

# Supplemental Material

## Tab #10: Safety Planning

A safety plan is an individualized plan that identifies methods to enhance the safety of victims and their children when confronted by family violence.

A good safety plan will include:

- ▶ names and telephone numbers of people to contact;
- ▶ strategies to address immediate needs, such as housing, food, health care, employment/income, parenting time and childcare; and
- ▶ the location of documents that may be necessary to pursue legal remedies, such as passports, birth certificates, status cards, citizenship cards, divorce or separation documents, and financial records.

Risk is not static, so the safety plan must be dynamic to reflect changes in the victim's circumstances as well as those of the abuser. **While an important focus of any safety plan is physical safety, emotional safety must also be taken into account.**

Remember to be cognizant of your client's particular circumstances and try to find resources that suit their individual situations. See [Tab #7: How to Incorporate Cultural Safety into Client Interactions](#). Your clients may be more likely to contact and "buy in" to resources and services that demonstrate specific consideration of intersectional factors.

**1. Whenever possible, you should work with your client to connect them to a support person, such as a frontline advocate, to help address safety concerns.**

You may need to explain to your clients that you are acting only as the legal adviser and that other community services are better placed to help them evaluate their safety risks, develop a safety plan and provide them with the tools and resources they will need to sustain themselves throughout the legal process. The Public Health Agency of Canada has resources to help guide victims of family violence in developing a safety plan: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/stop-family-violence/plan-your-safety.html>.

A good practice is for you to become familiar with the resources in your community that can assist your client in the areas you cannot. Collaboration and information sharing will be important to ensure there are no gaps or overlaps in what people are doing.

Your clients may find it helpful if you prepare or obtain a handout, card or other way to safely provide information to them on local resources. Remember to discuss ways the person can conceal the materials provided or website visits from their ex-partner, or otherwise ensure that having the handout or card will not put them at increased risk.

See [Tab #12: Making Referrals](#).

Frontline advocates may not be available in all circumstances. While a trusted family member, friend, colleague or member of the community can help support your client, for example by accompanying them to meetings, you should caution that the involvement of these informal support persons in promoting safety could make those people targets of violence where there are indications of higher levels of danger and lethality.

**Tip:** Remember that the time of preparing to separate and actual separation are when many victims are at increased risk of serious injury and death.

## 2. Safety planning and the family law process

As you work with your client, consider how you can help to reduce their risk in relation to the family law case:

- ▶ Discussing safe ways to contact your client. See [HELP Guide Section E.3](#).
- ▶ Addressing contact and communication between the parties (through court orders and agreements if needed)
  - Your client may need to communicate with the ex-partner regarding the children. Consider how this communication will happen. For example, will it be by phone, text or email or through a parenting app? Should your client be using a general email account or should they set up an email account solely for communicating with their ex-partner?
  - If both parties have parenting time, discuss how to enhance your client's safety regarding transfers of the children. For example, can the transfers occur in a public location? Consider situations that may affect the location of the transfers, such as the closure of a shopping mall on a statutory holiday.
- ▶ Planning when and where to serve documents
  - Have a discussion with your client about the most opportune time and place to serve their ex-partner; consider how their ex-partner may react when being served. For example, if the children are with the ex-partner, it is probably not a good time to serve them. If they have a lawyer, perhaps they can be served at their lawyer's office.

- Make sure you let your client know what day their ex-partner will be served. Speak with your client about their concerns for their ex-partner's reaction.
- ▶ Safety at court
  - Before court dates, you should discuss with your client the layout of the building, the entrances and exits, a safe waiting place, and how to leave court without being followed by the abuser. The more information you can give about the process and logistics, the more your client can prepare and create a safety plan.
  - It may be helpful for your client to visit the courthouse in advance to familiarize themselves with the building, parking, access by public transit, court security, accessible facilities, washroom locations and possible courtroom location.
  - Have your client attend court with a support person when possible, and stagger their arrival and departure times with those of the abuser. This will also help manage the client's safety after court if their ex-partner is unhappy with the outcome.
  - Consider meeting your client in a designated location in the courthouse, such as the victim/witness office, at a specific time.
  - To help enhance psychological safety in the courtroom, try to create ample physical and visual distance between the victim and their abuser if possible. Ask for breaks, if needed.
  - You may want to contact court staff or court sheriffs in advance of a court hearing to discuss possible protective measures that can be put in place. For instance, a sheriff may be able to walk the client to and from their car.
  - If your client and the ex-partner will be attending a family dispute resolution session together, many of the same considerations will apply. In addition, it may be possible to request further safety measures, such as having parties in separate rooms (e.g. shuttle mediation).

Consider offering your client information on technology safety (see below for some resources).

### 3. Safety planning resources

There are many safety planning resources available online, including:

- ▶ the Public Health Agency of Canada's webpage on how to plan for your safety if you are in an abusive relationship: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/stop-family-violence/plan-your-safety.html>
- ▶ the Safety Planning Guide by the Peel Committee Against Woman Abuse that is available in several languages, including Chinese, French, Hindi, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Urdu, Tamil, Spanish, Italian, Tagalog, Arabic and Vietnamese: <http://www.pcawa.net/safety-planning-guide.html>
- ▶ the Healing Journey's website for tips on safety planning for Aboriginal women and children: <http://www.thehealingjourney.ca/inside.asp?51>

- ▶ a brief by the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative on how to create a safety plan for vulnerable populations, including Indigenous women, immigrant and refugee women, children exposed to IPV, and rural/remote/Northern women: [http://cdhpi.ca/sites/cdhpi.ca/files/Brief\\_6-Online\\_0.pdf](http://cdhpi.ca/sites/cdhpi.ca/files/Brief_6-Online_0.pdf)
- ▶ a brief by the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative on culturally informed risk and safety strategies to reduce domestic homicide in immigrant and refugee populations: [http://cdhpi.ca/sites/cdhpi.ca/files/Brief\\_4-Online-Feb2018-linked-references.pdf](http://cdhpi.ca/sites/cdhpi.ca/files/Brief_4-Online-Feb2018-linked-references.pdf)

For resources specific to technology safety, you may wish to consult the following links:

- ▶ Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic's Technology Safety: A Toolkit for Survivors, which includes guidance to victims on cyber abuse, etiquette for attending virtual meetings and virtual family court appearances: <https://schliferclinic.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Technology-Safety-A-Toolkit-for-Survivors-1.pdf>
- ▶ National Network to End Domestic Violence offers a comprehensive Digital Services Toolkit as well as a bilingual resource on Technology Safety Plan with Survivors: Tips to discuss if someone you know is in danger (Canadian Version): <https://www.techsafety.org/digital-services-toolkit> and <https://nnedv.org/mdocs-posts/technology-safety-planing-with-survivors-canada/>
- ▶ Tips that Shabna Ali and Cynthia Fraser (Safety Net Canada) presented on technology safety at the 2012 National Victims of Crime Awareness Week Symposia is available on the Government of Canada's website: [https://www.victimswalk.gc.ca/symp-colloque/past-passe/2012/presentation/Shabna\\_Ali\\_Cynthia\\_Fraser\\_1.html](https://www.victimswalk.gc.ca/symp-colloque/past-passe/2012/presentation/Shabna_Ali_Cynthia_Fraser_1.html)
- ▶ Luke's Place offers a Tech Safety Toolkit: Identify, manage & document tech abuse on their website: <https://lukesplace.ca/resources/tech-abuse/>