

## The Out/Law Series of Legal Guides

### Keeping Safe

*An Action Plan for LGBT Whose Partners or Ex-Partners Are Abusing or Harassing Them*

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This is my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility of further violence. While I do not have control over my abuser's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to him/her and how to best get myself and my children to safety.

#### ***Step 1: Safety during a violent incident.***

Abused partners cannot always avoid their abuser's violence. In order to increase my safety, I may:

- a. Keep my wallet and car keys ready and put them some place where I can easily access them. I will also hide a spare set of keys.
- b. Put 911 on speed dial on my phone.
- c. Tell neighbours and friends about the abuse and ask them to call 911 if they heard suspicious noises coming from my house.

- d. If I have to leave my home, I will go \_\_\_\_\_ . *Decide this even if you don't think there will be a next time.*
- e. When I think we are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that I can escape from, like \_\_\_\_\_ . *Suggestion: Try to avoid arguments your abuser starts in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons or in rooms without an outside door. Bathrooms, kitchens, and garages often have things in them that can be used as weapons.*
- f. I will use my judgment and senses to enhance my safety. I will do whatever I can to protect myself until I am out of danger. I know best what works with my abuser.

## **Step 2: Safety when preparing to leave.**

Abused women often leave their homes for safety, especially when they live with their abusers. If I decide to leave, I need to plan carefully in order to increase my safety. My abuser might hurt me if he/she thinks that I might leave.

To make leaving safer for me, I can:

- a. Open a secret savings account to increase my independence.

- b. Check with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to see if I can stay with them or if they can lend me money.
- c. Practice my escape plan with my children, if that is safe.

***Step 3: Safety in my own home.***

I can do other things to increase my safety at home, like:

- a. Change the locks on my doors and windows.
- b. Replace wooden outside doors with steel or metal doors.
- c. Install a security system: add extra locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic alarm system, door alarms, etc.
- d. Install outside motion detecting floodlights that go on whenever someone comes close to my house.
- e. Tell people who care for my children who can (and who can't) pick them up. Ask them to call 911 if my abuser shows up to get them when I have a restraining order giving me temporary custody.

- f. Caller ID:
  - a. If I live with my abuser, I can check with my telephone company to see if our monthly telephone service includes Caller ID. (If it does, your abuser could be using Caller ID to see who is calling you when he/she isn't home, and you might not even know it.)
  - b. I can also check with my phone company to see if my telephone line is blocked to prevent anyone with Caller ID (like my abuser) from getting my unlisted telephone number if I call them.
  - c. If I want more information about how Caller ID can affect me or why I should find out how to use blocking, I should call the Vancouver General Hospital Domestic Violence Program at (604) 875-4924.

***Step 4: Safety with a protection order.***

If I am in danger I can call 911. I can ask the police when they come to: remove my abuser; get a no contact order or a peace bond to prevent my abuser from coming back to the house.

Some abusers obey “no contact” orders or restraining orders (issued by courts), but I can never be sure if my abuser will obey my protection

order. I may need to ask the police to arrest my abuser if he/she does not obey a restraining order.

If I am planning to leave, I can go to Legal Aid (820-1140 West Pender Street, 1-866-577-2525) or call Lawyer Referral at 604.687.3221 to get a lawyer who can start work on a restraining order for me.

To help the police or the courts enforce my protection order, I can:

- a. Keep my official copy of the protection order in a safe place where I can find it quickly. Note: Always keep a copy with you, 24 hours a day, wherever you go. You may need to show it to the police to prove you have it if your abuser violates it.
- b. Give copies of my restraining order to the local police departments of the communities where I work and/or live.
- c. Tell people around me that I have a restraining order against my abuser. Ask my employer, my co-workers, my religious leader, my family, my friends, and my neighbours to tell me or call the police if they see my abuser looking for me when I am around.
- d. If my abuser destroys my copy of my restraining order, I can get another copy from the courthouse where I got it.

- e. If my abuser violates the restraining order, I can call the police and report it, contact my lawyer, call my victim advocate, and/or tell the court about the violation. I should always write down the date and time it was violated, and what happened.

***Step 5: Safety on the job and in public.***

I will need to decide if, when, and how I will tell others that I have been abused and that I may still be at risk. My friends, family and co-workers can help protect me. I can think about whom to ask to help me become safe.

I can also:

- a. Shop and do banking at places different from those my abuser knows about, at times that are not normal for me.
- b. Tell my boss, the security supervisor and others at work that my abuser is dangerous to me.
- c. When leaving work, if I see my abuser, I can  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- d. When I'm driving, if problems occur, I can  
\_\_\_\_\_.

- e. If I take a bus, train, or taxi, and I see my abuser, I can \_\_\_\_\_.

***Step 6: Safety and my emotional health.***

Being abused and put down can be exhausting and emotionally draining. Building a new life for myself (and my children) takes a lot of courage and energy.

To save up my emotional energy and resources, I can:

- a. Call \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ for moral support.
- b. Go to support groups at a domestic violence agency in order to get validation and support for myself.
- c. When I feel down and think about going back to my abuser, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. If I plan to use drugs or alcohol to dull my pain, I can get treatment and help from \_\_\_\_\_.

### ***Step 7: Items to take when leaving.***

If I decide to leave my abuser, I will need to bring some important things with me. I can leave a copy of my restraining order, extra clothes, and spare car and house keys with a friend just in case I have to leave quickly.

The following is a list of what I can bring if I decide to leave for safety (*\* starred items are the most important*).

When I leave, I should take:

- \* A packed bag (I can hide it somewhere in case I need to leave in a hurry)
- \* My identification documents (I can get copies while my abuser is out of the house, if I can't pack originals)
- \* Birth certificates (mine and my children's)
- \* Social Insurance Card
- \* Money (if possible), chequebook, bankbook
- \* ATM (Automatic Teller Machine) card

- \* Credit cards
- \* Keys to house, car, office, safety deposit boxes, etc.
- \* Driver's licence and registration
- \* Medications (mine and my children's)
- \* Welfare or other identification
- \* Immigration documents, if any
- \* Passport
- \* Children's favourite toys and/or blankets
- \* Address book (especially if it has where I'm staying in it)
- \* Divorce papers
- \* Medical records (mine and my children's)
- \* Children's school and vaccination records
- \* Lease/rental agreements, house deed

\* Mortgage statement

\* Copies of any bank statements, brokerage, house statements, pay stubs, etc. that show what my abuser's assets are

\* Insurance papers

\* Important and sentimental family pictures

\* Jewelry

\* Small saleable objects

\* Other things of special sentimental value that my abuser might destroy

***Step 8: Telephone numbers that I need to know:***

- Police departments for home, work, school: 911 or

\_\_\_\_\_

- Children's school number: \_\_\_\_\_

- Religious Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

If I have to leave suddenly and I have no place to go, I can go to the Emergency Ward at \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital.

The following services are available. I can check them out before I have to use them:

- Rape Crisis Centre, (604) 255-6344
- Battered Women's Support Services, (604) 687-1867
- Multicultural Family Support Services, (604) 436-1025
- St. Paul's Hospital Domestic Violence Intervention, (604) 682-2344 ext 62093
- Vancouver General Hospital Domestic Violence Program, (604) 875-4924

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***Credits to:***

*Rhode Island Coalition against Domestic Violence  
Vancouver General Hospital Domestic Violence Resource Card.  
Providence Health Care Safety Planning Checklist*

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The information in this booklet is current to

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Published by  
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