

## SEPARATION TIPS FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Victims of Domestic Violence often do not know how to “escape” from their abuser. The following are tips to provide a safer environment and an “escape plan.” Always call 911 or have someone else call 911 if you are being abused or have become a victim of domestic violence.

- During an argument, avoid areas of the house that might have weapons, such as the kitchen, bathrooms, or workshop. If there are known weapons in the house, try to lock them up prior to an argument.
- Think of a safe exit from your home and use this exit if you need to. Know where you can go to be safe, if you would need to leave your house. Keep a bag packed with overnight essentials. Remember to pack identification, financial needs, legal papers, medications, and clothes.
- Ask a trusted neighbor to call 911 if they hear a disturbance coming from your house. The use of a code word could also be a signal if you see them. If you have an Order of Protection, show a picture of the abuser to your neighbors and ask them to call the police if they see him/her come near the house. Do the same with your employer. Tell your children’s school who has permission to pick up your children; show them a picture of the abuser and tell them that he/she is not allowed near your children.
- Open a bank account in your name. The bank should be a different bank than that of the one where you and your abuser had an account. Rent a safe deposit box to keep copies of important documents, money, and an extra set of keys. Give a copy of the same paperwork to a trusted relative or friend. This should be someone that you know you can turn to in the event you would need shelter and/or money.
- Always keep change on you in case you need to make an emergency call.
- If you have children, always try to remove them from the situation first. Talk to them about what to do in the event of a violent situation.
- If you already have an Order of Protection, keep it with you at all times. If you do not have one, get one as soon as possible to protect yourself and/or your children. Give a copy to a relative, trusted neighbor, the children’s school, your employer and the local police department.
- When you get an opportunity, change the locks on all the doors to the house.
- Tell your employer and the people you may seek shelter with to screen your telephone calls. Have someone walk you to your car, or walk with a group of people.
- Know that you can always talk with someone who will provide you with support. The 24-Hour Crisis Hotline that serves this area is **#314-OK-BE-MAD (314-652-3623)**. The counselors can help you with any situation that you may encounter and help you find resources to get you out of a violent situation.

Use the following Separation Plan to help you plan your “escape” safely. Keep a copy of it with you, or in your packed bag, in the event that you should need it.

## SEPARATION PLAN

### SAFETY DURING A VIOLENT EVENT:

- ✓ I will always use my judgment and intuition first. If the situation becomes too serious, I will give my abuser what he/she wants to calm the situation down. I have to protect my children and myself until we are out of danger.
- ✓ If I decide to leave, I will \_\_\_\_\_. (Practice how to get out safely. Does your plan include doors, windows, stairwells, elevators, or fire escapes?)
- ✓ I will keep my car keys and money ready and I have put them \_\_\_\_\_ in order to leave quickly.
- ✓ I can always talk to \_\_\_\_\_ and ask them to call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from my house.
- ✓ I can teach my children to call 911 in the event that I need help.
- ✓ My code word is \_\_\_\_\_ for my neighbors and children to call 911.
- ✓ If I have to leave my home, my children and I will go to \_\_\_\_\_. (Decide this even if you think there will not be a "next time.") If I cannot go to the location above, I can go to \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✓ I will teach my children some/all of these strategies, in the event that they would need to leave.
- ✓ When I expect that an argument is about to take place, I will try and move to a low-risk area, such as the \_\_\_\_\_. (This place should be free from anything that can be used as a weapon against you. Avoid the kitchen, garage, workshop, or any area that does not have access to the outside.)

### SAFETY WHEN PREPARING TO LEAVE:

- ✓ I will leave money and an extra set of keys with \_\_\_\_\_ so I can leave quickly.
- ✓ I will keep copies of important documents or keys at \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✓ I have opened a savings account at \_\_\_\_\_ to increase my independence. (Should be at a different bank than that of the one with your abuser.)
- ✓ The 24-Hour Domestic Violence Hotline number is **314-OK-BE-MAD (314-652-3623)** and the police department number is **314-645-3000** or **911**. I can seek shelter by calling any of these numbers.
- ✓ I will keep change for emergency phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use my cell phone or telephone calling card, the monthly bill will tell my abuser those numbers that I called after I left. I can use either coins or a friend's calling card to keep phone calls confidential until I can establish my own means of communications.
- ✓ I will check with \_\_\_\_\_ and/or \_\_\_\_\_ to see who will let the children and I seek shelter and/or money.
- ✓ I will review my safety plan every \_\_\_\_\_ so that I can constantly plan the safest way for the children and I to leave. A domestic violence advocate or friend can help you review your plan. I will rehearse my escape plan with my children.

## SAFETY INSIDE MY HOME:

- ✓ Safety measures are impossible to change all at once, but can be effective and added one or a couple at a time.
- ✓ I have changed the locks on all the doors and windows of my house.
- ✓ I have replaced wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- ✓ I have installed a security system with additional locks, door wedges, and electronic systems.
- ✓ I have purchased rope ladders to be used from second floor windows.
- ✓ I have purchased smoke detectors and fire extinguishers for each floor of my house. Smoke detectors should be placed outside of every bedroom.
- ✓ I have installed a motion-detector light that lights up when a person comes close to my house.
- ✓ I have taught my children to use the phone and call me collect and/or \_\_\_\_\_ (a friend, relative, minister, other) in the event that my abuser takes my children.
- ✓ I have told the people who take care of my children (babysitter, daycare, school) which people have permission to pick up my children and have provided a picture of the person who is not allowed to do so.
- ✓ I have informed my neighbors, friends, and relatives that my abuser no longer resides with me and they should call the police if he/she is observed near my residence.

## ORDER OF PROTECTION SAFETY:

- ✓ I will keep my Order of Protection \_\_\_\_\_. This way it is always near me.
- ✓ I will give a copy of the Order of Protection to the police departments where I live and work.
- ✓ There is a County Registry of Protection Orders that all police departments can access to confirm a Protection Order. The telephone number for the County Registry of Protection Orders is # 314-615-4400. (This number is for St. Louis County. If your Order of Protection originated in another county, look up the number for the Family Court in the county in which the Order was obtained.)
- ✓ I can check with local and county police departments of other areas that I frequent and ask if I can leave a copy of the Order of Protection with them as well.
- ✓ I can always call the 24-Hour Hotline if I have questions or problems with my Order of Protection.
- ✓ I will inform my employer, family and friends that I have an active Order of Protection against my abuser.
- ✓ If my copy of the Order of Protection gets destroyed, I can always contact the St. Louis County Family Courts at the above number or by going to the Family Court Clerk's Office at **501 South Brentwood** in downtown Clayton.
- ✓ If the police are called and do not provide help, I can call my advocate or attorney to file a complaint with the Chief of Police.
- ✓ I can also file a private complaint with the district justice in the jurisdiction of where the violation took place. I can charge my abuser with any and all charges that violate the Order of Protection. My advocate can help me do this.

## SAFETY AT WORK AND IN PUBLIC:

- ✓ I can inform my supervisor(s), security, and \_\_\_\_\_ at work of my situation.
- ✓ I can ask \_\_\_\_\_ to help screen my phone calls at work.
- ✓ When leaving work, I will not walk to my car alone, and I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✓ When driving home, if problems occur, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✓ If I use public transit, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✓ I can go to different grocery stores, malls, and other places to conduct business and during different hours than where and when I did with my abuser.
- ✓ I can use a different bank and take care of my banking at different times than when I was with my abuser.
- ✓ I can also \_\_\_\_\_.

## SAFETY AND DRUG/ALCOHOL USE:

If alcohol or drugs have been used in your situation, as the victim, you may want to consider the potential cost of continued use/illegal use of these items. Alcohol and/or drugs can reduce your awareness of the situation and slow your reaction times. If you need to involve your children in the separation, you need to be responsible for getting them to safety. If the police suspect you of using alcohol or drugs, it will inhibit your ability to take your children, although they may be released to a relative. If you do decide to continue to use, make sure you can do it in a safe place with people who understand your situation and who are committed to your safety. Think of other things you can do and what to do if your abuser is the one using the drugs/alcohol, and how to safeguard your children.

## SAFETY AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH:

Being verbally and physically battered can be emotionally exhausting. To conserve energy and resources, below are a few tips to help you through the harder emotional times.

- ✓ When I feel down and ready to return to an abusive situation, I can \_\_\_\_\_. (This is something or someone I can go to and talk before I make any decisions—usually a trusted friend, relative, or advocate.)
- ✓ When I have to communicate with my abuser either by telephone or in person, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✓ I can use “I can ...statements with myself and towards others. I have to become assertive in my thinking and my statements.
- ✓ I can tell myself “\_\_\_\_\_” whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.
- ✓ I can read \_\_\_\_\_ to make me feel better and offer me support.

- ✓ I can call \_\_\_\_\_ as other resources to be of support to me.
- ✓ Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✓ I can attend workshops, and support groups at the domestic violence program or do \_\_\_\_\_ to gain support and strengthen my relationships with other people.

### ITEMS TO TAKE WHEN LEAVING

- Identification for myself (driver's license, state ID, work ID, passport)
- Children's birth certificates
- My birth certificate
- Social security cards – yours and the children's
- School and vaccine records – of the children
- Money (I can legally take half of the money in the checking and savings accounts)
- Checkbook, ATM card
- Credit cards
- Keys – house/car/work
- Driver's license and registration (to prove ownership of the vehicle)
- Medication – yours and the children's
- Welfare ID, green card, work permits (if applicable)
- Passports, divorce papers
- Medical records – yours and the children's
- Lease/rental agreement, house deed, mortgage payment book (to prove ownership/rental of the residence)
- Bank books, insurance papers (house, car, health, life, property)
- Small saleable objects
- Address book
- Pictures, jewelry
- Children's favorite toys and/or blankets
- Items of sentimental value
- Have fingerprint ID cards made up for you and your children and carry these with you all the time (These may help identify you in case of an emergency)
- A list of telephone numbers you need to know and of people you can call for support

TELEPHONE NUMBERS I NEED TO KNOW:

Police Department: 314-645-3000 or 911

24-Hour Crisis Hotline: 314-OK-BE-MAD

St. Louis County Circuit Attorney: 314-622-4941

Children's School: \_\_\_\_\_

Police department near school: \_\_\_\_\_

Police department near work: \_\_\_\_\_

St. Louis County Family Courts: 314-615-4400

Work phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's home number: \_\_\_\_\_

Church's phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Friend's number: \_\_\_\_\_

Friend's number: \_\_\_\_\_

Relative's number: \_\_\_\_\_

Relative's number: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

KEEP THIS DOCUMENT IN A SAFE PLACE AND OUT OF REACH OF YOUR ATTACKER

Reviewed on: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

If you need help filling out this plan, please do not hesitate to call the Olivette Police Department, the 24-Hour Crisis Hotline, your appointed advocate, a trusted friend or relative, or the Circuit Attorney's Office. Remember that support is always a phone call away (#314-645-3000).

This plan is only made as a tip to help you reach safety. It in no way guarantees your safety or the safety of others. It is strictly a resource to help you think of possible answers for your unique situation.