

KANAWAYHITOWIN: TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHERS SPIRIT

Safety Planning for Women Who are Abused



Are you experiencing abuse by your partner, but aren't sure how to protect yourself or how to leave?

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of a safety plan. Safety planning educates women that they have options. For women who are still in abusive relationships, implementing a safety plan is the beginning of self empowerment and creating a sense that they matter.

This brochure ensures increased safety of Aboriginal women who experience abuse.

Kanawayhitowin is an Aboriginal initiative to raise awareness of the signs of woman abuse so that people who are close to an at-risk woman or an abusive man can help. The initiative reflects a traditional and cultural approach to community healing and wellness.

Everyone in the community has a role to play in helping to prevent woman abuse. You can reach out to organizations in your community to support you.

“Violence against women in any form is a crime, whether the abuser is a family member, someone you date, a current or past spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend, an acquaintance or a stranger.”

This initiative is a partnership between the Ontario government, Ontario Women's Directorate and the Expert Panel on Kanawayhitowin through the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children.

Developing a Safety Plan

Making a safety plan involves identifying actions to increase your safety and that of your children.

Below are some suggestions that might be helpful to you. Take one action at a time and start with the one that is easiest and safest for you.

Protecting yourself while living with an abuser.

- Tell someone you trust about the abuse.
- Think about your partner's past use and level of force. This will help you predict what type of danger you and your children are facing and when to leave.
- Tell your children that abuse is never right, even when someone they love is being abusive. Tell them the abuse isn't your fault or their fault, they did not cause it, and neither did you. Teach them it is important to keep safe when there is abuse.
- Plan where to go in an emergency. Teach your children how to get help. Tell them not to go between you and your partner if there is violence. Plan a code word to signal they should go for help or leave.
- Don't run to a place where the children are as your partner may hurt them as well.

- Create a plan to get out of your home safely and practise it with your children.

- Ask your neighbors, friends and family to call the police if they hear sounds of abuse and to look after your children in case of emergency.

- If an argument is developing, move to a space where you can get outside easily. Don't go to a room where there is access to potential weapons (e.g. bathroom, kitchen, workshop.)

- If you are being hurt, protect your face with your arms around each side of your head, with your fingers locked together. Don't wear scarves or long jewellery.

- Park your car by backing it into the driveway and keep it fuelled.

- Hide your keys, cell phone and some money near your escape route.

- Have a list of phone numbers to call for help. Call the police if it is an emergency. Your local shelter or police may be able to equip you with a panic button/cell phone.

- Make sure all weapons and ammunition are hidden or removed from the house.

Note: This safety plan may not be applicable to all Aboriginal Women and their situation.

Getting Ready to Leave

When you are planning to leave, here are some suggestions.

- Contact the police or a local women's shelter. Let the staff know that you intend to leave an abusive situation and ask for support in safety planning. Ask for an officer who specializes in woman abuse cases. Information shared with the police may result in charges being laid against the abuser.
- If you are injured, go to a doctor, Local Health Station, Aboriginal Health Access Centre or an emergency room and report what happened to you. Ask them to document your visit.
- Gather important documents including identification, bank cards, financial papers related to family assets, keys, medication, pictures of the abuser and your children, health cards, status cards, birth certificates, personal address/telephone book, cell phone and legal documents (e.g. house deed/lease, restraining orders/peace bonds.)

Getting Ready to Leave

- If you can't keep these things stored in your home for fear your partner will find them, consider making copies and leave them with someone you trust. Your local women's shelter will also keep them.
- Consult a lawyer. Keep any evidence of physical abuse (such as photos). Keep a journal of all violent incidents, noting dates, events, threats and any witnesses.
- Put together pictures, jewelry and objects of sentimental value, as well as toys and comforts for your children.
- Arrange with someone to care for your pets temporarily until you get settled. A shelter may help with this.
- Remember to clear your phone of the last number you called to avoid his using redial.

Leaving the Abuser

Here are some suggestions for your personal safety when you leave.

- Request a police escort or ask a friend, neighbor or family member to accompany you when you leave.
- Contact your local women's shelter. It may be a safer temporary spot than going to a place your partner knows.
- Do not tell your partner that you are leaving. Leave quickly.
- Have a back-up plan if your partner finds out where you are going.

"The time when a woman leaves an abusive relationship is often the most dangerous for her."

After Leaving

Here are some actions you should take after you or your partner has left the relationship.

- Visit the closest police station and ask to speak to an officer who specializes in woman abuse cases.
- Consider applying for a restraining order or peace bond that may help keep your partner away from you and your children. Keep it with you at all times.
- Provide police with a copy of any legal orders you have.
- Consult a lawyer or legal aid clinic about actions to protect yourself or your children. Let your lawyer know if there are any Criminal Court proceedings.
- Consider changing any service provider that you share with your ex-partner.
- Obtain an unlisted telephone number, get caller ID and block your number when calling out.
- Make sure your children's school or day care centre is aware of the situation and has copies of all relevant documents.
- Carry a photo of the abuser and your children with you.
- Ask your neighbours to look after your children in an emergency and to call the police if they see the abuser.
- Take extra precautions at work, at home and in your community. Consider telling your supervisor at work about your situation.
- Think about places and patterns that your ex-partner will know about and try to change them. For example, consider using a different grocery store or place of worship.
- If you feel unsafe walking alone, ask a neighbour, friend or family member to accompany you.
- Do not return to your home unless accompanied by the police. Never confront the abuser.

Learn the warning signs, take them seriously.

For further information, contact your local Friendship Centre, Metis Council, Woman's Shelter, or Aboriginal Service Provider.

Call the Assaulted Women's Helpline at:
1-866-863-0511
(1-866-863-7868 TTY)

In an emergency, call the police.

For further information, visit our website at:
www.kanawayhitowin.ca

Contact your:



Local service provider contact information



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