

PERSONAL SAFETY PLANNING

Make a Personal Safety Plan by using this document to generate ideas that work for YOU.

SAFETY THROUGH PROTECTION ORDERS....

Restraining Orders and Peace Bonds are both made by a judge in court (criminal court for peace bonds and civil court for restraining orders), for the purpose of protecting one person from another. Both list conditions that must be followed or there are significant consequences including fines and jail. Both can be enforced anywhere in British Columbia. Protection orders include:

- **Civil Restraining Orders**

When issued by a judge under the Family Law Act, Restraining Orders can work to deter harassment and unwanted contact. They are not obtained through the criminal justice system, but instead are obtained through a civil court process – you can ask questions at the Court Registry office. Details should be discussed with a lawyer, and there will be fees associated with having a lawyer (unless you qualify for Legal Aid). You may want to ensure that there is wording included about “authority for the RCMP to respond and apprehend” as restraining orders do not always direct the RCMP to act. Restraining orders must be ‘served’ and this may be problematic if the offender’s whereabouts are not reliable. Restraining orders can be used only when there is a family connection – you are (or were) married or living together or you have children together. A restraining order has no time limit and will be enforced only in British Columbia. If you move to another province, you will need to apply for another one.

- **Peace Bonds**

Peace Bonds are voluntary undertakings and therefore not likely to be applicable in violent situations already involving police and/or criminal charges. However, if there is not enough evidence for the police to proceed with requesting charges, they may apply for a Peace Bond (or 810 recognizance). You can apply for a Peace Bond for protection from anyone, including someone you’ve had only a dating relationship with. You do not need a lawyer – the police can apply and a Crown counsel lawyer will handle the case in criminal court, where there will be a Peace Bond Hearing that you will have to testify at. A Peace Bond lasts up to one year, and there is no fee to obtain one. Further information should be obtained from police, Court Registry, Crown Counsel, or your local advocate.

- **Bail Conditions and No Contact Orders**

When an accused person has been held in custody for a bail hearing, a victim may speak to the police or the Victim Assistance Worker about ‘conditions of release’ they feel would be helpful to them. These conditions could include a “no contact or communication” order, a curfew, a geographical restriction, prohibition of alcohol and/or drugs, weapons prohibitions or other conditions. If the court agrees that the conditions are appropriate, they may be a part of the terms of release until the trial date. You should carry a copy of these conditions on your person at all times. If the accused breaks these conditions (called a “breach”), you should phone the RCMP immediately. If you have been in touch with the Probation Officer in charge of the case, you should also call them to report the breach.

If you fear for your safety, talk to the RCMP. They may meet with the accused and issue an informal ‘no contact’ directive, and this will put your concerns ‘on the record.’

- **Keep your restraining order or peace bond documents with you at all times. Leave copies at work, with a friend, in your car, etc.**
- **Call the police if your partner breaks the court order (breach of conditions).**
- **Think of alternative ways to keep safe if the police do not respond right away.**
- **Inform family, friends and neighbors that you have a restraining order or peace bond in effect.**

SAFETY DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT...

- If an argument seems unavoidable, try to have it in a room or area that has access to an exit. Avoid the bathroom, kitchen or anywhere near weapons.
- Practice how to get out of your home safely. Identify which doors, windows, elevator, or stairs would be safe and easily accessible.
- Have a packed bag ready. Keep it in a secret place in order to leave quickly.
- Identify a neighbor you can tell about the violence and ask that they call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.
- Make a code word to use with your children, family, friends, and neighbors when you need the police.
- Decide where you will go if you have to leave home (even if right now you doubt you will need to).
- If the situation is very dangerous, use your own instinct and judgment to keep yourself safe. Calming the abuser may be the most important thing to do. Call the police as soon as it is safe to do so. You can obtain a restraining order or peace bond, have 'no contact' conditions, or he can be arrested and jailed pending a court appearance.

SAFETY WHEN PREPARING TO LEAVE...

- Identify who would let you stay with them or lend you some money.
- Always try to take your children with you or make arrangements to leave them with someone safe.
- Leave money, an extra set of keys, copies of important documents, and extra clothes with someone you trust.
- Ensure that your vehicle gas tank is always at least ½ full.
- Open a savings account in your own name to start to establish or increase your independence. Make deposits to slowly build your funds. Arrange for statements to be mailed to someone you trust.
- Apply for a credit card in your own name to slowly build a credit rating – a gas card might be easy to obtain. Have these statements sent to someone you trust.
- Keep the shelter numbers close at hand and keep change or a calling card with you at all times.
- Review your safety plan with a friend or counselor in order to plan the safest way to leave the abuser.
- Prepare an information package on the offender, including a recent clear picture, description of his vehicle, age, ID numbers if you have them (SIN, Driver's License, etc), and a note describing the risks posed to victims, and who the potential victims will be.
- **REMEMBER - When you leave is the most dangerous time of all!**

SAFETY THROUGH SHARING...

One of the best safeguards you may take is the difficult step of sharing your experience and your need for safety with those people who surround you in your life. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- Sharing information with your children's teachers and day care providers and providing clear instructions about who will be picking them up, etc., especially if there are custody and restraining orders in place.
- Neighbors who are aware of your needs can be alerted to call the police if the offender is seen around your home, or attempts to pick up your children following school hours.
- Alert neighbors not to hesitate to call the police if they hear a disturbance from your home at any time. You can wear a piercing whistle around your neck which neighbors can hear and respond to by calling the police. If you have a court order, ask them to call the police should the offender be seen around your home while you are absent. Show the neighbors a recent clear picture of the offender and explain who you think his target will be.
- A special "code word" can be chosen and shared with people you regularly contact. In the event of immediate danger, saying "_____ " will be understood by them to mean 'call the police' while the word will be overlooked by the offender.

SAFETY THROUGHOUT THE DAY....

A comprehensive safety plan covers all your regular activities. This includes time spent in the home, in the car or on public transit, in the homes of friends and relatives, at work, and in public places such as shopping malls. The following tips may be useful:

- Change locks (use good quality deadbolts along with knob locks and chain locks) and ensure window security especially if the offender has ever had access to your home or your keys. Make sure windows can't be opened from the outside. If windows need to be reinforced, doweling can be used to brace them closed.
- If threatening calls have been made, you can change your phone to an unlisted number or add a new unlisted numbered line while keeping an answering machine monitoring your old one. Monitor your calls through Call Display, plus through an answering machine. Only answer the phone when you are positive who is calling, and otherwise only return calls to people who have left messages. In cases involving violence and intimidation, the telephone company may be willing to waive certain fees. Do not erase messages from the answering machine. Keep the tapes. Do not answer the phone when he calls, or if the caller's number is blocked.
- Keep a journal of all dates, times and events to do with feeling threatened, being abused, stalked or harassed.
- Keep a listing of community resources handy.
- Preprogram your phones with emergency numbers (including RCMP).
- Place caller ID system on your home telephone to screen calls. This can be very helpful for children, particularly if they are told to answer only when the number displayed is one which you have taught them is safe (e.g. your work number, your doctor, close friends and relatives).
- A security chain should be fitted to all entry doors and used at all times when the door is answered by you or your children. Make sure it is solidly secured.
- Improve visibility around your house by altering gardens and landscapes nearby, and having motion-lights and perhaps video cameras installed.
- Keep your cell phone on hand, even when the other phones in the home are working, in the event that the telephone lines are cut.
- Plan for extra safety between leaving your car and entering your home. If you have a garage, an automatic opener and safety lighting may also be helpful. Environmental risks presented by shrubs, trees and breezeways may be reduced through strategic lighting, or even through removal if posing a direct risk.
- Install a security system in your house.
- Get a dog that will bark when strangers come to the house. Post a 'Beware of Dog' sign at the end of your driveway, even if your dog is friendly or even if you don't HAVE a dog! The sign will make people think twice before entering your yard or trying to enter your house.
- Stay with other people in public and well-lit places-don't walk alone or in isolated places.
- Take a self-defense course.
- Cooperate with RCMP fully (if you have chosen to report) so that their file is complete and thorough. Then when you call in a crisis, they are familiar with the offender and your situation, and can respond accordingly.

SAFETY WHILE TRAVELLING...

- Vary your travel routes to and from work.
- Keep a map in your car and pre-plan routes to prevent having to leave your vehicle to ask for directions.
- Vehicle doors should always be locked and windows open only to less than an arm's width at any time.
- Keep your vehicle in good condition, especially tires, fan belt and transmission to prevent breakdowns, and keep it over ½ full of gas at all times.
- Carry a "call police" sign to post in your car window if a breakdown does occur.
- Carry a cell phone in your vehicle at all times. You can purchase an inexpensive charger that plugs into your vehicle lighter.
- If using public transit, arrange for someone to meet you at the nearest stop or have neighbors watch for you at regular time intervals.
- Park in well-lit, well-used areas as close as possible to entry doors. If necessary and possible, ask for an escort to your vehicle, or walk to cars in groups.
- Wear a loud whistle around your neck
- Try not to be alone when leaving your car. Other people around will help to deter an attack because they could be witnesses.

SAFETY ON THE JOB...

- Be sure that your supervisor and immediate colleagues and building security are aware of your danger. Provide them with a photo of your partner and any identifying information you may have.
- Your supervisor may wish you to have a group safety planning exercise to allay fears of co-workers, as well as to support you.
- Arrange to have someone screen your calls.
- Try to have gates or doors that prohibit the public from walking into employee space. Receptionists should have barriers in the form of high counters and plexiglas between them and the public. Receptionists should have a panic button that will alert someone else in the office that there is a problem. These buttons can be purchased at hardware stores and installed on the bottom of counters or chairs.
- Identify a safety plan when you leave work. Have someone escort you to the car, bus or train. Use a variety of routes to go home if possible. Think about what you would do if something happened while going home. Keep your cellphone with you.

YOUR CHILDREN'S SAFETY...

- The best thing your children can do for you and themselves during a violent episode is to get away and protect themselves. Make a plan for what your children should do if they see you being abused – make sure they understand the plan.
- Choose a safe room for them to go to that has a lock and a phone, if they see abuse occurring.
- Tell your children their most important job is to keep themselves safe.
- Teach your children how to call for help. If they cannot safely get to a phone in your home, talk to them about getting to a neighbour's phone, or a nearby payphone.
- Teach your children that you do not need money to dial an emergency number. Teach them how to use a cellphone and help them memorize an emergency phone number.
- Make sure your children know their name, address and phone number if they need help.
- Rehearse with your children what they will say when they call for help. For example "My name is _____. I am ___ years old. I need help. Send the police. Someone is hurting my mom. The address here is _____. The phone number here is _____."
- Pick a safe and easy-to-get-to place to meet your children outside your home if you have had to quickly leave the house.
- Teach your children the safest route to get to the safe place to meet.

IF YOU ARE A TEEN IN A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP...

- If things in your relationship don't feel right to you, talk about it with someone you trust.
- Decide which friend, teacher, or relative, you can go to in an emergency. Memorize their phone numbers and program them into your cellphone.
- Contact a victim assistance worker in your community – the RCMP will have the number.
- If you feel threatened and/or in danger call the RCMP. They can issue a no-contact order and enforce it.
- Make a safety plan.
- Talk to an adult - do not keep this a secret!
- Ask a school counselor if you can speak to her in confidence – they will often have many great ideas.
- Listen and trust your instincts and inner voice when they suggest something is wrong in your relationship
- Make sure that your friends know about your concerns
- Carry a cellphone at all times
- Nurture your self-esteem, know your rights and stand up for yourself – you deserve to have the life you want
- Make plans for your future based on who you are and what YOU want out of life – set yourself some goals.
- Learn to recognize what healthy relationships look and sound like.
- Surround yourself with people you can trust, and who accept you for who you are

YOUR EMOTIONAL WELLBEING...

Remember that not all these ideas will be right for you.....you will use this list to help you build your own Personal Safety Plan. You may choose some of these actions, and/or you may think of some that aren't here.

- If you are thinking of returning to a potentially abusive situation, discuss plans and alternatives with someone you trust. Be honest with yourself about the possible risks and think carefully about your boundaries.
- If you have to communicate with your abusive ex-partner, carefully determine the safest way to do so. You may want to have a 3rd party present, you may want to meet in a public place, you may need to prepare your boundaries in your mind beforehand, you may need to remind yourself to not 'engage' in button-pushing.
- Have positive thoughts about yourself and be assertive with others about your needs.
- Plan to attend a support group to gain support from others and learn about the law and your rights.
- Decide who you can call to give you the support you need, when you need it.
- Read self-help books and educational articles to give you tools for managing your life, and to increase your understanding of your situation and your reactions to it.
- Seek resources and pamphlets concerning woman abuse/domestic violence/sexual assault/historical assault/criminal harassment/victimization.
- Attend counseling sessions with counselors trained in domestic violence.
- Become involved in community activities (attend openings, fairs, markets, festivals) to reduce isolation.
- Do volunteer work where others can benefit from your energy.
- Get a part time or fulltime job.
- Enroll in school or courses which will help to build self-esteem as well as contribute to job possibilities.
- Take part in social activities (movies, dinner, exercise, etc) with other people.
- Take care of sleep and nutritional needs every day – consciously think these things through.
- Have a doctor that you trust and can confide in – make sure your health has been attended to – medications can be effective in managing depression and/or anxiety for a short period of time if you and your doctor think this is appropriate for you.
- Take time to prepare yourself before going into stressful situations like meeting with lawyers or attending court, by planning ways to stay calm and stay centered.
- Explore ways to reduce stress – for example book only one appointment per day.
- Avoid excessive shopping and impulse buying.
- Do not use alcohol, drugs or food excessively – it will increase depression.
- Join a health club or an exercise program
- Keep a personal journal to record your feelings in – keep it in a safe place and plan to burn it later
- Do things that make you happy. Plan them into your day.
- Remember that you are the most important person to take care of right now and it is ok to say no to other people's demands and requests.
- Get a cat or dog – they can be wonderful companions and emotional supports
- Explore the possibilities of herbal remedies and supplements if you are feeling tired, depressed or anxious. Discuss this with a naturopath or nutritionist – do not self diagnose and prescribe.
- Do not keep your situation a secret – tell family members and neighbors what is happening to you, even if you risk their disapproval and advice. These are the people that will be able to identify when things seem out-of-the-ordinary, and they may be the ones who will come to your aid when you are not able to help yourself.
- If you feel in a great deal of danger you can consider moving somewhere else and starting over, ensuring that your new address and phone number are known by very few people, and only those you can trust. This may not be a practical solution for many people, and does not guarantee that you will not be found by someone who really wants to find you.
- Carefully document your Safety Plan, and regularly check it and update it. Knowing all the measures you take to ensure yours and your children's safety is very reassuring.
- Listen to your instincts and intuitions. Trust and believe in yourself.

Checklist-When You Leave You Will Take

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| _____ Identification-CareCards/Aboriginal status cards | _____ Children |
| _____ Driver's license, car title and registration | _____ Children's birth certificates |
| _____ Birth and marriage certificates | _____ Money (incl coins for phone) |
| _____ Restraining Order/Peace Bond/Custody papers | _____ Bank books/Chequebooks |
| _____ Lease, rental agreement, house deed | _____ Insurance papers |
| _____ House and car keys | _____ Medications |
| _____ Medical records for all family members' | _____ Address books, Pictures |
| _____ Social Insurance cards | _____ Welfare identification |
| _____ School records | _____ Work permits |
| _____ Immigration papers, Passport | _____ Divorce papers |
| _____ Jewelry, Children's small toys | _____ Pets |
| _____ Picture of ex for ID purposes | _____ Credit cards |

Other Things To Take:

Things I plan to pick up later (with police accompaniment):
