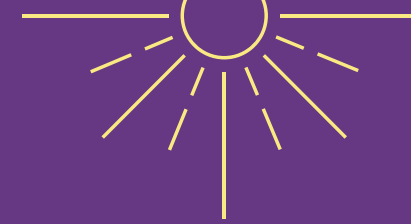


Domestic Violence Risk Assessment: A Guide for Professionals

Presented by Metro Nashville Office of Family Safety

Our Teams



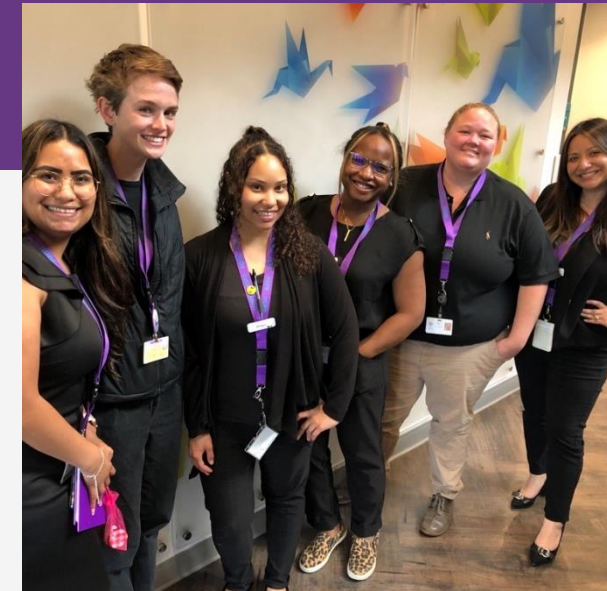
High Risk & Training



Outreach & Awareness



Advocacy



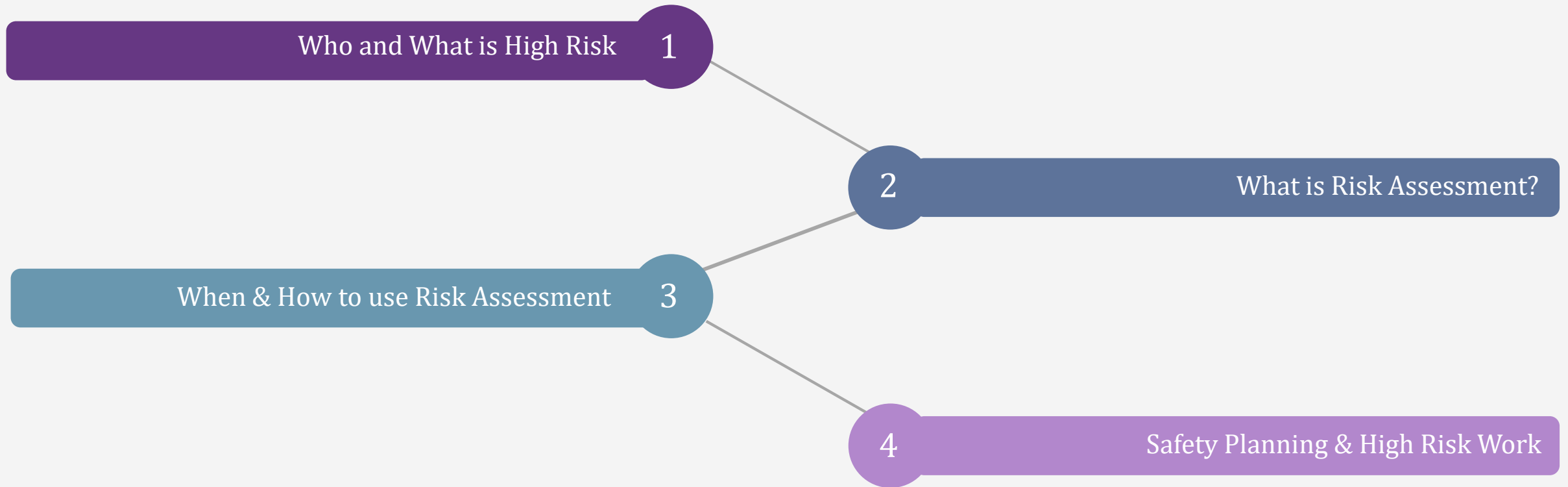
Case Management

CONTENT WARNING

- Check in with yourself - feel free to take breaks.
- If it is not safe for you to participate in this training today, log off now.
- Follow up with services during or after if you need them.
 - TN Domestic Violence Helpline: **1-800-356-6767**
 - TN sexual Assault Hotline: **1-866-811-RISE (7473)**
 - Office of Family Safety: **615-880-1100**
 - Local Support Map:
<https://tncoalition.org/get-help/help-in-your-area/>



Agenda & Objectives

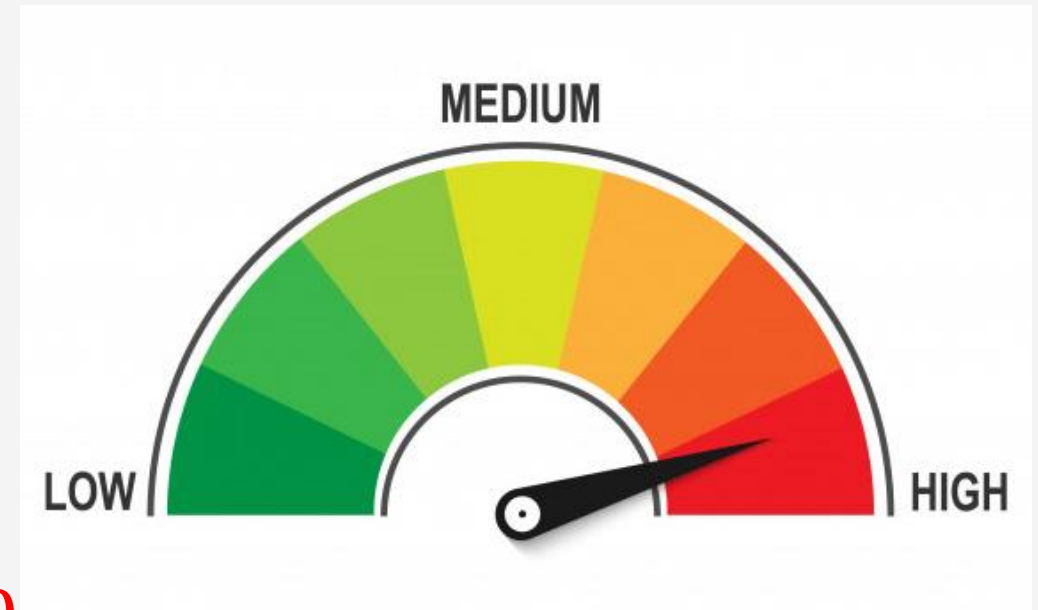


Who is High Risk (HR)?

Someone who has been deemed to be at an **elevated risk** to be **seriously injured** or **murdered** by their partner.

What makes someone HR?

- 🚩 Stalking = 2x
- 🚩 Sexual assault = 2x
- 🚩 Owning/Access to firearms = 5x
- 🚩 Strangulation = 7.5x
- 🚩 Threats to kill = 15x
- 🚩 Threats/Assault with weapon = 20x



Strangulation in Nashville



56%

Victims who answered the LAP
in **2021** and indicated they
had been **strangled** by their
abuser



52%

Victims who answered the
Danger Assessment in **2021**
and indicated they had been
strangled by their abuser

Effects of Strangulation

**5-10
seconds**

Loss of
consciousness

**15
seconds**

Loss of
bladder
control
(urination)

**30
seconds**

Loss of bowel
control
(defecation)

**1-3
minutes**

Death

Force of Strangulation

4.4 pounds of pressure **closes jugular**

= trigger pull (4-6 pounds)



Force of Strangulation

11 pounds of pressure **closes carotid arteries**

= opening a can of soda (22 pounds)



Force of Strangulation

30 pounds of pressure **closes trachea**

= adult handshake (80 pounds)



Sexual Violence & Risk



- **68%** IPV victims experience sexual violence
- **1.87 times** more likely to be murdered if sexual violence present
- Associated with **strangulation** and **threats** to kill

What is stalking?

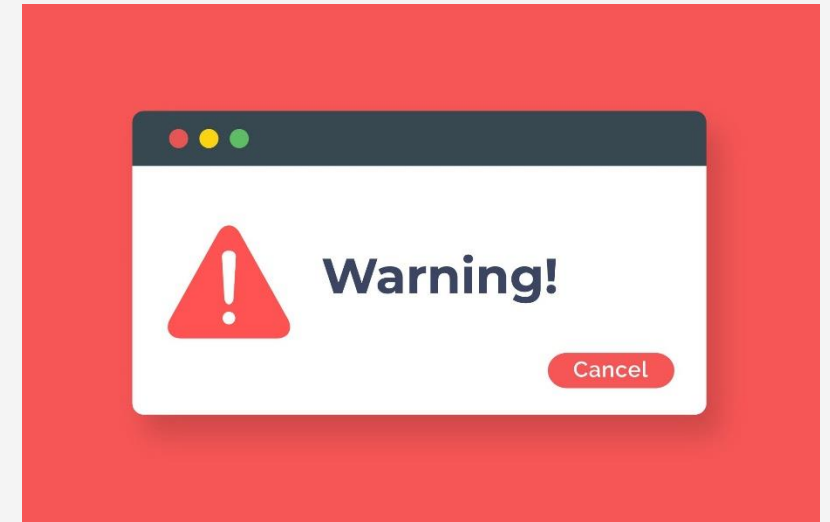
Tennessee Code:

A **willful** course of conduct involving **repeated or continuing harassment** of another individual that would cause a reasonable person to **feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated, threatened, harassed, or molested**, and that actually causes the victim to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated, threatened, harassed, or molested.

2 or more separate non-continuous acts

Stalking and DV

- **Intimate partner stalkers are:**
 - More likely to physically approach the victim
 - More insulting, interfering, and threatening
 - More likely to use weapons
 - More likely to escalate their behavior more quickly
 - More likely to re-offend
 - More likely to assault third parties



Stalking & DV Homicides

The 3rd & 4th most common ‘Yes’ answers on the LAP among Nashville’s intimate partner homicide victims:

- Is [the perpetrator] violently or constantly jealous or does he/she control most of your daily activities?
- Does [the perpetrator] follow or spy on you or leave threatening messages?

Risk Assessment Tools

How do we know someone is HR?

There are Three Elements of Effective Risk Assessment:

- The victim's own assessment of their level of risk.
- Evidence based risk indicators
- Professional Judgement

What is Risk Assessment?



Not a Diagnostic Tool



Determines a Victim's individual Level of risk



Targeted Tool- Recipient & Purpose Should be Clear

Danger Assessment

- 1. Has the physical violence increased in severity or frequency over the past year?
- 2. Does he own a gun?
- 3. Have you left him after living together during the past year?
3a. (If have *never* lived with him, check here___)
- 4. Is he unemployed?
- 5. Has he ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a lethal weapon?
(If yes, was the weapon a gun?___)
- 6. Does he threaten to kill you?
- 7. Has he avoided being arrested for domestic violence?
- 8. Do you have a child that is not his?
- 9. Has he ever forced you to have sex when you did not wish to do so?
- 10. Does he ever try to choke/strangle you or cut off your breathing? (If yes, has he done it more than once, or did it make you pass out or black out or make you dizzy?___)

Danger Assessment

- 11. Does he use illegal drugs? By drugs, I mean "uppers" or amphetamines, "meth", speed, angel dust, cocaine, "crack", street drugs or mixtures.
- 12. Is he an alcoholic or problem drinker?
- 13. Does he control most or all of your daily activities? For instance: does he tell you who you can be friends with, when you can see your family, how much money you can use, or when you can take the car? (If he tries, but you do not let him, check here:)
- 14. Is he violently and constantly jealous of you? (For instance, does he say "If I can't have you, no one can.")
- 15. Have you ever been beaten by him while you were pregnant? (If you have never been pregnant by him, check here:)
- 16. Has he ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
- 17. Does he threaten to harm your children?
- 18. Do you believe he is capable of killing you?
- 19. Does he follow or spy on you, leave threatening notes or messages, destroy your property, or call you when you don't want him to?
- 20. Have you ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
- Total "Yes" Answers

Danger Assessments

1,590 Danger Assessments administered by OFS in 2021



Indicated
their abuser
owned a gun



Indicated their
abuser had used a
weapon against
them or had
threatened them
with a lethal
weapon



Indicated that
weapon was a
gun

Danger Assessment Stats

1,590 Danger Assessments administered by OFS in 2021

426

Indicated their abuser had forced them to have sex

995

Indicated their abuser stalked them

831

Indicated their abuser had tried to strangle them or cut off their breathing

454

Indicated they lost consciousness during a strangulation

Another Type of Risk Assessment: LAP

Why We Use the LAP

- Assess level of risk
- Help clients understand their level of risk and plan accordingly
- Can't assume victims are getting full services elsewhere



How We Use the LAP

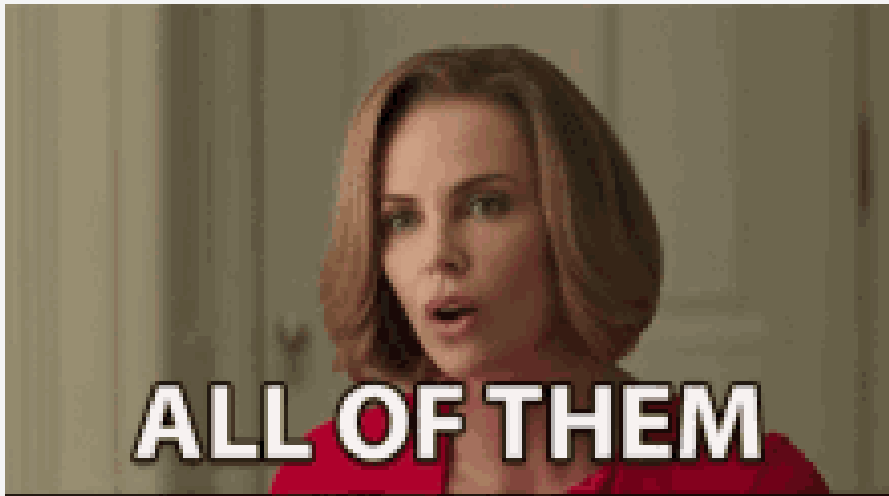
- With every intimate partner
- Helps inform legal documents
- Helps safety plan appropriately
- Helps us refer out to other services we can't provide
- Helps screen clients for high-risk review
- Helps us educate clients on IPV



LAP & Homicides

- **The two most common high-risk indicators among these victims were:**
 - "Has[the perpetrator] ever used a **weapon** against you or threatened you with a weapon?"
 - "Has [the perpetrator] ever tried to **choke you?**"

Nashville's Homicides



- Every domestic violence homicide reviewed by Nashville's Domestic Abuse Death Review Team (DADRT) has shown **at least 1 high risk marker**
- During reviews of these cases, the DADRT has pinpointed an **average potential score of 5 on the LAP** for each case

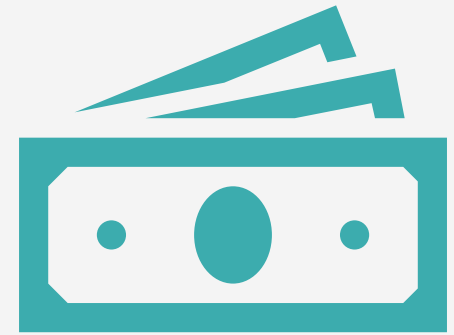
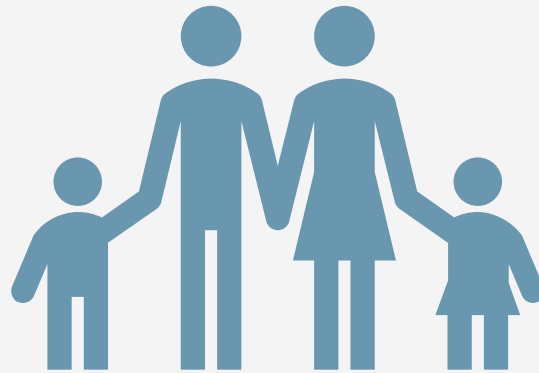


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idvBTbQELwM>



Safety Planning

What do you need in your life to feel safe?



What is a Safety Plan?

Safety planning is made up of three main components:

- individualization
- long-term safety
- risk analysis

What is a Safety Plan?

Risk analysis means:

- Identifying any potential red flags or lethality indicators such as:
 - Firearms or threats with weapons
 - Strangulation
 - Sexual assault



**Safety planning is NOT
about leaving.**

Be Aware of Your Questions



“No one is hurting you, right?”

“You aren't being abused, are you?”

“Have you been experiencing any domestic violence?”

“Are you being abused by your partner?”

“Do you feel safe in your home?”

“Is there anything that concerns you about your safety right now?”

“What steps have you already taken to increase your safety?”



“Do you feel safe at home?”
or “What is it like when you
and your partner argue?”



“Do you ever feel afraid at
home?” or “Has your partner
ever hurt you?”



“Did your partner
force you to do
something
physically that
made you
uncomfortable?”



“Did your partner
cause this [insert
injury] ?”



Concern, Validation,
& Connect to
Resources

Trauma-Informed Approach

- Avoid triggers and thoughtfully plan
- Provide time and space for the survivor to have fully-informed decision-making
- Treat each survivor as an individual
- ***Be honest about what you can offer.***

Opening the Conversation

- Mirror the client's language and communication
 - About their partner and about their situation
- When client is done speaking:
 - Validate fears/concerns/feelings
 - *It sounds like you're concerned about...what have you done in the past when this has happened?*
 - *If this happens again, would it be possible for you to...? or Do you think you could do...?*



If you know or believe that your partner is capable of physically hurting you, think of what you will do if a violent incident occurs.

Safety Plan Brochure

If you decide to leave your partner permanently:

- Make one plan for if you have time to prepare before leaving and another plan for if you have to leave in a hurry.
- Leave when your partner least expects it. This will give you more time before your partner realizes you're gone. If you can, call a police officer to escort you out of the house as you leave (615-862-8600).
- Get your own PO box.
- Open a bank account only in your name and start putting money in it. Set as much money aside as you can without making your partner suspicious. If you can't open an account, ask someone you trust to hold your money so your partner can't find or use it.
- If you have pets, make arrangements for them to be cared for in a safe place.
- Consider opening a safety deposit box to keep your important documents in.
- Ask trusted friends or family if they would take you and your children in during an emergency.
- Try to take the originals or copies of the following documents:
 - Your and your children's birth certificates
 - Your and your children's social security cards
 - Your and your children's IDs
 - Money and credit cards in your name
 - A copy of your Order of Protection
 - Your divorce and custody papers
 - Your marriage license
 - A copy of your lease agreement
 - The deed to the house
 - The car's title, registration, & insurance papers
 - Your and your children's medical records
 - Your children's school records
 - Your and your children's work permits, green cards, visas, and passports
 - Your and your children's medications
 - Keys to the house and car(s)
 - Your and your children's valuable jewelry
 - A list of contacts (with addresses and phone numbers) for any family or friends you could turn to for help
 - Keys to your safety deposit box and/or PO box
 - Any evidence you have of your abuse**



Metro Office of Family Safety

If you are worried about your safety or are sometimes afraid of your partner or loved one, there is help available. To speak to an advocate, you can reach out to either of our offices. All of your information will be kept **confidential** and **all services are free**.

Family Safety Center

walk-ins and appointments

610 Murfreesboro Pike

Nashville, TN 37210

(615) 880-1100

M - F, 9:00 am - 6:00 pm

Order of Protection Assistance 24/7

Jean Crowe Advocacy Center

courthouse location

100 James Robertson Pkwy., Suite 114

Nashville, TN 37201

(615) 862-4767

M - F, 7:45 am - 4:00 pm

We can help file Orders of Protection, create a safety plan, assess your level of risk, connect you with resources like shelter and counseling, and provide a safe place for you to wait for your court hearing.

Your experience with abuse is unique to you, and your path to safety and healing will be as well. We will listen to you, believe you, and explain the resources that are available. **You choose whether to involve law enforcement or not.**

If you are in Nashville, you can also call the YWCA's 24-hour hotline:
1-800-334-4628

If you are outside of Nashville, you can call the 24-hour National Domestic Violence Hotline at:
1-800-799-7233



Safety Planning

No one deserves to be hurt.

This project is funded under an agreement with the State of Tennessee. This project was supported by Grant No. 2015-WE-AX-0020 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, US Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

English + Spanish

<https://ofs.nashville.gov/get-help/safety-planning/>

Safety Plan Brochure

Top 5 Tips:

- Make sure your phone is always charged. Carry a phone charger with you at all times.
- Make sure your car always has plenty of gas.
- Register for Smart911 (www.smart911.com)
- Keep an emergency bag with: phone charger, change of clothes, money, medicines, and important documents. Hide it where your partner can't find it but easy for you to get to.
- Call 911 if you ever feel threatened or scared.

During a Violent Incident:

- Remove yourself and your children from the situation before the violence begins.
- Think of several reasons your partner will believe for leaving the house at different times of the day or night in case you need an excuse to leave.
- Make up a signal with neighbors that you trust (flashing the lights on and off or hanging something out the window) to let them know you need help.
- Stay away from any sharp or heavy objects and any firearms in case your partner tries to use them.
- Stay out of the kitchen, garage, and bathrooms.
- Try not to go where your children are because your partner may hurt them too.
- Make a copy of the car keys and keep them in a secret place in case your partner takes the keys away from you.
- If you cannot get away, curl up into a ball in a corner. Protect your face by putting your arms around each side of your head and wrap your fingers together.
- Try not to wear scarves or long jewelry that your partner could try to use against you.

When at Home:

- Change your locks.
- Consider installing security devices on your windows or installing a security system.
- Keep your doors and windows locked at all times.
- Keep all porch lights on at night.
- Tell trusted neighbors to call the police if they see your partner near your home.
- Don't disclose your address to anyone you don't know or trust.

When in Public or at Work:

- Inform security, managers, and trusted coworkers of your situation and ask them to call police if they see your partner.
- Provide a photo of your partner to security, managers, and trusted coworkers for identification.
- Vary your routes to and from work.
- Ask someone to walk with you to your car or bus every day. If no one can walk with you, talk to someone on the phone while you walk.
- Arrange to have your calls screened at work.
- Think of what you will do if your partner shows up.

When Using Social Media or Technology:

- Turn the location feature off on your phone and all social media accounts.
- Do not post or share personal information about yourself, your home, your location, or your family online.
- Use a fake name for email accounts and usernames when creating new accounts.
- Use a virtual phone number app (like Google Voice) to give a virtual phone number out instead of your cell phone number.
- Request to have your phone number unlisted or unpublished.
- Don't call your partner from your home or cell phone.
- Consider changing your phone number.

With Your Children:

- Notify schools, daycares, babysitters, teachers, after-school program teachers, and coaches about who is allowed to pick them up.
- Discuss, review, and practice your safety plan with your children often.
- Make sure your children have their home address memorized and know how to dial 911.
- Create a code word or phrase with your children so they know when to call the police or when to leave the house and get help.
- If they cannot leave the house safely, teach them to go to a safe room that has a lock and a phone and to call 911.
- Tell them not to get involved if you are being hurt because they may get hurt too. Their priority is to stay safe, not to protect you.
- If you plan on leaving, plan what to do if your child accidentally tells your partner.
- Formalize a parenting plan through the court if you feel the children are safe around your partner.
- Teach your children about safe behavior with their phone, computer, internet, and social media.

With Your Order of Protection (OP):


- Keep a copy of your OP with you at all times.
- Give a copy of your OP to trusted management and security at work, family, and trusted neighbors and friends.
- If your children are on your OP, give a copy of it to their schools, daycare centers, babysitters, teachers, and after-school program teachers and coaches.

English + Spanish

Safety Plan Brochure Inserts

English + Spanish

Stalking




- Keep a detailed incident log with any stalking actions. Consider sharing this with police.
 - Take photos of destroyed property and/or injuries.
 - Print copies of website and social media posts.
 - Keep all emails, texts, notes, letters, or items from your stalker.
 - Save voicemails and answering machine messages.
 - Save police reports and all legal documents.
- Consider changing your phone number to one that is unlisted. Keep the number confidential.
- Never verify your home address over the phone.
- Report threatening phone calls to your phone company and police.
- Consider getting a PO box.
- Remove your name from reverse directories at www.privacyrights.org.
- Change the locks to your home and car.
- Get your car checked for tracking devices.
- Consider installing motion detector lights outside of your house with light bulbs that are out of reach.
- Consider installing a security system and/or security cameras.
- Park in well-lit areas and avoid walking alone.
- Change the routes you take to and from work. Vary your work hours if you can.
- Turn off all location settings on your phone. If you feel that your phone activity is being monitored, take your phone to your phone company or another tech service and have it checked and/or wiped.

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1

Stalking



- Give trusted supervisors, security officers, and reception staff at work a picture and description of your stalker and a copy of your Order of Protection.
- Tell trusted friends, family members, and neighbors about your situation and show them a picture of your stalker so they can help keep an eye out for you as well.

Additional Resources

Stalking Harassment and Risk Profile (SHARP) Risk Assessment
(stalkingawareness.org/sharp/)

- a free and easy-to-use tool designed to examine and assess stalking as well as information about stalking risks and safety suggestions

Stalking Incident Log
(familyjusticecenter.org/resources/stalking-incident-log/)

- a stalking incident log where you can record information such as the date and time of the incident, description of incident, location, witness names, police report number, and officer name and badge number.

2

- Stalking
- Pregnancy
- Firearms
- Pets

Staying Safety Plan

MY PERSONAL SAFETY PLAN

Before a Violent Incident

I can tell my partner is going to become violent when they:

1. **Start drinking**
2. **Get home from work mad**
3. **Their team loses the game**
4. **The kids start crying**

In the past, my partner has calmed down when:

1. **I take the kids outside**
2. **I get their drugs**
3. **They pass out drunk**
4. **I have sex with them**

Staying Safety Plan

I can use any of these excuses to get out of the house if I become scared:

1. **I want to make your favorite dinner but I forgot some chicken at the store.**
2. **My mom is expecting me at her house in 30 minutes.**
3. **The dog has been throwing up. I need to take him to the emergency vet.**
4. **I think I left my wallet at Tiffany's house. I'm going to run and get it.**

Leaving Safety Plan

Backup Plans

Plan A:

In one month when he goes out of town on a hunting trip

Plan B:

The weekend after the hunting trip when he has to work a double shift

Plan C:

The next time he is passed out drunk

Leaving Safety Plan

After I Leave

Ways I can
increase the
safety of my new
home:

1. Keep my porch lights on
2. Talk to someone on the phone if I'm coming home after dark
3. Park behind the building so he can't see my car
4. Get a dog

Ways I can
increase the
safety of my
children:

1. Add them to my OP
2. Tell the new school that I am the only one allowed to pick them up
3. Put parental controls on the computer and their phones
4. Rework my schedule so that I can be home when they are home

	Work	Home	Kid's School	Church
Challenges /Fears				
Strategies /Plans				
Allies				

Three R's for Providers

Recognize

```
graph TD; A[Recognize] --> B[Respond]; B --> C[Refer];
```

Respond

Refer

Resources & References

- Understanding risk- <https://ofs.nashville.gov/understand-your-risk/>
- Safety Planning Tools- <https://ofs.nashville.gov/get-help/safety-planning/>
- Various risk assessment tools and screenings- https://isc.idaho.gov/files/Approved_DVEval_Assessment_Tools_7-1-2018.pdf
- Additional Risk Assessment Tools- <https://www.domesticshelters.org/resources/risk-assessment-tools>
- ODARA- <https://www.waypointcentre.ca/cms/one.aspx?portalId=10043&pageId=52600>
- <https://www.bwjp.org/our-work/topics/risk-assessment.html>
- <https://www.bwjp.org/resource-center/resource-results/the-blueprint-for-safety.html>

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<https://ofs.nashville.gov/>

