

Staying Safe

If you are in an abusive relationship, there are several things you should do.

- Talk to someone you trust like a friend, family member, doctor or other professional.
- Create a safety plan (see below) so you know what to do if you need to leave an abusive situation. The plan should include who to call, where to go, how to get there and what to bring with you. You should also have a back-up plan in case things do not go the way you expect.
- Learn about the laws that protect people from family violence. Emergency protection orders, restraining orders and peace bonds are some of the legal ways to stop an abuser from contacting someone.
- Contact the [Bow Valley Victim Services](#) and the police for help.

You should **NOT** confront a violent person. It could be dangerous. Leave and call for help.

What to tell your children

If you have children, you must keep them safe at all times. To ensure their safety, you need to talk to them about what is going on. Don't try to pretend it's not happening. You may think they are unaware of what is happening, but children typically know.

- Make sure children know that even though the adults in their home do not get along, the children are not to blame and the abuse is not their fault.
- Tell your children exactly what they should do in an emergency. If something does happen, they need to be prepared. Don't scare them but be clear about what they should do. Should they go to a friend or neighbour's house and wait for you? Should they call 911? Having a plan can make a huge difference in an emergency situation.

Creating a Safety Plan

Step One: Tell people you trust that you are being abused.

Talk to them about how they can help you stay safe. You may want to keep the abuse private, but when people outside your home know about the abuse, they can help keep you safe (and, if you have children, help protect them too).

Step Two: Plan where you can go if you need to leave in a hurry.

Look for safe places that are open 24 hours where you can be safe while you call for help. If you plan to go to someone's home, arrange this ahead of time. That way if you arrive with no notice, they will know to let you in, lock the doors and ask questions later. (Be careful about going to the home of a friend or relative where your abuser will think to look. That could be dangerous for everyone involved.)

Step Three: Make sure you have car keys and gas in the car, bus tickets or another means of transportation.

Know exactly how to get to where you plan to go.

Step Four: Plan what you need to bring with you.

Pack an emergency bag with cash, debit or credit cards, health care cards, your driver's license and passport (children's passports), prescription drugs or medications, etc. If you have children, include things for them like toys or books. (Some people may require a longer period of time to accumulate cash reserves for their emergency bags.)

Step Five: Find out about emergency protection orders, restraining orders, peace bonds or other legal ways to stop your partner from contacting you.

Your local police service or a police-based victim services unit can give you information.

Adapted from Alberta Children and Youth Services, Family Violence website, How to Stay Safe
<http://www.child.alberta.ca/home/593.cfm>

Safety Plan 1

If You Have Left an Abusive Situation Or Relationship

Safety plans must be developed to take into account the specific circumstances and abilities of each individual. All or some of the information may be helpful in planning for your safety.

1. Call the police immediately if the abusive person tries to contact you.

2. Work in conjunction with a qualified support person to discuss the potential risks you may be facing and what can be done to decrease these risks e.g. [Bow Valley Victim Services](#).
3. Develop an escape plan and practice it with your children.
4. Change door locks, add dead bolts, if possible install motion sensor lights in the yard or install a security system. Ensure all entrances are well lit and keep doors locked and windows securely locked. Ask for your landlord's assistance if possible. Let them know you are fearful of your ex-partner.
5. Keep a telephone in a room that locks from the inside. If possible, purchase a cellular phone and keep it nearby (i.e. purse, pocket, etc.) or in an accessible hiding place.
6. Obtain a private or unlisted telephone number. If possible, pre-program emergency numbers (i.e. 911) into the telephone directory.
7. Consider renting a post office box for your mail - addresses may be listed on legal orders and police reports and can be accessed by the abusive person.
8. Develop signals or codes for neighbors and friends to call the police, such as banging on the floor or wall in the case of an emergency.
9. Have a safety plan to the children. Teach your children not to let the abusive person in the home. Prepare the children to respond to the abusive person who comes to their school or day care centre. If a protection order includes provisions about the children, give a copy to the children's school or childcare facility.
10. If it is not safe where you live, choose a safe place to go (i.e. trusted friend or relative, motel, emergency shelter, etc.) Check to see which shelters are barrier free for you and if they have accessible support that you require. Do **not** go to a friends or relatives house if the abusive person is likely to find you there. This can be dangerous for both you and those trying to assist you.
11. Keep a copy of all protection orders and custody orders with you at all times.
12. Change any appointments the abusive person was aware of (i.e. medical or dental appointments).
13. Shop at different stores and frequent different social spots so that the abusive person will be less likely able to find you.
14. Call the telephone company about safety features such as "Caller ID" and "Blocking". "Caller ID" assists you by displaying the telephone number of anyone attempting to call you. "Blocking" is a feature that blocks your number from being displayed. This is especially valuable if you have had to change your

number or now have an unlisted number. In some areas, you can press *67 before dialing, which will block your number from appearing on the phone you are calling. Press *69 provides the number of the last person who called your line. Please be aware that there may be costs associated with accessing this telephone function.

15. Review your safety plan monthly.
16. Advise your place of work and ensure a plan should the abusive person try to contact you at your place of work.
17. Think about ways abuser may try to contact you and put a plan in place to deal with these situations e.g. let your work know about the situation and they may be able to stop him from entering your workplace.

Safety Plan 2

When Choosing to Stay in an Abusive Relationship

Safety plans must be developed to take into account the specific circumstances and abilities of each individual. All or some of the information may be helpful in planning for your safety.

If you stay in an abusive relationship, there are some steps that can be taken to increase your safety if an abusive incident occurs. Even if all these precautions are followed, your safety cannot be guaranteed.

If you feel an abusive situation may occur, it is best to make arrangements to be away from the abuser at these times. Remember you do not deserve to be hurt or threatened.

1. If an abusive situation seems likely, try to avoid rooms with access to potential weapons (i.e. knives, heavy objects), and with only one exit. Avoid the kitchen and bathroom areas.
2. Do not run to where your children are as they may be hurt as well.
3. If possible, pre-program emergency numbers into your phone (i.e. 911). Keep a phone in a room you can lock from the inside.
4. Talk to your neighbor, relative or friend that you can trust and arrange a signal or code for when you need them to get help e.g. getting them to phone you to see if you are OK.

5. Teach your children not to intervene in the violence. Instead, teach them a code for when you need them to get help.
6. Have an emergency bag packed and hidden in an accessible location. Include numbers for emergency contacts such as shelters and police; identification; and a few items of clothing and money for phone calls and/or transportation. Have an extra set of car keys or enough money for a taxi or bus. Keep your important papers for you and your children. These may include health care cards, birth certificates, custody agreements, social insurance numbers, and citizenship and immigration documents.
7. Ensure that some form of emergency transportation is available upon request. This may be through a trusted relative, friend or through community agencies.
8. Have an escape route out of your home. Teach and practice it with your children.
9. Work out a code word that can be used on the phone with a person that is trusted. The code could mean to contact the police or to inform them that you are leaving. It may be important to develop signals or codes for the neighbors to call the police, such as banging on the floor or wall in case of an emergency.
10. Look at options for safe places (i.e. a friend, a neighbor, a relative, motel or emergency shelter). If you can do so safely, contact people in advance to let them know you are coming. This allows them to watch for you and call for help if needed. Do not go to a friend or relative's house if your partner/caregiver is likely to try and find you there.
11. Whenever calling a shelter or other resources, phone another number or press several numbers immediately afterwards so that your partner/caregiver cannot press the redial button and find out who you were speaking with.
12. Children should be told that violence is not right, even the abusive person is someone they love. Tell your children that when violent situations occur, it is not their fault. Neither you nor they caused the violence. The most important thing is for you and your children to be protected.
13. Review your safety plan monthly and get help to continually assess risk.

The abused person may wonder whether to tell their partner/caregiver they are leaving. When making this decision it is important to remember that in cases where there has been physical abuse or extremely controlling behavior, telling the abuser can seriously endanger the abused person. Abusers can become increasingly violent when they fear their partner is leaving or they are losing their control over them.