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DEVELOPING A PERSONALIZED SAFETY PLAN

No battered woman can control her partner's violent behaviors, but, she can and does find ways to reduce the risk of harm to themselves and their children. Please use the following safety planning as a guide to help identify and evaluate your options and to commit to a plan to reduce your risk when confronted with the threat of harm or actual harm. Use what applies and add / modify it as needed. Review it regularly and make changes as needed. You DON'T have to figure it all out on your own – ask a domestic violence advocate to help.

IN A CRISIS:

- If I decide to leave, I can use _____ (*identify doors, windows, etc.*) to get out safely and quickly.
- I can practice this escape plan and when possible, practice it with my children.
- I can keep my purse and car keys ready and put them _____ to get to them so I can leave quickly.
- I can keep copies of important papers (*e.g. marriage license, birth certificates, Restraining Order, divorce/separation agreements, custody papers, passports, Green Card, immunization and health insurance records, Social Security card, apartment lease, mortgage / house insurance documents, checkbook, ATM card, car registration, driver's license, prescriptions, etc.*) at _____ so I can get them quickly and easily.
- I can leave extra clothes with _____.
- If I have to leave my home, I will go to _____. If I can't go there, I will go to _____.
- The telephone number of the local domestic violence hotline is _____ in case I need to go to a shelter.
- If it is not safe to speak openly, I will use _____ as a code word.

I CAN GET HELP:

- I can tell _____ about the violence and I can ask them to call the police if they hear noises coming from my home.
- I can teach my children how to use the telephone to call the police and fire department.
- I will make sure my children know our address.
- I will use _____ as my code word with my children and my friends so that they will call the police if there is a problem.
- I will decide on a safe place and let my children know where to go and meet me in case of an emergency or in case we get separated.

I CAN USE MY JUDGMENT:

- I will be aware of my environment. If I think my partner and I will argue, or if he is trying to pick a fight, I will try to move to a safe space that places me at lowest risk for injury, such as _____. (*When possible, avoid arguments in the bathroom, kitchen, basement, garage, or in rooms that have no outside exit.*)

(Continued)

- I will use my judgment and intuition. In a serious situation, I can give my partner what he wants to try to calm him down. I know I have to protect myself until I am out of danger.
- I can teach these strategies to my children as appropriate.
- I will change the route I take to work, to school, to the supermarket or other places I go to frequently to make it more difficult for my partner to follow me.

WITH AN ORDER OF PROTECTION:

- I can ask an advocate to go to court with me if I decide to get an Order of Protection / Restraining Order.
- I will ask a local program for a referral to a free or low-cost legal services program.
- I will keep the protection order _____ (*keep it near you*), and will give copies to the police in the community where I live, work, go to church, and visit family / friends. I will give copies to my employer, my priest, my closest friend, my children's school, and to _____.
- If my partner violates the order, I can contact the police and report the violation.
- If my partner destroys the order, I can get another copy from the court that issued it.

IF I AM CONSIDERING OR PLANNING TO LEAVE:

- I will call a domestic violence program to help me plan and to help me figure out my options. The phone number is _____.
- I will speak to a domestic violence advocate to learn my legal rights.
- I will go to a domestic violence support group whenever it is safe to do so. It is at _____.
- I will keep important telephone numbers and a telephone pre-paid card with me at all times.
- I will contact a domestic violence program to ask about getting a free cell phone.
- I know that my partner can find out who I've been talking to by looking at my cell phone or the telephone bill, so I will ask _____ to use their telephone or phone card.

AFTER I LEAVE:

- I can change the locks on my doors and windows. If I cannot afford to do this, I will contact a domestic violence program to see if there is funding available.
- I can increase my safety by installing additional locks, window bars, or poles to wedge against outside doors.
- I can install smoke detectors and fire extinguishers on each floor in my home.
- I can use an answering machine and "Caller ID" to screen my calls. If a blocked or restricted number appears, I will not answer - I will let the call go to voice mail.

I CAN INCREASE MY INDEPENDENCE:

- By obtaining copies of my important papers and documents and those of my children, and keeping them with _____, or at _____.
- By opening a bank account and getting a credit card in my own name.
- By taking classes or getting job skills or updating my résumé.
- Other ways I can increase my independence are _____.

*To communicate with a trained domestic violence advocate 24/7, 365 days a year:
Contact the NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE
CALL: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
Or go online to: thehotline.org*