

# PERSONALIZED SAFETY PLAN FOR CHILDREN WITNESSING WOMAN ABUSE

This guide was developed to support mothers in teaching their children some basic safety planning. For specific information regarding the needs of children in woman abuse situations please refer to the Child Witness Program (455-9000) or call the Abused Women's Helpline (642-3000) for more information and resources.

## Safety Planning - What is a safety plan?

A safety plan is a simple, concrete strategy devised with your children to help them deal with a dangerous situation and get to safety. This safety plan is based on the belief that the most important thing that children can do for their mothers and their families is get out of the way! They cannot stop the abuse, although they often try by distracting the abuser or directly interfering in the abusive episode. It is important to tell the child that the best and most important thing for them to do is keep themselves safe.

There are several strategies to help you develop a safety plan with your child(ren).

1. Have your child identify a safe room/place in the house, preferably with a lock on the door, and a phone. The first step of any plan is for the children to get out of the room where the abuse is occurring.
2. Stress the importance of being safe, and that it is not his/her responsibility to make sure that their mother is safe.
3. Teach the child how to call for help. It is important to ensure that the child know they should not use a phone that is in view of the abuser. This puts them at risk.
4. Teach them how to contact police at the emergency number.
5. Ensure that the child knows their address and full name (rural children need to know their Concession and Lot#).
6. Rehearse what they will say. In the case of young children it should be simple yet specific, i.e. "someone is hurting mommy".
7. It is important for children to leave the phone off the hook after they are done talking. The police will call the number back if they hang up. This could create a dangerous situation for yourself and the child.
8. Teach the child about Neighbourhood Block Parents and how to use them.

It is important to assist children and youth in learning ways to protect themselves. Children who experience woman abuse can be profoundly affected. It is very traumatic for them to be faced with violence directed at them or at someone they love. Personal safety is extremely important and safety planning is always necessary for children whose families are experiencing violence.

## Children's Safety Plan

This is your own personal safety plan.

**Remember:**

1. You are not to blame for the abuse.
2. You must not put yourself in danger.
3. Abuse is very dangerous, and it is against the law.
4. If you have a safe place, go there when the abuse is happening.
5. You are not responsible for your mother's safety, but you may be able to get help.
  
6. If you can get to a phone in your own house, a neighbour's house, or a pay phone, you can call for help.

Here's what to do when you call:

**Dial:** 9 1 1.

**They will say:** "POLICE, FIRE, AMBULANCE"

**You answer:** Police

**Then say:**

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 \_\_\_\_\_.

It may not be safe for you to stay on the phone. If it is not safe tell the person that and then just put the phone down. **DO NOT HANG UP.** If you hang up, the police may call you back.