

Safety Plan for Adults in Violent Situations: client focus

THINK UP A SAFETY PLAN

Take your safety seriously. If you feel unsafe or threatened by someone, think of ways to protect yourself.

If you are living with them you might not feel that you are able to separate at the moment. However, there are things that you can do to make you feel safer in the relationship:

- Tell trusted friends or family about the situation and get them to help protect you by being around when the person is there.
- Try not to be alone with them.
- Think of ways to be in control of the situation. For example, if you are out, arrange another way of getting home rather than going with them, or try not to drink too much or use other drugs. Take extra money in case you need to take a taxi or use the telephone.
- Have an excuse prepared so you can leave quickly if you feel uncomfortable or scared.
- Have a code word or signal that you can use to give to trusted friends or family to get them to help you. For example, if you cannot call the police, they know to do this once they hear the code word.
- If you go to school / uni / work with this person, you could talk to a teacher or workmate that you trust to help protect you.
- Memorise or write down the number of the police so that you can call them when you are in danger. (In Australia, phone 000 for police in an emergency).
- If you want to break up with this person but are scared about their reaction, you could consider telling them over the phone, rather than in person. Or you could tell them when other people are around.

After you have broken up with this person. You might still have contact with this person, especially if you are at the same school, workplace, have mutual friends or children together. They might still try and contact you after you have split up. You could try the suggestions above and also think about these ideas:

- Have an answering machine or have someone else take messages from them.
- Arrange a safe place to stay where they can't contact you.
- If you are worried about them interfering with your mail, you can open up a post office box.
- Talk to someone about what you can do legally to protect yourself from any more violence.

HOW CAN THE LAW PROTECT YOU

You might feel intimidated by the police or legal system. The law is there to protect you, but you might need support in knowing how to use it.

Criminal Charges:

Physical and sexual assault and threats are crimes. Stalking (repeatedly harassing or following someone to make them scared for their own safety) is also a crime.

You can report violence (for example, assault, property damage, rape or other sexual assaults, stalking) to the police. If there is enough evidence, police can lay criminal charges against the violent person. For this, you need to give them a statement about what happened. If it is a sexual assault, they may ask you to have a medical examination. (You don't have to have one if you don't want to though).

Related policies:

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Intervention Order:

You can apply for a court order which can help protect you from further violence or abuse. In Victoria, this is called an intervention order. You can apply for an intervention order if you've been assaulted, threatened, harassed, stalked or had property damaged and it is likely to happen again. The order can prohibit the violent person from harassing, threatening or abusing you, or from coming near your home, your work or other places you need to go. It is a criminal offence if they disobey the order. In Victoria:

- If you are under 14 years, another person can apply for the order on your behalf. (For example, the police, a parent / guardian or any other person with your parent / guardian's consent or the court's permission).
- If you are 14-16 years old, you can take out an order, but the magistrate at the court will want to know if you understand what you are doing and will decide as to whether your application will go ahead.
- If you are over 17 years, you can apply for one yourself.
- Also the police can apply for an intervention on your behalf (they can do this with, or without, your consent).

SERVICES THAT CAN HELP

Counsellors can listen to you in a safe and confidential setting and give you support, ideas and information on what you could do. A domestic violence service can talk to you about abuse in relationships. A sexual assault or rape crisis service can support you if you have been sexually assaulted or raped by someone known or unknown to you. Most of these services can talk to you, provide support and information over the phone, and will refer you to see a counsellor in person if you want to. You might feel nervous about ringing a service. If so, it might help to ring first with a few questions, about who they are and how their service works, before you talk about your situation. You don't have to give your name, and you can just hang up if you feel uncomfortable. If you are worried that the worker may not keep what you tell them confidential, ask them for their policy on confidentiality.

USEFUL NUMBERS

- In case of an immediate emergency, risk to life, injury (basically feeling really unsafe), call **000** for police and/ or ambulance response.
- For advice on family violence call Victorian Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service on **1800 015 188** or **9373 0123**.
- For men who want to change their violent behaviour call Men's Referral Service on **1800 065 973** or **9428 2899**.
- Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service **9898 3145**
- Women's Legal Service **9642 0343** / **1800 133 032** (free call)
- Kara House Lesbian Domestic Violence Outreach **9877 9711**
- Elizabeth Hoffman House, Indigenous Women's DV Service **0438 528 525**(business hours only)

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