

Staying safe: Getting ready to leave

This is a practical guide for safety planning if you are in an abusive or controlling relationship and thinking about leaving. It provides information about steps you can take to help get ready to leave quickly. It also provides a list of family violence services that can help and resources which can provide more information.

Be prepared

You may not be ready or able to leave your partner right now. However, there are some things you can do to help prepare you and your children to leave quickly if you need to.

Find a safe place to keep things

If you need to leave quickly in an emergency there won't be much time to pack things for yourself and the children.

If possible, find a safe place outside of your home to keep some essential things you will need after you leave.

This could be with family, a close friend 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 essential items and keep this in your safe place ready for when you leave.

Talk to trusted friends and family

Tell a trusted friend or family member you are thinking about leaving the relationship. Ask them to check on you regularly (for example, regular visits or phone calls). Have a codeword for emergencies for them to call the police.

If you feel comfortable, you can talk to your neighbours and ask them to call the police if they hear arguing or anything that concerns them in the future.

Keep spare clothes and essentials

Keep some spare clothing and other essential items for you and your children in your safe place.

As part of your safety planning think about other essential items you will need after you leave and important personal items you may want.

For example:

- a spare set of keys,
- spare glasses,
- medicine or scripts,
- toiletries, and
- photographs.



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.

For example, ensure you are using a safe device if you search for information about family violence services, set up a new bank account or talk to people about your plans to leave.



Create a new email account

Create 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 verify your identity (use the email address or mobile number of a trusted friend or family member),
- create a strong password that will not be obvious to your partner (avoid using names and birthdays of your children or pets), and
- keep using your normal email for your usual everyday things.



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, withdraw small amounts of cash that will not be noticed by your partner and deposit 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 on or use the Payment and Service Finder on the Centrelink website

www.servicesaustralia.gov.au to find out what payments you may be able to get 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 **136 150** (Mon to Fri, 8am to 5pm) 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 as myGov stores important documents and information from Government services such as Centrelink and Medicare all in one place. Make sure you use a password that cannot be easily guessed by your partner and provide 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.



Gather important documents

Gather important documents and save them somewhere safe where you can get them after you leave.

Try to gather the following documents for you and your children:

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

If you are worried your partner may notice paper documents are missing, make copies instead of taking the originals.

Save copies of documents on a safe device or on an external storage device and keep this in a safe place.



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 and make a plan with them about what they should do if someone other than yourself answers your phone.



Stay safe online

When you are making plans to leave, it is best to use a safe device which your partner cannot access. However, if you need to use a device that your partner may be able to access, you can do the following to help keep you safe:

- browse the internet using the 'private' or 'incognito' mode or regularly delete your browser history (after deleting your browser history create a safe browser history by searching for online shops or hobbies),
- check the privacy and security settings on every device and account you and your children have,
- don't use saved passwords to log in to accounts – change your password then do not save the new password,
- use passwords that cannot be easily guessed by your partner (don't use names of children or pets),
- sign out of your accounts when you have finished (don't just close the window),
- set your device to auto-lock after a short period of time, and
- make sure your devices have anti-spyware and anti-malware software.

The Office of eSafety website www.esafety.gov.au has an Online safety checklist and a range of "How to" videos which give step by step advice about online safety including how to clear browser history, privacy settings, blocking numbers, reporting abuse and more.



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 of owners who are escaping domestic violence. Pets are placed in a foster home while their owner seeks accommodation of their own.

This service is available via a referral from a case worker or healthcare professional. Find out more by visiting the RSPCA WA website

www.rspcawa.org.au.



Keep your location safe

Keep your location safe. The following are some things you can do, and some things to be aware of, to help keep your location safe:

- turn off location services on all of your and your children's devices,
- if your partner set up your device or you share an account (for example, an Apple ID) they may be able to access information about your location remotely - in this case, it is safer to restore the device to factory settings,
- don't check in to places on social media and be careful that your post does not give away information about your location, and
- be aware that withdrawing cash from an ATM and credit card payments may show your location.



Get legal advice and social support

Legal Aid WA's Domestic Violence Legal Unit (DVLU) is a free specialist unit which 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 (Mon to Fri, 9am to 1pm) which can give advice and help with applying for a Family Violence Restraining Order.

You can also call DVLU on **1300 650 579** (Mon to Fri, 8:30am to 4:30pm).

DVLU provides social support services including counselling, risk assessment and safety planning, and referral to other services for help with other issues such as tenancy, housing, immigration and financial (Centrelink) issues.

Legal Aid WA's Family Advocacy Support Services (FASS) is a free specialist family violence service located at the Family Court of WA in Perth (Mon to Fri, 9am to 4pm).

FASS provides legal and social support services to people with a family law problem who are affected by family violence.

FASS social support workers can help with risk assessments, safety planning, counselling, referrals to other services, in-court support and advocating on your behalf with organisations outside the court system such as police, refuges and housing services.

HELP AND SUPPORT

Police, ambulance and fire

131 444 if you are feeling unsafe
000 in an emergency
24 hours
0403 277 478 **SMS Assist**
WA Police service for hearing or speech difficulties. Not to be used for emergencies.

Family Violence Law Help website

www.familyviolencelaw.gov.au
Information about family violence and the law including family law, child protection, child support and family violence protection orders. It also has a directory of services that can help with legal advice, emergency housing and money.

The Women's Domestic Violence Helpline

1800 007 339
(08) 9223 1188
24 hours
Counselling, information, advice, referrals to services, police liaison and help escaping family violence.

Men's Domestic Violence Helpline

1800 000 599
(08) 9223 1199
24 hours
Operated by the Department of Communities offering information and support to men who have experienced family violence. This service can also provide counselling for men who are concerned about their behaviours.

Crisis Care Helpline

1800 199 008
131 114 (24 hours)
Operated by the Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support offering help in crisis situations.

Entrypoint Perth

1800 124 684
(08) 6496 0001
Mon to Fri 9am – 7pm
Sat and Sun 9am – 5pm
Accommodation and support options for victims of family violence that have left their homes due to family violence or are homeless due to family violence.

Ask Izzy

www.askizzy.org.au
A free and anonymous national website providing a list of services that offer help such as housing, meals, healthcare, counselling, legal advice, and addiction treatment.

LUMA Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (DVAS)

(08) 6330 5400
www.luma.org.au/services/family-and-domestic-violence/
A free service helping women to access support including discussing options, safety planning, applying for a family violence restraining order, obtaining advice from legal services and referrals to other services.

National Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Counselling Service

1800 RESPECT
1800 737 732
24 hours

Your Toolkit

www.yourtoolkit.com.au
A web-based resource offering information to help women facing domestic violence and financial abuse.

Penda App

Available from the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).
A free financial app for mobile devices to help those experiencing family violence. It combines financial tips, safety and legal information and referrals.

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)

131 450
Call this number to speak to an interpreter in your language who can help with contacting the services on this list.

Aboriginal Interpreting WA

1800 330 331
You can access an interpreter through this service who can help with contacting the services on this list.

National Relay Service

133 677
<https://www.accesshub.gov.au/services>
Call this number if you are deaf and/or find it hard hearing or speaking with people who use a phone, or check the website for alternative communication methods.

LEGAL AID WA OFFICES



Infoline: 1300 650 579



Translating & Interpreting Service:
131 450



Website/InfoChat:
www.legalaid.wa.gov.au



National Relay Service: 133 677
(for hearing and speech impaired)

Perth Office

32 St Georges Terrace,
Perth, WA 6000
1300 650 579
(08) 9261 6222

Midwest & Gascoyne Office

Unit 8, The Boardwalk,
273 Foreshore Drive,
Geraldton, WA 6530
1800 813 492
(08) 9921 0200

West Kimberley Office

Upper Level, Woody's Arcade,
15-17 Dampier Terrace,
Broome, WA 6725
1800 813 796
(08) 9195 5888

Great Southern Office

Unit 3, 43-47 Duke Street,
Albany, WA 6330
1800 813 874
(08) 9892 9700

Goldfields Office

Suite 3, 120 Egan Street,
Kalgoorlie, WA 6430
(08) 9025 1300

East Kimberley Office

98 Konkerberry Drive,
Kununurra, WA 6743
1800 991 347
(08) 9166 5800

Southwest Office

7th Floor, Bunbury Tower, 61
Victoria Street,
Bunbury, WA 6230
1800 813 732
(08) 9721 2277

Pilbara Office

28 Throssell Road, South
Hedland,
WA 6722
1800 421 129
(08) 9172 3733

Indian Ocean Office

Administration Building,
20 Jalan Pantai, Christmas Island,
Indian Ocean, WA 6798
(08) 9164 7529

This information contains a summary of the law and is correct at the date of publication. It is not legal advice. You should always seek legal advice about your individual situation. Any services referred to which are not operated by Legal Aid Western Australia are not endorsed or approved by Legal Aid Western Australia. ©Legal Aid Western Australia. This information sheet may be copied, reproduced or adapted to meet local needs by community based organisations without permission from Legal Aid Western Australia provided the copies are distributed free or at cost (not for profit) and the source is fully acknowledged. For any reproduction with commercial ends, or by Government departments, permission must first be obtained from Legal Aid Western Australia.

CMS 7814751v5