refers tricking or deceiving computer systems or other computer users. This is typically done by hiding one's identity or faking the identity of another user on the Internet or via Text.  
<http://www.techterms.com/definition/spoofing>

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<p><b>Safety Considerations inside the Home</b></p> <p>Review possible in-home safety considerations with victims.</p>	<p>If the victim has left the relationship and is staying in her/his own home, what strategies and protections can be put in place to protect her/him against further physical and verbal abuse?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install dead bolts and window locks,</li> <li>• Change locks and do not keep a key outside,</li> <li>• Have key copier engrave “Do Not Duplicate” on keys,</li> <li>• Install a peep hole,</li> <li>• Look for signs of break-ins before entering,</li> <li>• Trace harassing phone calls (*57),</li> <li>• Block phone calls to others (*67 then dial number),</li> <li>• Obtain an unlisted number,</li> <li>• Leave old cell phone number connected to voicemail to record threats,</li> <li>• Have easy access to important numbers,</li> <li>• Keep copies of protective orders with friends or family,</li> <li>• Install a security alarm or loud window/door sensors,</li> <li>• Padlock outside circuit boxes,</li> <li>• Install motion detector lighting outside.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Safety Considerations at Work</b></p> <p>Review safety considerations at work and how to engage the victim’s employer in the safety plan.</p>	<p>What accommodations can be made at work, school or daycare to protect the victim?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notify trusted supervisors and coworkers,</li> <li>• Request that 911 be called anytime the abuser is seen on the premises,</li> <li>• Request that 911 be called anytime the victim is more than a set time period late for work,</li> <li>• Let employer know that if you call out for work using a set phrase, to call the police,</li> <li>• Adjust work hours to change the normal routine,</li> <li>• Check for the abuser’s car in the parking lot and use a security service when available,</li> <li>• Request a parking spot closer to the entrance,</li> <li>• Keep office doors secured and locked,</li> <li>• Be aware of escape routes for emergencies,</li> <li>• Share copies of protection orders with employer,</li> <li>• Transfer to another position or location within your company/job,</li> <li>• Limit public profile on websites and company publications.</li> </ul>