

# Domestic Violence Safety Planning

Family Violence Prevention Fund  
www.endabuse.org

*When a person has been screened for domestic abuse and has been identified as a victim or suspected victim, it is important to speak to her or him about immediate and future safety before she or he leaves the clinic. The severity of the current injuries or the abuse is not always an accurate predictor of future violence. Assisting the victim in making a safety plan can help her or him think through various options, and help the clinician assess the situation and offer better support. The following check-list will help you initiate these important discussions.*

## **If he or she is planning to leave:**

\_\_\_\_ Does the patient have a friend or supportive family member that lives nearby with whom they can stay?

\_\_\_\_ Does the patient have a friend that will stay with them to minimize the violence?

\_\_\_\_ Does the patient want to go to a battered woman's shelter, homeless shelter, or use other housing assistance services such as hotel vouchers from social services or advocacy programs?

\_\_\_\_ Does the patient want to call the police, obtain an order of protection or an emergency protective order?

## **If she or he is NOT planning to leave:**

\_\_\_\_ Would the patient call the police if the perpetrator becomes violent? If the victim couldn't get to the phone, could she or he work out a signal with a neighbor to call the police or teach the children to call 911?

\_\_\_\_ What kind of strategies have worked in the past to minimize injuries? Does the patient think these strategies could continue to work?

\_\_\_\_ Can the patient anticipate an escalation of violence and take any precautions?

\_\_\_\_ Does the patient have a support network or friends or family that live nearby who could help when she or he needs assistance?

\_\_\_\_ Are there weapons in the home? Can they be removed or placed in a safer area separate from the ammunition?

## **If the perpetrator has been removed from the home:**

\_\_\_\_ Discuss safety measures such as changing the locks on the doors and windows, installing a security system, purchasing rope ladders, outdoor lighting sensitive to movement, smoke detectors and a fire extinguisher, if affordable.

\_\_\_\_ It is important to teach children how to use the phone and make collect calls in case the perpetrator kidnaps them. Make arrangements with schools and daycare centers to release children to designated persons only.

\_\_\_\_ Encourage the patient to tell her or his neighbors, family, and friends that the perpetrator has left and to call 911 if they are seen around the home.

## **Being prepared to get away:**

\_\_\_\_ Discuss the following component of a safety plan with your patient:

Encourage the patient to keep in a safe place:

\_\_\_\_ Keys (house and car)

\_\_\_\_ important papers: social security cards, birth certificates, drivers license, etc.

\_\_\_\_ cash, food stamps, credit cards, etc.

\_\_\_\_ medication for parent and children, children's immunization records

\_\_\_\_ important phone numbers and addresses

\_\_\_\_ loose change or pre-paid calling card

\_\_\_\_ change of clothes and personal care items

\_\_\_\_ Have the patient plan with the children. Identify a safe place for the children.

\_\_\_\_ Contact local domestic violence program to find out about laws and community resources before they are needed.