



Voices
Against
Violence

SAFETY PLANNING WITH CHILDREN

1. Teach your children when and how to call 911.
2. Instruct them to leave the home if possible when things begin to escalate, and where they can go.
3. Come up with a code word that you can say when they need to leave the home in case of an emergency — make sure that they know only to tell the agreed-upon safe people what the word means.
4. In the house: identify a room they can go to when they're afraid and something they can think about when they're scared.
5. Instruct them to stay out of the kitchen, bathroom, and other areas where there are items that could be used as weapons.
6. Teach them that although they want to protect their parent, they should never intervene.
7. Help them make a list of people that they are comfortable talking with and expressing themselves to.
8. Enroll them in a counseling program. Local service providers often have children's programs.

How to Have These Conversations

Let your children know that what is happening is not their fault and that they didn't cause it. Let them know how much you love them and that you support them no matter what. Tell them that you want to protect them and that you want everyone to be safe, so you have to come up with a plan to use in case of emergencies.

It's important to remember that when you're safety planning with a child, they might tell this information to the abusive partner, which could make the situation more dangerous (ex. "Mom said to do this if you get angry.") When talking about these plans with your child, use phrases such as "We're practicing what to do in an emergency," instead of "We're planning what you can do when dad/mom becomes violent."

Planning for Unsupervised Visits

If you have separated from an abusive partner and are concerned for your children's safety when they visit your ex, developing a safety plan for while they are visiting can be beneficial.

Brainstorm with your children (if they are old enough) to come up with ways that they can stay safe using the same model as you would for your own home. Have them identify where they can get to a phone, how they can leave the house, and who they can go to.

If it's safe to do, send a cell phone with the children to be used in emergencies — this can be used to call 911, a neighbor, or you if they need aid.

Planning for Safe Custody Exchanges

Avoid exchanging custody at your home or your partner's home.

Meet in a safe, public place such as a restaurant, a bank/other areas with lots of cameras, or even near a police station.

Bring a friend or relative with you to the exchanges, or have them make the exchange.

Perhaps plan to have your partner pick the children up from school at the end of the day after you drop them off in the morning – this eliminates the chances of seeing each other.

Emotional safety plan as well – figure out something to do before the exchange to calm any nerves you're feeling, and something after to focus on yourself or the kids, such as going to a park or doing a fun activity.