

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Safety Tips For You And Your Family

To find out about help in Virginia, call the Virginia Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline:

1-800-838-8238 (V/TTY)

Whether or not you feel safe to leave an abuser, there are things you can do to make yourself and your family safer.

IN AN EMERGENCY

If you are at home & you are being threatened or attacked:

- **Stay away from the kitchen** (the abuser can find weapons, like knives, there)
- **Stay away from bathrooms**, closets or small spaces where the abuser can trap you
- **Get to a room with a door** or window to escape
- **Get to a room with a phone** to call for help; lock the abuser outside if you can
- **Call 911 right away for help**; get the dispatcher's name
- Think about a neighbor or friend you can run to for help
- If a police officer comes, stay calm; tell him/her what happened; **get his/her name & badge number**
- **Get medical help** if you are hurt
- **Take pictures** of bruises or injuries
- **Call a domestic violence program or shelter**

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AT HOME

- Learn where to get help; **memorize emergency phone numbers**
- **Keep a phone** in a room you can lock from the inside; if you can, get a cellular phone that you keep with you at all times
- If the abuser has moved out, **change the locks on your door**; get locks on the windows
- **Plan an escape route** out of your home; teach it to your children
- Think about where you would go if you need to escape
- **Pack a bag** with important things you'd need if you had to leave quickly; put it in a safe place, or give it to a friend or relative you trust
- Include **cash, car keys & important information** such as: court papers, passport or birth certificates, medical records & medicines, immigration papers
- **Get an unlisted phone number**
- **Block caller ID**
- **Use an answering machine**; screen the calls
- Take a good self-defense course

HOW TO MAKE YOUR CHILDREN SAFER

- **Teach them not to get in the middle of a fight**, even if they want to help
- **Teach them how to get to safety**, to call 911, to give your address & phone number to the police
- **Teach them who to call for help**
- **Tell them to stay out of the kitchen**
- **Give the principal at school or the daycare center a copy of your court order**; tell them not to release your children to anyone without talking to you first; use a password so they can be sure it is you on the phone; give them a photo of the abuser
- **Make sure the children know who to tell at school if they see the abuser**
- **Make sure that the school knows** not to give your address or phone number to **ANYONE**

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF OUTSIDE THE HOME

- **Change your regular travel habits**
- **Try to get rides with different people**
- **Shop and bank in a different place**
- **Cancel any bank accounts or credit cards you shared**; open new accounts at a different bank
- **Keep your court order and emergency numbers with you at all times**
- **Keep a cell phone** & program it to 911 (or other emergency number)

HOW TO MAKE YOURSELF SAFER AT WORK

- **Keep a copy of your court order at work**
- **Give a picture of the abuser to security** and friends at work
- **Tell your supervisors** - see if they can make it harder for the abuser to find you
- **Don't go to lunch alone**
- **Ask a security guard** to walk you to your car or to the bus
- **If the abuser calls you at work, save voice mail** and save e-mail
- **Your employer may be able to help you find community resources**

Reprinted by permission of the American Bar Association from the Domestic Violence Safety Plan: Safety Tips for You and Your Family, a joint project of the ABA Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section and the ABA Commission on Domestic Violence.