



When Separating

Keeping Safe

This is a guide to help prompt ideas and action if you are at risk of family and domestic violence. It is based on real life examples from people who have needed to take such steps in relation to their safety. When you are at risk of family and domestic violence, take steps and precautions for your safety and that of your children.

Keep this in a safe place

At the end of this guide there are some telephone numbers you can call in an emergency or for support. There is also a space for you to write down additional contacts that you or your children may need to find quickly. Please take the time to think about what telephone numbers you need to include.

Be prepared – safety planning

You may not be ready or able to leave the relationship right now. However, you can prepare a safety plan for you and your children. This can be used if you notice tension building up and you are worried there may be an incident of violence about to occur or when an incident of violence does occur.

Safety planning - be ready to leave at a moment's notice.

- Make sure you have all your and your children's important documents together (or copies of them if they will be missed) and keep them in a safe place outside the home so you do not have to gather them together in an emergency. These include:
 - all forms of identification
 - your driver's licence
 - Medicare card
 - Passports
 - birth certificates
 - bank account details
 - bills
 - car registration
 - contracts.
- Make copies of photographs, children's reports and certificates
- Remove any personal items (heirlooms, gifts) that you do not want to leave behind
- Keep some spare clothing for you and the children with a friend or neighbor
- Save a little money each week and keep it with your documents
- Write down the name of any medication you or your children need
- Make yourself aware of the names of any community services you may need to contact in an emergency. It may be helpful to write the name and telephone number of these services in the space provided at the end of this document
- Speak to a domestic violence counsellor to review your safety plan

- Keep a copy of this information sheet with your documents so you have all your information, telephone numbers and documents in one place

Protecting your children

Talk to your children about what to do if your (ex) partner becomes abusive. Your children need to be able to get out of the house and go somewhere safe.

- Practise with your children getting out of the house safely (what are the best exits?)
- Arrange for your children to have a safe place to go (eg a neighbour's house). Tell your children where they can go if there is an emergency
- Teach your children how to use the phone and how to call the police in an emergency
- Talk to your children about how Crisis Care can help with refuge accommodation and transport to get there. Make sure they know where the telephone number is
- Make sure your children know your address and phone number to give to the police or the Crisis Care operator when they call
- You may wish to hide a mobile phone for them to use or show them where the closest phone box is and practice with them how to dial the emergency numbers
- Inform your children's day care or school about who has permission to collect the children. Follow this up in writing. Legal Aid WA can assist you to draft a letter to the day-care or school
- Talk to your children about what they should do if your ex partner attends their school (i.e. do not go with your (ex) partner. Go to the principal's office or find a teacher for help)

If your ex partner has threatened you or your children and has firearms or weapons, report this to police and get legal advice.

If you are abused or threatened

If there is an incident (eg you are verbally or physically abused or threatened):

- Contact the police
- Get medical attention
- Contact Crisis Care – this is a 24 hours service. They are able to tell you which refuges have vacancies and they can help you get there
- Get legal advice about a restraining order
- Keep a diary and write down the date, time and details of what happened. Keep this diary in a safe place with a friend or family member you trust

Financial assistance

Centrelink may be able to offer you emergency financial assistance if you leave your home in a hurry and you do not have access to money for food or housing. Ask them about crisis payments and ongoing financial support.

After you leave

Seek legal advice as soon as possible after you leave a relationship where there has been violence, especially if you have children and/or a restraining order or the court has imposed protective bail conditions on your ex partner.

Be very careful about giving out your new contact details. Some details appear on public records, which means anyone can access your information. Some information can be given out by mistake. If

you leave home and move to another address, you will need to change your contact details with the following:

- Post Office (mail redirection)
- Your bank
- Your employer
- The children's school
- Department of Transport (driver's licence)
- Your telephone provider
- Synergy
- Water Corporation
- Alinta Gas
- Centrelink
- Australian Electoral Commission (the electoral roll)
- Landgate

When you contact any agency or service to change your contact details, tell the person you speak to that your new address and phone number must remain confidential. Ask for a Privacy Alert to be placed on your records. This is a warning notice that will come up on the computer screen when your records are accessed by an employee at any of the above services, drawing their attention to the fact that your details must remain confidential.

Australian Electoral Roll

The Australian Electoral Commission is a Commonwealth government department that maintains the Australian and West Australian electoral roll. The name and address of every person registered to vote in Australia appears on the electoral roll and this information is available to the public. You can apply to the Australian Electoral Commission to register as a silent elector if you fear that publication of your address on the electoral roll would put the safety of you or your family at risk. This means that your details are not publicly available.

Contact the Australian Electoral Commission on 13 23 26 for more information about registering as a silent elector.

Landgate

Landgate is the state government department that maintains the official register of land ownership in Western Australia. If you purchase any property or your name appears on a land title in Western Australia, your name and address appears on the official register of land ownership and is available to the public. If your personal safety or your family's safety is deemed at risk you can apply to Landgate for your address details to be suppressed. This means that your details are not publicly available. For more information about this service, contact Landgate on (08) 9273 7373.

Mail

Do you have a postal address that is safe for agencies like Legal Aid WA, Centrelink etc to send information to?

- NO
 - talk to a friend or family member you trust whose address you can use and who will keep your mail safe
 - set up a PO Box in a suburb that is not near to the suburb you live in

- YES
 - if your postal address is different from your home address make sure you always give out your postal address

Phone

Do you have a phone number that is safe for agencies to contact you on?

- NO
 - if it is not safe for agencies to leave a message DO NOT give out the number.
 - if you need to give out your number, tell the person you are giving the number to what to do if someone other than you answers the phone
- YES – please be aware that:
 - anyone who has access to your telephone can find out who you last called by pressing the redial button on your phone. If you call a service for legal advice, referrals or other assistance, do the following when you hang up
 - dial a safe number (eg work or children's school) so that this will be the last number you used
 - delete the record of the last number you used by calling your phone provider's Directory Assistance number

If you move house, you can

- change your phone numbers
- request a silent number by contacting your phone provider. This means that your telephone number is not listed in the phone book or Internet
- get an answering machine so that you can screen your calls

When you move to a new address or get a new phone number, only give it out to people you trust will not pass it on to your ex partner if pressured.

Making your home secure

- Can you stay with friends or family, or can someone stay with you?
- Do your home's doors, windows, gates, garage, and any roof access have locks? Do you keep them locked?
- If you are renting you may want to move to a new (confidential) address. Get legal advice before you break a lease.
- If you rent through the Department of Housing, contact your Housing Services Officer for help.
- If you have a mortgage, get legal advice about protecting your assets and changing the locks.
- Contact the Safe at Home Service on (08) 9420 7264. Safe at Home provides support for women and children to stay in their home, safely. Visit www.womenscouncil.com.au/safe-at-home.html for more information

Name	Details	Phone Number
In an emergency Police, Ambulance and Fire If you or your family is in danger, call the police first	Emergency Numbers Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.	000 131 444 (calls to this number are recorded).
Crisis Care Provides information about metropolitan and regional refuge vacancies and may be able to organize a taxi to take you and your children to a refuge. Crisis care can help provide telephone counselling about domestic violence issues.	Available 24 hours a day seven days a week.	(08) 9223 1111 1800 199 008 (freecall STD) (08) 9325 1232 (TTY)
Women's Domestic Violence Helpline can help provide telephone counselling about domestic violence issues.	Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.	(08) 9223 1188 1800 007 339 (Freecall)
Legal Aid's InfoLine For information and referral. Where appropriate an appointment can be booked for you to receive legal advice.	8:30am – 4:30pm Monday to Friday	1300 650 579

Need more? Go to: www.whenseparating.legalaid.wa.gov.au