
ECECD HOME VISITING GUIDANCE SAFETY PLAN and INSTRUCTIONS GUIDANCE DOCUMENT 2

A safety plan is a personalized, practical plan to improve a family's safety while experiencing abuse, preparing to leave an abusive situation, or after the parent leaves. A safety plan should include vital information tailored to a person's unique situation to help them prepare for and respond to different scenarios, including telling friends and family about the situation, coping with emotions, and various resources suited to the individual's circumstances. Some of the preparations for a safety plan might seem obvious, but it can be hard to think clearly or make logical decisions during moments of crisis. Having a safety plan laid out in advance can help protect the parent/caregiver and the children high-stress situations.

CONSULTATION AND TRAINING

Safety is a priority. It is important to consider the current safety needs of the family, bearing in mind the following questions:

- Who needs to be protected?
 - Who is going to do the protecting?
 - Steps that can be taken to help prepare to protect?
- The Child Welfare Information Gateway and the National Domestic Violence Hotline suggest:
- **Identify your partner's use and level of force** so you can assess the risk of physical danger to yourself and others before it occurs.
 - **Identify safe areas in your residence** with pathways to exit, away from any weapons. If arguments occur, try to move to those areas before they escalate.
 - If safe, **have a phone accessible at all times and know what numbers to call for help**, including friends or family, The Hotline at 800.799.SAFE (7233), and your local shelter. Know where the nearest public phone is located.
 - **Let trusted friends and neighbors know about your situation** and develop a plan and visual signal for when you might need their help. Give them clear instructions on who you do or do not want them to contact in moments of crisis, including law enforcement.
 - **Talk to others living in the residence how to get help, including children or roommates.** Instruct them not to get involved in violence between you and your partner and work with them to establish a mutual signal for when they should get help or leave the house.
 - **Create several plausible reasons for leaving the house** at different times of the day or night. Ex. multiple trips to the grocery store, spending time with friends, staying at work longer, find unnecessary errands to complete.
 - **If possible, keep weapons like guns and knives locked away** and stored as inaccessibly as possible. If you are concerned about your safety, please reach out to an Advocate.
 - **Be mindful of how clothing or jewelry could be used to physically harm you.** For example, if your partner has put their hands around your neck, avoid wearing scarves or jewelry that can be used to harm you.
 - **Back your car into your driveway when you park at home and keep it fueled.** If possible, keep the driver's door unlocked with the rest of the doors locked to allow for quick access to the vehicle.

- **If violence is unavoidable, make yourself as physically small as possible.** Move to a corner and curl into a ball with your face protected and arms around each side of your head, fingers entwined.
- When are they going to do this?

The UNM CDD Consultant Team will support the program and home visitors to strategize ways to meet each participant's individual needs.

DATA

Documentation of the safety plan is key. Refer to New Mexico Home Visiting Program Standard 6.3 on documentation in family files and in the Early Childhood Services Center (ECSC) database. When providing safety guidance and using the dropdown box in the database, always include a narrative in the service note. Seek assistance from UNM CDD Consultant to strategize how to meet each participant's individual needs (ECSC Tip Sheet #20 Adding a Safety Plan).

PERFORMANCE

Strategies to Promote Family Safety (see NM Home Visiting Program Standard 5.4.b).

Completion of the Relationship Assessment Tool is encouraged during initial visits with the families enrolled in home visiting. Assessment must be performed no later than six weeks after enrollment. Once the assessment is completed, a result will yield either a positive or negative screening.

In the event of a negative screening (i.e. participant is NOT indicating that they are in an abusive relationship), it is important to advise the client about being safe and what resources are available in the community. Reviewing the *Equality Wheel* with the parent/caregiver is a helpful way to establish trust in order to continue the discussion on healthy relationships.

In the event of a positive screening (i.e. participant is indicating they are in an abusive relationship), please validate the findings with the participant and continue the conversation in the following manner:

- Acknowledge to the participant that they do not deserve to be abused or in an unhealthy relationship.
- Let the participant know you are concerned for their safety.
- Ask the participant if they are in immediate danger and inform them you can support them to be safe. Always respect your client's wishes.
- In the event of immediate danger, offer to support the participant to call a shelter or 911 to get immediate assistance.
- Listen and respect what the participant says they would like to do and what they need; they are the expert on their own relationship.
- If the participant does not wish to leave their relationship, help them create their own safety plan. It can be as simple as providing them the number to their local domestic violence shelter or helping them create a specific safety plan (see example attached to this guidance). Leaving the safety plan with the participant may not be appropriate for safety reasons. The safety plan can be filled out, kept in the file, reviewed, and discussed with the participant at home visits while discussing the plan details. This should be an ongoing discussion with the participant.



Domestic violence resources vary by county. The New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NMCADV) provides information and resources to all groups and be accessed through the following link: [Home - New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence \(nmcadv.org\)](http://nmcadv.org)

Other Uses for Safety Plans

Safety Plans can be used for other situations in the home. A safety plan can be developed with a family when an infant is starting to crawl, or when a young toddler is starting to walk, by discussing child safety measures like outlet covers, sharp corners on furniture, storage of cleaning products, cabinet locks, and the dangers of leaving a child in a high chair or bath unattended. The safety plan may also address the presence of weapons in the home, such as firearms or other weapons that a child may have access to.

Home visitors should also develop safety plans with participants with a history of substance abuse. Discuss a safe place where a participant might take their child if they think they will use again. This is important to discuss without judgment, keeping in mind that these safety plans are for the safety of the child, not a judgment on the parent or their substance abuse issues.

Emergency Response Strategies

Develop a safety plan for families to identify emergency response strategies during a public health emergency or other emergency situations. Due to emergency situations, shelters and other intimate partner violence resources may be limited. It is important for the home visitor to work with the home visiting Program Manager to develop appropriate safety plans in response to public health emergency or other emergency situations in the community for families.

Include resources such as: Learn more technology safety tips at techsafety.org; myplanapp.org or call the **National Domestic Violence Hotline** at [1-800-799-7233](tel:1-800-799-7233) and TTY [1-800-787-3224](tel:1-800-787-3224).

References

Child Welfare Information Gateway. Retrieved from: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/domviolence/casework-practice/safety-planning/>

National Domestic Violence Hotline. Retrieved from: <https://www.thehotline.org/create-a-safety-plan/>

Suggestions and examples in this document were modeled after “Strong Families AZ Home Visitation: Guidelines on Domestic Violence (2014)”

SAFETY PLAN EXAMPLE

STEP 1: SAFETY DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT

I can use some or all of the following strategies:

- A. If I have to or decide to leave my home, I will go to _____.
- B. I can tell _____ (neighbors/friends/family) about the violence and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.
- C. I can teach my children how use the phone to contact the police.
- D. I will use _____ as my code word so someone can call for help.
- E. I can keep my purse/car keys ready at _____ (place) in order to leave quickly.
- F. I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my partner what he/she wants to calm him/her down. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

STEP 2: SAFETY WHEN PREPARING TO LEAVE

- A. I will keep copies of important documents (birth certificates, Medicaid cards, EBT, Social Security cards, etc.), keys, clothes and money at _____.
- B. I will open a savings account by _____ to increase my independence.
- C. Other things I can do to increase my independence include: _____
_____.
- D. I understand that if I use my telephone, credit card, or cell phone, the telephone bill or phone log will show my partners the numbers that I called after I left.
- E. I will check with _____ and my advocate to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- F. If I plan to leave, I won't tell my abuser in advance face-to-face, but I will leave a note or call from a safe place.

STEP 3: SAFETY IN MY OWN RESIDENCE

- A. I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
- B. I can replace wooden doors with steal/metal doors.
- C. I can install additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, and electronic systems etc.
- D. I can install motion sensor lights outside.
- E. I will teach my children how to contact me if my partner takes the children.

- F. I will tell people who take care of my children that my partner is not permitted to pick up my children.
- G. I can inform _____ (neighbor/friends/family) that my partner no longer resides with me and they should call the police if my partner is observed near my residence.

STEP 4: SAFETY WITH A PROTECTION ORDER

- A. Always carry a certified copy with me and keep a photocopy.
- B. I will give my protection order to police departments in the community where I work and live.
- C. I can get my protection order to specify and describe all guns my partner may own and authorize a search for removal.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Domestic violence is a crime and you have the right to legal intervention. Contact the police for assistance.
- You may also obtain a court order prohibiting your partner from contacting you in any way.
- Contact a local domestic violence program or an attorney for more information.
- If you have injuries, ask a doctor or a nurse to take photos of your injuries for your medical records.