



Escape Plan: For Survivors Fleeing the Home

Ladies First

- 1. The less an abuser partner knows about your plans, the safer you will be*
- 2. Remember, you deserve to live in peace and safety in your own home. You never cause anyone to be abusive and you never deserve to be abused.*
- 3. You don't have to do this alone. There are people and resources to help you find your way. With enough information, support and resources, you can break free of the abuse and turn your home back into the sanctuary you deserve.*
- 4. Remember that nothing is carved in stone. Be prepared to pivot and adjust your plans with new information and new risks.*
- 5. Consider this your flight plan, your pilot checklist, prior to take-off and with each check, that's one more accomplishment. Pat yourself on the back! Think Kaizen, taking one small step at a time - you're on the runway to freedom!*
- 6. Self-care. It is important that you take care of yourself through this process.*
- 7. This checklist is meant to be a companion to WomenSV's Safety Plan. Please refer to it for more details for each of the following categories.*
- 8. If you didn't get a chance to do a sufficient amount of preparation, but have already left or been forced to leave, please refer back to "Preparation" to double check any extra safety measures that you could take.*

Preparation

Shelter

- Plan where you are going to go. Make sure it is a safe location (for example: a local shelter, hotel, trusted family member with a safe space for you and your children). Make sure they can be trusted not to share your plans with your partner or make well-meaning attempts to reunite you.
- If you are renting, consider writing a letter to your landlord explaining that you have had to leave because of domestic violence and you are breaking your lease.

Transportation

- Think about which car you are going to take
- If the car is being tracked, don't remove tracking device/software until the day you escape
- How many car keys exist? Can you get them all the day of?
- Who owns the car? Gather the car's registration, insurance, title, etc. (If it's not safe to do so, make copies of these documents)
- Think about having your keys changed after you escape (this can be time consuming and expensive)

Advocate/Safety Planning

- Call a domestic violence victim services program. Find out which services and shelters are available as options if you need them. You will have to also call the day you escape to find out if there is space in a shelter. Have a back-up plan for where you can stay! Keep their address and phone number close at hand at all times.
- Consider meeting with a police officer, preferably one who has a background in domestic violence, to discuss safety recommendations and to build support. Let them know you are not in immediate danger, there is no crime in progress so they do not end up interviewing your partner. Focus on gathering safety information, resources, and support for the days ahead, and for after you escape.
- Consider reaching out to security at your place of employment as well as your supervisor if you have a trusted relationship to have a confidential conversation about your plans and letting them know about the RO in the future. Letting them know that you will give them a copy and a picture of him, so that he can't be on the property.
- Consider finding out what your workplace protocol is for a DV. They should give you time off work to attend court. No one should be fired for any reasons having to do with domestic violence.

Basic Supplies

- Giving a "go-bag" filled with extra clothes (for all seasons), shoes, toiletries, etc. to a trusted friend/family member. If that's not possible, gather clothes, etc. in a trash bag and make it seem like you are donating things for Goodwill. If you live in "fire country," you could make it seem like an emergency kit.

- Personal items such as family heirlooms and photographs. Make a list of personal items that you will take with you the day of your escape if you aren't able to safely bring them to a trusted friend/family member in advance.
- Keys: make copies DISCREETLY of keys you will need
 - House keys
 - Car keys (spare keys too!)
 - Storage keys
 - Safe deposit keys
 - Keys to a home safe

Medical

- Consider calling your doctor and OBGYN to have a confidential conversation about your plans. This way your partner can't call asking where you are, acting concerned about your health and well-being.

Technology

- Consider buying a burner phone, buying it with cash and using a pseudonym
- Consider making a list of your most used internet accounts, for example social media accounts and email accounts.
- If he has access to your cloud accounts (dropbox, icloud, etc.) stop backing up to your cloud. Consider if this will raise any concerns for him, if so, move this point to your "day of" checklist.

Documentation

- Find a safe place to store documents. Hiding in plain sight in a folder labeled something he will not check (e.g. Poetry), in a fire bag to make it look like emergency preparedness, with a trusted person, at work in a locked drawer, in a storage facility.
- Consider getting a burner phone and taking photos of important documents with it. Make sure you keep the burner phone in a safe place.
- Consider renting a storage unit/safety deposit box/PO box but beware of statements being sent to your address.
- Make copies of documents when you can't take originals. Be sure to replace the documents exactly as you found them.
- Consider gathering copies of any medical/police reports from past incidents
- If you can safely do so, make copies of all personal documents for you, your partner and your children:

- Birth certificates
- Marriage certificate
- Passport, children's passports, copy of your partner's passport
- Immigration documentation (Visa, green card, etc.; copy of your partner's immigration)
- Driver's license, copy of your partner's driver's license
- Social security card, copy of partner's card or number
- Health insurance cards for you and your children
- Copy of partner's health insurance card or medical record number
- Family accountant's contact info (be careful of how much information you share regarding your plans)
- Your medical records/prescriptions/vaccination records, your children's, any medical record info you have on partner
- Your family financial adviser's contact info (be careful of how much information you share regarding your plans)
- Credit and Debit Cards
- School records
- Rental agreement
- Car title, registration, insurance
- Property deed/title
- Insurance information
- Your bank information (account and routing number)-joint and personal
- Your partner's bank information
- Legal papers, TRO, etc.
- Make yourself a list of the originals that you will take with you on the day you leave.
- Make an Executive Summary* that can help you to communicate your goals and concerns with the audience of your choosing. (Planting seeds with family, friends, children's network, doctors, or filing for a restraining order, or hiring your attorney).

*An Executive Summary is a brief 2 page, bullet-point summary of the abuse you have experienced which can be adapted depending on the provider or person you are reaching out to for support and understanding.

Pet

- Gather documents that prove you are your pet's owner (receipts from adoption or purchase, license to establish ownership, receipts for purchases you made for the animal) proof that you are the pet's owner
- Consider including your pet in your RO
- Food
- Carrier
- Toys
- Bedding
- ID and rabies tag (if you have a dog or cat)
- Medications
- Copies of medical records (veterinary or vaccination records)
- Important phone numbers including your vet
- Consider calling your vet to have a confidential conversation about your leaving with your pet. This way he can't call acting concerned about you and his pet and asking where you are.
- Consider calling your local humane society to see if they can house your pet to see if they can take care of your pet while you set up your new home.

Finances

- Determine how much you have in savings
- Do you have an ongoing source of income to cover living expenses plus a retainer for legal fees?
- Consider Maslow's hierarchy of needs and budget for basic survival needs like food, shelter, clothing, money, legal representation and daily safety including security cameras
- Consider making a list of your most used online financial accounts, for example, Bank websites, IRA/Roth websites, Brokerage website
- ATM cards
- Credit cards
- Checkbook
- If it's possible, stock up on cash cards/Prepaid credit cards like Vanilla Visa cards to have money to spend after you escape
- Cash (withdraw cash slowly, or take as much as you can the day you leave)
- Arrange for your income to be deposited in an account your partner does not have access to.
- Gather and/or make copies of income tax returns for the past 5 years.
- Consider opening a bank account at a separate bank.
 - Stress the importance of keeping your information confidential. You will need a physical address to open the account. Ask that no paper/electronic statements be sent. Arrange for your paycheck to be direct-deposited in your separate account.

Legal

- Do you have any evidence of the abuse? (This could be organized with your Executive Summary).
- Take copies of any proof you have
- Make backups and store them in a secure location
- Are you considering a Restraining Order (RO)? Do you have a trusted person who can help you draft RO pleadings on their computer?
- Secretly interview attorneys
- Consider trying to pay them in cash so that there is no paper trail.
- When interviewing attorneys, consider these three requests: getting an advance on community assets, emergency temporary spousal support and if your partner is the higher earner, asking that your partner pay for your attorney fees

Legal: Filing for divorce

- Consider filing for the RO at the same time as the divorce. He will be served with both papers at the same time
- If you can do so safely, consider reading Splitting by Bill Eddy (Safe ways include, at a friend's house, at the library, on a secret electronic device).

Work

- Any items you need for your job that are currently in your home:
 - Documents
 - Uniform
 - Equipment
 - Identification
 - Keys
- School transcripts, any documents you need to apply for work

Children

- Be careful about sharing plans with your children. They will be eager to know especially as they get older. The less they know right now the better. Let them know that you are taking care of things and the only thing they need to worry about is being a child and taking care of themselves
- Consider buying a burner phone for your child as well (if you need assistance getting a burner

phone, let an advocate know)

- Comforting items and toys
- Documents (see checklist above)

- Medical necessities (see checklist above)
- Financial documents (see checklist above)
- Technology they need
- Anything they need for school, uniforms, books, etc.
- Plan out what you will say to your children on the day you escape. How much information do they need to know beforehand?

Gathering Your Village

- Start planting seeds with trusted people if you are able to safely do so
 - Doctors/pediatricians
 - Therapists
 - Trusted friends and family
 - Getting a domestic violence advocate
- Attending support groups

Self-care

- Without letting on that you are making changes and feeling stronger as you make plans, take care of yourself and fill up your cup.
- If it's possible, stock up on cash cards for massages, spa treatments, and other self-care remedies

Day Of

Note: Reorder this list so that it makes the most strategic sense given his routine. How much time do you have to go to the bank before he is served? Once he has been served how quickly do you need to send messages to insurance providers? How much time will you have to gather your belongings? Etc.

Basic Supplies

- Clothes, shoes, work uniform, toiletries
- Personal items like family heirlooms and photographs
- Keys
- Phone, laptop, chargers

Medical

- Medications, take prescription names and numbers for you, your children and your partner.
- If you have any spare meds, take those with you.
- Glasses, contact lenses/solution, hearing aids, dental equipment, etc.
- Prescriptions
- Vaccination records

Documentation

- Gather the original documents and the ones you made photocopies of (birth certificates, passports, marriage certificates, vaccination records etc.)
- Sending a letter to the landlord you wrote in preparation letting them know that you have escaped domestic violence and are breaking the lease.

Legal

- If you can, have him served with the divorce papers and the RO the day that you leave.. Make sure he doesn't know where you are at that moment.
- Good Cause Report if you are taking children.
- Make sure the police take his guns/weapons if he is served with RO. Also tell the police about any guns he may have access to (e.g. his best friend, brother, etc.)

Children

- Make a plan for where your children will be. Can they stay with a trusted person?
- If you are escaping on a school day, try to have him served with the RO at the same time you take the children out of school. (RUTH)
- Notify the school of the RO. Consider speaking with the principal, bringing a copy of the RO and a picture of your partner.

Financial

- Take as much money out of the joint account as you can. Keep in mind that banks have cut off times for money withdrawals and limits on the amount of money you can transfer depending on if it's online or in-person. Also be prepared for them to ask you why you are withdrawing so much to ensure there's no fraud (one possible answer could be that you all are just moving some money around for investments, etc.). Also be cautious that he may be alerted/notified on his phone if a certain amount of money is withdrawn from the account. Place it in an account

that only you have access to, and talk to your attorney about proving to the court that it was not stolen, only placed there for safe keeping.

- Alert your bank that you are in a different area and ask that they don't have a fraud alert to freeze your account. Have cash on hand in case your card is frozen and you need to pay for necessities (gas, groceries, etc.)

Transportation

- Are you going in your car?
- Have you checked for GPS trackers (e.g. airtags, airpods and tiles)? You can use the LightBlue App to search for bluetooth signals. Be careful about removing them prior to your escape as this will tip him off. Act as if you were being followed during the planning stage, park several blocks away from sensitive appointments and leave electronics in trunk
- Is your car from 2018 or more recent? It may give your partner the ability to track or record you.
- Do you have a Tesla or other car where he may have an app originally created to track car thieves but that can also be used to stalk you? He may also have the ability to change the cars functions while you drive (e.g. open and close the windows)
- Check with your car provider to see what contact information they have for an emergency, make sure ALL of it is you, your email, your phone.
- Does your car have a dashcam?

Technology

- Get any and all USB sticks, SD cards, or hard drives
- Take your cell phone, laptop, tablet, etc. and their chargers
- Turn on multi-factor authentication on all of your online accounts.
- Change passwords (When you can, consider using password management software like Lastpass)
- Take any old cell phones you can find

Insurance

- Write to insurance agencies and tell them they cannot cancel any of your plans in the coming weeks.

Self-care

- Make plans to be with a trusted person if you aren't going to a shelter

- If you are going to a shelter, do something comforting and to give yourself some love
- Go to church, pray, read, whatever fills your soul

After the Escape

Shelter

- To avoid publicly disclosing your new address, consider applying for a Safe at Home address through the Secretary of State for mail to be sent and to substitute for your residential address when registering/applying/filling out paperwork. Another option is Joe's contact with the RV postal service. (Ruth??)
- If you need to go back to the home to get more things, consider calling the police non-emergency number and scheduling for a civil standby. You will have to wait for an officer to be available, but safety is of the utmost importance.

Children

- In your new home, consider getting an internal, electronic lock like Simple August that you only have the passcode to. This way the children won't be able to unlock the door if dad comes to it demanding to be let in.

Accounts

- Consider changing:
 - Phone carriers
 - Medical insurance policy
 - Car insurance (if it was shared)
 - Email (Protonmail)

Legal

- Change your will so that he is not the beneficiary of your estate.

Gathering Your Village

- Attending support groups
- Continuing relationship with domestic violence advocate

Self-care

- You can now practice self-care openly!
- Therapy
- Art of Living
- Exercise (joyful movement)
- Fun with friends and family
- See self-care ideas handout