



Safety Planning

A safety plan is a plan developed with the person experiencing the violence to prepare in advance for the possibility of future violence by the perpetrator. It can refer to any aspect of physical, social, emotional, financial and psychological safety, but it typically involves planning to avoid serious injury and to ensure the safety of children.

Ideally, clinicians should refer clients to a specialist FDV service to help them with their safety planning. See the FDV Support Services Guide for a list of possible support services. Be aware that if a person is planning on leaving the abusive partner, this is a time of extreme danger and you should strongly encourage them to meet with a specialist FDV support service to plan for this.

What does a Safety Plan look like?

When making a safety plan, it is critical to address and understand the relationship between the victim and perpetrator, particularly when there is a continuing emotional attachment or when children are involved.

Most women have developed a number of strategic and creative ways to keep themselves and their children safe. It is important to ask the woman what she has done in the past to keep herself and her children safe.

At a minimum, a safety plan should include:

- Emergency contact no's e.g. Women's FDV Helpline; Police and Crisis Care
- Identification of a safe place to go if in danger and how to get there (e.g. neighbour, friend, family, refuge). Let that person know
- Have a code word that tells a friend, family or neighbours that you feel unsafe and need assistance
- Security arrangements at their home (exit strategy, safe rooms etc)

- An “emergency bag” with essential items you’ll need if you have to leave the house quickly. See below

An Emergency Bag should include:

- Some cash
- Spare debit or credit cards if possible
- Spare car and house keys
- A spare mobile phone with pre-paid credit
- Forms of identification (or certified copies) for you and children (e.g. birth certificates and passports).
- Lease, rental agreement, mortgage papers for your house.
- Bank account details.
- Insurance papers.
- Any medication (or scripts) for you and your children
- Medical records, immunisation details and your Medicare card.
- Centrelink information.
- Legal papers and copies of any Family Violence Restraining Orders
- Clothing and personal hygiene items for you and your children

If there are children

It is essential for children who live in violent environments to have a simple safety plan so they know what to do when the violence is occurring. Some safety precautions to consider when there are children in the home are:

- Help your children choose a room in the house where they feel safest but can escape from if necessary. Tell them to go to this room if there is a fight and not to get involved in the fighting.
- To teach your children how to contact family, friends or neighbours they will be safe with.
- Develop a code word that signals to your children that they need to leave now.
- Teach your children how to call 000 for the police, fire and ambulance services. Tell them not to hang up afterwards.

If separated from the perpetrator

Even if a person is separated from the perpetrator, they can still be in danger. Some safety precautions they can consider include:

- Applying to their local Magistrates’ Court for a Family Violence Restraining Order (FVRO);
- If you have a FVRO that covers the children, advise the school clearly who is allowed to pick up your children;
- If your ex-partner breaks a FVRO, ring the police and report him;
- If they have remained in the family home, change the door locks, fit window locks and install outside lighting. The local Safe at home program can help with this (see FDV Support Services page for contact details);
- Have a silent telephone number;
- Turn off location setting on their mobile phone;
- Use caller ID or an answering machine or message bank service so you know who is calling before you answer the phone. This can also provide evidence of harassing phone calls;
- Have your mail sent to another address or PO Box;



- Get your neighbour's phone number in case of emergency. Provide a code word that lets them know that you are feeling unsafe;
- If your ex-partner knows your passwords for your email, facebook, Instagram etc, change them;
- Do not post any photo's on social media which would identify your location;
- Arrange handover of children to the other parent in a public place, and take along a supportive person.

Being Safe with Technology

Victims of family violence should also be made aware that the perpetrator can get information about calls from mobile and landline telephones and pages accessed via the internet. You should encourage victims to regularly clear the 'recently dialled numbers', log in their mobile telephone and dial another 'safe' number after contacting services via the landline. Victims should also be advised about the safety features on family violence websites that prevent the tracing of viewed pages.

Consider giving clients the fact sheet [Being Safe with Technology](#).

Samples of Safety Plan Templates

[Personal Safety Plan Template - Department of Communities Child Protection](#)

[1800 RESPECT Safety Planning Checklist](#)

[Domestic Violence Resource Centre - My Safety Plan](#) (go to page 27)

Helpful App's and information you can give your client

[Daisy](#) App: connecting you to local FDV support services. Download via iTunes or Google Play.

[Sunny](#) App: a support tool for women with a disability who have/are experiencing FDV. Download via iTunes or Google Play.

[Positive Pathways](#): a safety and wellbeing app for women experiencing FDV. It looks like a wellness app with inspirational quotes, positive moments and a daily diary that is password protected. It's main purpose is for use in emergencies with audio recording, automatic help messages and GPS location as well as a one-touch 000 call function. Download from iTunes or Google Play.

The [Arc](#) app: enables women experiencing FDV to track details of abusive behaviour by uploading photos, videos, audio and diary entries to create a record of what has happened, when it happened, and how it made them feel. The app also has information about technology and safety as well as links to legal resources.



[SmartSafe+](#) app: enables you to collect evidence through diary entries, photos, video's and voice recordings. It provides advice on the type of evidence it may be useful to collect. The app is password protected and all the information is stored in a secured cloud. Download from iTunes or Google Play.

Developed by the Women and Newborn Health Service, available via the [WNHS FDV Toolbox](#)

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

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