

FAMILY VIOLENCE SAFETY PLANNING

Getting ready to leave

It can be difficult to stay focused on safety when you are stressed or worried. Sometimes it's hard to remember all the things you need to do. This fact sheet has tips for planning to stay safe if you are experiencing family violence and thinking about leaving the relationship.

Planning ahead

You are the best person to work out when and how you can keep yourself safe if you are experiencing family violence or abuse in a relationship. If you make the decision to leave the relationship, it is good to think of the safety steps you need to take for you and your kids.

You may not be ready or able to leave your relationship right now. However, there are some things you can do to help you and your kids to be ready to leave quickly and more safely if you decide to leave.



Who can help me make a safety plan?

Legal Aid WA's Domestic Violence Legal Unit (DVLU) is a free specialist unit that provides legal and social support services to women, children and men in same-sex relationships affected by family violence.



DVLU has a duty lawyer service at Perth Magistrates Court (Monday to Friday, 9 am to 1 pm) that can help with applying for a family violence restraining order. You can also contact DVLU on 1300 650 579 (Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm).

Legal Aid WA's Family Advocacy Support Services (FASS) is a free specialist family violence service that provides legal and social support services to people with a family law problem.

If you live in a regional town, there are local agencies that can help you make a safety plan.

If you want to start planning yourself here are a few hints. You can find more information about safety planning on the [Legal Aid WA website](https://www.legalaid.wa.gov.au).

Use a safe device

A safe device is one which your partner cannot access such as a library computer or computer of a trusted friend or family member. Use a safe device for all safety planning and anything that may make your partner suspicious you are planning to leave. Use a safe device when looking for information about family violence services, setting up a new bank account or talking to people about your plans to leave.

Make a new email account

You should make a new email account to use when you contact services such as Centrelink or refuges or email anyone about your plans to leave. Give services your new email address to get information sent to you safely. When you create a new email account:

- do not use your real name in your email address,
- do not link the new account to an existing account,
- do not use your existing email or mobile number to prove your identity (use the email address or mobile number of a trusted friend or family member),
- create a strong password that your partner will not be able to guess (it is best to not use names and birthdays of your kids or pets), and
- keep using your normal email for other things.

Be careful giving out your mobile number

Be careful giving out your mobile number to services if you think your partner might check voicemails or text messages. It may be safer not to give services your mobile number. You can ask services to communicate with you by emailing your new safe email address. If you need to give a service your mobile number, ask them not to leave a voicemail message and plan with them about what they should do if someone other than yourself answers your phone.

Find a safe place to keep things

You might have to leave quickly in an emergency and there won't be much time to pack things for yourself and the kids. It would be good if you are able to find a safe place outside of your home to keep some of the main things you will need after you leave. This could be with a close friend, family member or neighbour.



If you don't have a safe place to keep things outside your home, try to think of somewhere safe inside your home where your partner is not likely to look. You can pack a bag of things and keep this in your safe place ready for when you leave.

Talk to friends and family you trust



Tell a friend or family member you trust you are thinking about leaving the relationship. Ask them to check on you regularly (for example, regular visits or phone calls). It is good to have a secret or code word for emergencies for them to call the police.

If you feel okay about it, you might talk to your neighbours and ask them to call the police if they hear arguing or anything that worries them in the future.

Keep spare clothes and other basics

Keep some spare clothing and other important things for you and your kids in your safe place.

As part of your safety planning think about other main things you will need after you leave and personal things you may want. For example:

- a spare set of house or car keys
- spare glasses
- medicine or scripts
- toiletries
- photographs, and
- personal things that you want to keep, like your jewellery.



Gather important documents

Gather important documents and save them somewhere safe where you will be able to get them after you leave. Try to gather the following documents for you and your kids:

- birth certificates,
- your driver's license (or other photo identification),
- Medicare card,
- passports,
- Centrelink card, and
- immigration papers.



If you are worried your partner may notice documents are missing, make copies instead of taking the originals. Save copies on a safe device or external storage device and keep this in a safe place.

Set up a bank account and start saving



Set up a new bank account for yourself and, if possible, start regularly saving small amounts. Do not transfer money electronically from your usual account to your new account, as this may be seen by your partner. If possible, take out small amounts of cash that will not be noticed by your partner and put the cash into your new bank account or keep it in your safe place.

Contact Centrelink

Call Centrelink on the number you usually contact them or use the [Payment and Service Finder](#) on the Centrelink website to find out what payments you may be able to get to help after you leave. For example, you may be able to get a Crisis Payment, income support payments or rent assistance.

Centrelink also have social workers who offer free private counselling and support and can refer you to family and domestic violence services including emergency accommodation. You can call Centrelink on 132 850 (Monday to Friday, 8 am to 5 pm) and ask to speak to a social worker.

Set up a myGov account

Set up a myGov account if you don't already have one. myGov stores important documents and information from government services such as Centrelink and Medicare all in one place.

If you are setting up a myGov account, make sure you use a password that can't be easily guessed by your partner and use your new safe email address. If you already have a myGov account, change your password and change the linked email address to the new safe email address you have created.

Plan for your pets

Plan for the care of your pets after you leave. The RSPCA Pets in Crisis program is a free service providing a temporary home for pets for owners who are escaping domestic violence. Your pets are placed in a foster home while you seek accommodation of your own.

This service is available by a referral from a case worker or healthcare professional. Here is the link to the RSPCA WA webpage [Pets in crisis](#).

