

## **Risk Identification and Safety Assessment (RISA) Tool**

# **Safety Plan**

NOTE: RISA is a self-directed tool for service providers to use with professional discretion and in line with relevant organizational policies, professional codes of conduct, and laws. The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic does not assume any responsibility or liability for assessments conducted using this tool. Always refer to your own organization's policies and procedures, which take precedent over the content provided in this tool and consult with your supervisor.

# Safety Plan

The RISA Safety Plan can be used to support your client in planning for their safety. It is intended to be used in conjunction with the RISA Questionnaire and Risk Factor Summary Worksheet. You can view all of the RISA content on our website at [www.riseaboverisk.ca](http://www.riseaboverisk.ca)

## Things to keep in mind:

This safety plan is intended as a starting point and content may not be applicable depending on your client's unique situation. Please use your discretion.

It is important to review the safety plan with your client periodically since risks are dynamic, and the plan might need to be revised based on change in circumstances and emerging needs.

## Before you start:

- Check in with your client about the potential risks they may be facing. You can use the RISA Questionnaire and Risk Factor Summary Sheet to help guide your professional identification of risk.
- The quality of your safety plan will depend in part on how complete your questionnaire is. If there are skipped answers in your questionnaire, you may want to consider completing these answers before reviewing this plan with your client.
- Depending on the client and setting, you may choose to print and walk through the safety plan with your client. Or you may choose to have an open conversation with your client about safety, where you can use the plan as a general guide to help ensure you cover key safety factors related to your client's situation.
- For a refresher on key approaches to safety planning, check out our RISA tool's Framework and Learning Modules. These are available at [www.riseaboverisk.ca](http://www.riseaboverisk.ca).

## How this safety plan is organized:

Use the Content Links on the next page to navigate to the most relevant safety planning strategies for your client's unique situation. If sharing with a client, you may want to highlight those sections most relevant to them. You can also download this plan as an MS Word or HTML file so that you can easily shorten the plan to focus on areas most relevant to your client's situation.

## Content Links

[General Safety Strategies](#)

[In Case of an Emergency](#)

[Emotional safety](#)

[Technological Safety](#)

<b>Safety Factor</b>	<b>Safety Planning Content</b>
Current living situation: living with the person(s) who caused harm	<a href="#">If/When living with the person(s) who caused harm</a>
Current living situation: preparing to leave the relationship/ living situation	<a href="#">If/When preparing to leave</a>
Current living situation: recently separated from the person(s) who caused harm	<a href="#">After separation</a>
Currently employed	<a href="#">Workplace safety</a>
Economic Coercion/ Human Trafficking	<a href="#">Additional safety considerations in cases of Economic Coercion or Human Trafficking</a>
Forced Marriage or at risk of forced marriage	<a href="#">Additional safety considerations in cases of Forced Marriage</a>
Has access to a car	<a href="#">Car safety</a>
Has children	<a href="#">Safety Plan with Children and Youth</a>
Has pets and/or livestock	<a href="#">Pet Safety/ Livestock safety</a>
Identity Factor: 2SLGBTQIA+ and/or gender-diverse communities	<a href="#">Additional safety considerations for 2SLGBTQIA+ and gender-diverse communities</a>
Identity Factor: Immigration Status other than Canadian Citizen (refugee, immigrant, non-status, temporary resident)	<a href="#">Additional safety considerations for Immigrant, Refugee, or Non-Status People</a>

Identity Factor: Indigenous	<a href="#"><u>Additional safety planning considerations for Indigenous communities</u></a>
Identity Factor: Older person (age 65+)	<a href="#"><u>Additional safety considerations for Older people</u></a>
Identity Factor: Person with a Disability	<a href="#"><u>Additional safety considerations for People with Disabilities</u></a>
Legal situation: Starting an application in family court and/or there are ongoing or past court proceedings	<a href="#"><u>Starting a Family Court Application</u></a>
Legal situation: There is a protection order in place (e.g. restraining order/ bail conditions)	<a href="#"><u>If/When there is a Protection Order (restraining order/ bail condition in place)</u></a>
Lives in a rural, remote, and/or Northern region in Canada	<a href="#"><u>Additional safety considerations when living in Rural, Remote, or Northern communities</u></a>

## I. General Safety Strategies

- ❑ You may consider telling people you trust about your situation:
  - Talk to them about how they can help you be safe
  - Let them know about any custody or no-contact orders (if any)
  - You may want to keep the abuse private, but when people outside your home know about the abuse, they can be a source of support and help you keep you safe.
  
- ❑ It is important to try to build a support network of trusted people such as friends and/or family members, community members, workers at community organizations, or others.
  - Ensure they have your full address (including unit number if applicable), in case of emergency.
  - Try to establish regular check-ins with people of your support network.
  
- ❑ It is important also to gather papers and information you might need and keep them in a safe place. Some of the documents include the following:
  - Driver's license or other identification for you and children or dependents
  - Birth certificates for you and children or dependents
  - Marriage certificate
  - Copies of any protection orders
  - Custody papers
  - Passports for you and children or dependents
  - Insurance policies
  - Bank account details and statements
  - Adoption papers
  - Any medical and legal agreements
  - Rental agreements, mortgage and titles in your name (including for house, vehicles, hire purchase agreements)
  - Proof of income
  - Evidence of abuse (like photos, police reports, medical records)

## II. In Case of an Emergency

It is important to have a safety plan in mind in case of an emergency, so you can get to a safe place quickly if necessary.

- ❑ In case of an emergency, think about what you will need to leave in a hurry:
  - Look for places that are open 24 hours where you can be safe while you call for help
  - If you plan to go to someone's home, arrange this ahead of time in case you need to arrive without notice. Do NOT plan to go to the home of a friend or relative

where the person who caused harm will think to look. That might endanger all of you

- Make sure you have the car keys and gas in the car, or bus tickets or another means of transportation
  - Know in advance exactly how to get to where you plan to go
  - Have a backup plan in case you are not able to get to the place you intended to go
- Memorize emergency numbers like the numbers for the police, taxi, or Uber
  - Turn off your phone location services off (review the tech safety section for more tech safety tips)
  - Make a list of important contact info (including telephone numbers, email addresses, etc.) of trusted friends or relatives to tell them where you are going. You may not have time to look up these numbers if you need to leave fast.
  - Seek information and legal advice about emergency protection orders, restraining orders, peace bonds or other legal ways to stop the person who caused harm from contacting you.
  - Pack a small emergency bag and put it in a place where it cannot be found. You could leave it with a trusted friend or in a place that only you know about.
  - Include some things you will need, such as:
    - Cash
    - Debit or credit cards
    - Health care cards
    - Car keys
    - Important documents like your driver's license and passport
    - Any prescription drugs
    - Copies of any no contact orders (in case you have one)
    - If you have children, things they might need
  - Gather papers and information you will need, including:
    - Driver's license or other identification for you and children or dependents
    - Birth certificates for you and children or dependents
    - Marriage certificate
    - Copies of any protection orders
    - Custody papers
    - Passports for you and children or dependents
    - Insurance policies
    - Bank account details and statements
    - Adoption papers
    - Any medical and legal agreements

- Rental agreements, mortgage and titles in your name (including for house, vehicles, hire purchase agreements)
- Proof of income
- Evidence of abuse (like photos, police reports, medical records)
- ❑ What to take with you:
  - Documents for you and children or dependents
  - Keys to house, garage, car, office
  - Clothing and personal needs
  - Cell phone (turn off GPS, replace sim card)
  - For children, essential school needs, favorite toy or comforter
  - Photograph of the person hurting you so people can recognize them
- ❑ If you're injured, get medical attention. Ask the healthcare provider to record your visit and what happened to you. Take pictures of your injuries and send them to your support person, remember to delete any evidence of the photographs.
- ❑ If a non-emergency response vehicle tries to pull you over, do not stop in a low-traffic area; proceed to a public space or police station, or call for help
- ❑ Carry your keys in your hand when walking to and from your vehicle
- ❑ Use remote entry if possible
- ❑ Use a buddy system to get to and from your vehicle.

### III. Technological Safety

It is important to consider and take steps regarding online safety since people who cause harm may use technology to continue or escalate the abuse, including monitoring your whereabouts and online activity.

Many online resources can assist you with tips to enhance your safety online. Before clicking on the weblinks in this section, consider changing your device's passwords and privacy settings by using a private mode when searching other websites and erasing your browser history.

#### Digital Footprint and Geolocation

Your "digital footprint" is the trail of data you create when you use the Internet. It shows all the websites you visit, emails you send, social media, and more. Your digital footprint includes "active" and "passive" activities.

Your "passive" digital footprint is the data trail you unintentionally leave online. For example, when you visit a website, the webserver may log your Internet Protocol (IP) address, which identifies your Internet service provider and your approximate location. Even though your IP

address does not include personal information, it is still part of your digital footprint. It also has your search history, which some search engines save while you are logged in. Your "active" digital footprint is more intentional – it is the emails you send and receive, your social media posts, and even the content on someone else's social media post that you "like" or comment on.

Everyone using the Internet has a digital footprint – it's not worth worrying about! However, it is good to think about the trail of data you are leaving behind. If you put a picture or something in writing on the Internet, it is there forever. It is important to pause and think twice about your online activity before you hit "send."

### **Password Safety:**

- Consider changing your password for all your social media platforms and email addresses. Creating a new email account to communicate with service providers is a good idea.
- Don't tell anyone the passwords to any of your devices. For example, avoid entering your device passwords in front of anyone else to keep your password safe.
- Log off when leaving your device or account unattended. It only takes a few moments for someone to access it and steal or change your password. Once they have your password, they can go back later to check your activity.
- Use different passwords for each of your online accounts and devices. If one account gets compromised, it doesn't immediately put your other accounts at risk.
- Don't leave your passwords lying around on a post-it note or a notebook that others can access. Remember to save and keep your passwords safe.
- Change your passwords regularly. Avoid reusing a password you've used before for at least one year.
- Create and use **strong** passwords. A strong password is easy to remember, but hard to guess.
- If you are living with the person who caused harm, avoid saving your passwords on any apps or websites you often navigate. If you have your password saved, logging out of an app or website does not delete your saved password.

### **Web Browsing**

Many internet browsers, such as Google Chrome, Internet Explorer, Safari, and Mozilla Firefox, are used to navigate the Internet. All browsers remember the pages you visit, and you may use more than one on your devices. You can delete the list at any time by clearing your browsing history. In addition, most browsers have features to help you to keep your online activity



private. It is important not to delete all your history at once, especially if you think your online activity has been monitored by the person causing harm. The person who caused harm might be monitoring your online activity; therefore, navigating other websites is essential to avoid raising suspicions that you are looking for help and information online about the abuse. To learn more about browser safety tips, visit [Internet Browser Privacy Tips](#).

## **Spyware**

Spyware is a computer software program or hardware device that lets someone (such as an abuser) secretly monitor and gather information about your technology use. Also, if the person is using spyware or any tracking device on your phone, you might still be monitored even if you use your browser in private mode. There are safety measures you can take if you are concerned that the person causing harm may use spyware to track your online activity:

- Install and enable a firewall
- Install anti-virus protection and scan your computer regularly
- Install anti-spyware programs. To learn more about spyware, visit [Mobile Spyware – BC Society of Transition Houses \(bcsth.ca\)](#)

## **Geolocation**

Someone can track your location in real-time with Google latitude through your phone's GPS or web browsers. If you have concerns, see your cell phone service provider. They can help check for tracking enabled on your phone. Make sure to turn it off or disable your GPS on your device. Photos uploaded to websites can appear on Google Maps; therefore, a search of your name might reveal your location or where the picture was taken. To learn more about geolocation safety tips, visit [How to Disable Geolocation in Browsers \(privateinternetaccess.com\)](#)

## **Social Media**

Social media can be a great source of connection and entertainment. However, it can also enable people to monitor your location and be used for cyber violence. The Canadian Women Foundation has produced a fact list about cyber violence and online hate. To learn more about this issue, visit <https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/online-hate-and-cyberviolence/> and [Facebook Guide — Safety Net Project \(techsafety.org\)](#).

Regarding your social media activity settings, you can take steps to limit your exposure to social media and avoid potential harm. Under the platform settings, you can:

- Disable your precise location tracking
- Enable two-factor authentication
- Set up a private account
- Select who can view your account stores.

#### **IV. Car safety**

- Park in an open and public place and change the location as often as possible
- Ensure that nobody is hiding around your vehicle as you approach it or inside of it before entering
- Have your cell charger in your car at all times
- Consider having the gas tank full
- Check the inside (interior and under the hood) and outside (including underneath) of your vehicle for tampering (such as an added GPS tracker or leaking fluids) and that brakes are working
- Reverse into parking spots to ensure that a quick exit is possible

#### **V. Workplace safety**

Questions to consider:

- Is the person who caused harm aware of where your work location?
- Is your employer aware of your situation?
- Is there any safety plan in case the person who caused harm shows up at your workplace?
- Is your employer capable of protecting you?
- Is there a possibility of changing the hours of work/location?

#### **VI. Safety Plan with Children and Youth**

You might consider talking to your children about safety in cases of an emergency or potential violence. It is important to keep in mind that safety planning for children should be based on age and maturity of your child and may consider the following:

- Things they can do when they feel afraid
- People they can turn to for help
- Places they can go to feel safe
- what they should do in an emergency
- How they will know it is an emergency

The list below has some suggestions about safety planning with children and youth.

- Talk to your child/ren about which adults are authorized to pick them up from school/daycare
- Inform the child's teacher, daycare or caregiver about the situation and who is authorized to pick them up

- Talk to your children about a safe or code word so that children know to call for help and/or leave
- Ask them to memorize the address and important contact numbers
- Keep the child's identification documents in a safe place
- Talk about situations in which a call to 911 might be necessary
- Teach children how to use a telephone to call for help (police or support) away from the person causing harm (in a safe room, at a neighbour's home, or the nearest pay phone) and to not hang up even after they are done speaking
- Teach children what information they may need to provide to an operator in case of an emergency (full name, address, and phone number and what is occurring/what kind of help is needed)
- Establish a safe meeting place and route with children should they leave the house during an abusive occurrence
- Select a safe room with a lock and phone for children to go to during an abusive occurrence OR determine an exit route and safe place to go (family, neighbour, etc.)
- Talk about a safe place to go to when there's a conflict at home (ex. In the closet, in the bathroom, in the backyard, under the bed, to a neighbour's, etc.)

## **VII. Pet Safety/ Livestock safety**

Keep in mind that in some cases pets or livestock may be used to undertake family violence through threats or actual acts of harm against them as a form of control and abuse.

- Think of alternative places to bring your pet(s) when leaving your residence (your local Humane Society may have a program in place if you do not have a trusted support person who can care for them).
- If safe to do so, visit your pet for emotional healing when possible.
- Do not return to a potentially dangerous situation to retrieve or visit a pet without feeling safe or without accompaniment (e.g. police support, if appropriate).
- Look into “safe haven” programs for larger animals (e.g. cows, horses, sheep) that may be offered in your region.
- If you are considering leaving your current living situation with the person(s) causing harm, you may want to seek legal advice on how to determine ownership of animals as well as potential emergency intervention orders that will allow you to stay in the home to continue to feed and care for animals.

## VIII. Emotional Safety

Violence affects people in different ways and taking care of yourself is an important part of your healing journey.

Self-care is different for everyone. The list below has different categories with strategies or activities you can undertake. It is essential to develop a self-care plan that makes sense to you. Try to incorporate your plan into your daily life by setting some time apart for yourself, finding a safe space, and identifying what makes you feel grounded - some examples are sounds, smells, texture, colors, images, and others. Other examples of self-care are listed below.

### Physical well-being strategies

- Try to get enough sleep and rest
- Aim for a healthy diet
- Take breaks from work
- Engage in any physical activity that is fun, such as running, playing sports, walking, dancing

### Psychological /emotional well-being strategies

- Keep a journal
- Set some time for relaxation
- Spend time with people who you enjoy
- Make time to engage with friends and family who are positive and supportive
- Give yourself affirmations – write three good things about yourself
- Do something you enjoy – like going to the movies, meeting a friend, gardening, concerts
- Consider joining counselling or support group
- Allow yourself to feel angry or sad – find constructive ways to express it
- Find things that make you laugh
- Practice self-love and self-compassion

### Spiritual wellbeing strategies

- Go to church/mosque/temple
- Make time for reflection
- Reflect and confide with a close friend
- Do yoga
- Spend time in nature

### Online resources for self-care:

- Dr. Kristin Neff – Self-compassion guided meditations: <https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#guided-meditations>
- Tara Brach – Guided meditations: <https://www.tarabrach.com/guided-meditations/>
- Free Media | Compassion Institute: <https://www.compassioninstitute.com/free-media/>
- Dr. Arielle Schwartz: yoga therapy videos that assist with healing of trauma: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5LUxnXbReV7I5cEzvb46sQ/videos>
- Self-care interactive guide: [About \(youfeellikeshit.com\)](http://About(youfeellikeshit.com))
- Brighten your day – positive daily affirmations: [Brighten your day with bite size support | Soul Medicine](#)

**Things to consider while caring for yourself and others:**

- How can I feel grounded? \_\_\_\_\_
- How do I feel when I am grounded? \_\_\_\_\_
- These are things I need to do every day to feel grounded and supported  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- These are things I need to do occasionally to feel grounded and supported  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- These are things I know are important to my wellness, but I do not always do them  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What in my life can become a barrier to achieving my goals?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- In the past, how have I successfully addressed these barriers?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How can I plan to address these obstacles before they affect my goal?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What supports can I reach out to when I feel overwhelmed?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Consider taking care of your emotional needs and preparing yourself for interactions with lawyers, police, court officials or the person who caused harm.
- Avoid overbooking appointments and consider having an advocate/support person attend your appointments.

## Client's Current Situation

The types of safety planning strategies below will be based on a client's current situation – whether the client is living with the person(s) who caused harm, planning to leave, or has recently left the situation.

In some cases, there may be a family law case (or the commencing of a case) and/or a protection order in place.

It is important to remember that a client's situation may be dynamic and it is important to review safety planning strategies with them as the situation evolves over time, using a non-judgemental approach and in ways that center the client's choice and empowerment.

### IX. If/When living with the person(s) who caused harm

While living with the person(s) who caused harm, you may want to work with your service provider to identify patterns of abuse in your situation as well as the forms of risk you may be facing, so that you can proactively plan ahead for yourself and your loved ones.

- Be sure to review the [general safety strategies](#) and [emergency safety strategies](#) included in this plan

In addition to the strategies included in this plan, you may want to consider:

- Create an emergency escape plan and memorize it, including places you can go to in a situation of an emergency
- Plan your emergency exit(s) in case of violence
- Consider what transportation options are available to get you to a safe place (e.g. taxi fare, bus routes, trusted support)
- In the case of an argument, try to move to a place with the lowest risk of getting hurt.

### X. If/When preparing to leave

Preparing and having a plan is essential if you decide to leave the relationship. There are steps you can take. Consider reviewing the recommendations below when planning to leave an abusive situation.

- Don't let the person who caused harm to know about your plan to leave
- Keep in mind where the safest exit is with clear pathways
- Try to hide any evidence of leaving
- Turn off your phone location services off (review [tech safety section](#) for more tech safety tips)
- Tell your children only after it is safe to do so.

- Tell trusted friends, family, or neighbours about the violence and give them my full address, including apartment number, so they can call the police if they need to.
- Set up a code word with people you trust so when you text them or speak the code word, they will know how to call the police right away.
- If residing with the person causing harm, consider making the following arrangements:
  - Know that physical safety is more important than any items you may want to bring with you
  - Create an emergency escape plan and memorize it
  - Compose a list of important telephone numbers for contacts such as the police, the most appropriate shelter, a crisis line, and trusted supports
  - Consider a trusted support or shelter that you can go to and safely stay with
  - Keep a bag or suitcase packed or ready to pack for yourself and your dependent(s)
  - Try to set aside some money and leave it with a trusted support
  - Leave extra clothing and important small items with a trusted support
  - Open a bank account and/or safety deposit box and have all documentation directed to you (or arrange to have mail sent to a trusted support)
  - Consider what transportation options are available to get you to a safe place (e.g. taxi fare, bus routes, trusted support)

## **XI. After separation**

If you decide to leave the relationship, it is important to know that separating can be one of the most dangerous times in an abusive relationship. The person(s) who caused harm is losing control over you and may do everything possible to get it back. This situation increases the risk of violence, harassment, threats, and emotional abuse. That **does not mean you should stay** in an abusive situation. **It means you need to assess the potential risk and plan how to stay safe.**

The list below outlines some safety precautions after leaving an abusive relationship.

- Do not tell anyone your location, especially the person who caused harm and friends in common
- Consider blocking their phone number, getting a new phone and/or a new phone number.
- Turn off your phone location services off (review [tech safety section](#) for more tech safety tips)
- Be sure to change any services you share with your ex-partner, such as a joint cell phone plan, cable, or hydro.
- Consider deleting and blocking them from social media.
- Be aware at work, at home, and in the community. You might need to change your routine, especially to and from work or school and walking or running routes and avoid going to places where you are known to be.

- You may want to consider telling your boss, co-workers, and children's school principal about your situation. You may also give them a picture of the person who caused harm, so they know to watch out for them.
- Make sure all your banking information, bills, and accounts are in your name and change the address on your accounts.
- If you have children, seeking legal advice regarding custody and visitation is extremely important.
- If you see the person who caused harm while out in public:
  - Try to get to a well-lit and/or populated space, such as a store
  - If concerned for your safety, try to draw attention to yourself and let somebody know that you need assistance
  - Have someone walk you to and from public transportation, your vehicle, or your home
  - Sit near the front/driver if taking public transportation
  - Note the location of emergency alarms when taking public transportation

## **XII. Starting a Family Court Application**

Starting a family court application can be stressful and overwhelming and, in most cases, can increase risk and safety concerns.

There are some specific situations where you should consider having a plan for your safety:

- Situations where the opposite party (your ex-partner) is served with court documents (the person becomes aware you started an application by receiving the court documents from a third party)
- During court proceedings where you and your ex-partner would go to court and would be in the same room before a judge
- After a court order (in particular, orders that might not align with your ex-partner's claims).

Therefore, preparing in advance and having a safety plan in place is extremely important.

### **Starting an application in family court**

Filling in an application in family court might trigger a not positive reaction from the opposite party, which can lead to situations where you need to avoid contact for some time with the person served with court documents.

A family court application must be served to your ex-partner by a third party; however, you must know when the application will be served, so you might consider having some strategies for your safety, as described below:

- Ask your lawyer or the person who is serving the application to inform you of the date and time the document will be served to your ex-partner



- Avoid contacting your ex-partner for some time (unless instructed by your lawyer or in cases communication is needed to arrange visitation) to avoid verbal abuse or intimidation
- Consider going to a safe place with your children for a few days (a place that your ex-partner does not know)
- Inform child(ren) school or daycare about upcoming family court litigation
- Consider connecting with a [Family Court Support Worker \(Ontario\)](#) who can provide additional information, support, court accompaniment, and detailed safety planning.

### **Safety Plan before and after court proceedings**

- It might be a good idea to visit the court location before your court date – look for main and alternative entrances and exits, and washrooms
- Ask where court security is located if you need to access them. Note: in case you have a restraining order or severe safety concerns, contact court security before or upon your arrival in court
- Think of alternative ways of transportation
- Consider staying in court after the end of the proceeding so your ex-partner can leave before you.
- Consider having a support person with you during and after court

### **XIII. If/When there is a Protection Order (restraining order/ bail condition in place)**

- Inform your employer, close friends, family and child (ren) school/daycare that you have a protection order in effect
- It is a good idea to make several copies of the protection order and keep it with you and in different places
- Save the phone number for the Crown Counsel and local enforcement agency in case you need to contact them
- Have an advocate attend meeting with you
- Notify authorities if the person who caused harm breaches any legal orders
- Seek out a Legal Aid office for assistance with legal needs ([Link to Legal Aid](#))
- Find help with restraining or court orders by having support persons complete affidavits (document violent occurrences/circumstances under oath to be used in court)
- Arrange for a police escort if you need to re-enter your home to retrieve items
- Contact your local Victim Services organization for information, referrals, and advocacy ([include a link here](#))

## Client's Identity Factors and Special Circumstances

This section of the safety plan includes specific safety strategies based on a client's identity factors and special circumstances, such as client who identify as Indigenous, part of the 2SLGBTQIA + communities and clients living with disabilities. Use the safety strategies that apply to your client based on your initial intake and RISA Questionnaire answers.

### XIV. Additional safety planning considerations for Indigenous communities

There are safety planning resources designed specifically for Indigenous communities in Canada.

You may want to share these with your client and/or work with your client to address specific considerations unique to their social identity.

#### Native Women's Association of Canada: Safety Planning Guidebook

"The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is committed to healing in our communities. No matter what your situation, you do have options and there is a way out, do not give up! We hope this toolkit will give you information and strategies to make healthy and positive changes in your life and the lives of your children. We also hope this toolkit will help you to recognize your inner strength and to see that, with the help and support of those people and organizations who care about and love you, you can stand strong and build a better future for yourself and your children."

<https://www.nwac.ca/assets-knowledge-centre/NWAC-You-Are-Not-Along-Handbook-with-weblinks.pdf>

Sample strategies from this resource (directly quoted):

- Build a support network. A support network can include a trusted friend, family member, a women's group, an Aboriginal women's group, an advocate, or community member to help you leave an abusive relationship safely. It's important to make sure that people in your support network have your full address, including apartment number, in case of an emergency.
- Get support from an Aboriginal women's group, women's group, or an advocate and ask them to help you through your situation. This could mean asking them to help you figure out child custody, what to do about the home you left, or going to the police.
- Contact an Aboriginal women's group, women's groups or an advocate to help you go through police and court processes. This may include asking for a peace bond or restraining order. It's important to get support as these processes can be complicated and are different in each province and territory. Many women have gone through this to protect themselves and their children and you can do it too!
- Family law is something you will have to consider when leaving your partner. Family law deals with parenting arrangements, separation and divorce, division of property and debts, restraining orders, and child and/or spousal support payments. Family law is different in each province and territory in Canada and can be difficult to understand, but do not give up! You can do it! Talk to someone you trust and get help with family law issues. The Who's Who Guide contains a list of Aboriginal women's groups, women's groups, and legal services you can contact for information.

- Consider whether or not the Matrimonial Real Property Act applies to your situation:  
“Matrimonial real property refers to the house or the land that a married or common-law couple lives in while they are in a relationship. Provincial and territorial laws do not apply to real property on reserve. As of December 16, 2014, the Matrimonial Real Property Act came into effect. This Act applies to all common-law or married couples that live on reserve where at least one partner is a member of the First Nations Band. Each individual nation can create their own Matrimonial Real Property Law, but until they do, the Matrimonial Real Property Act applies.”

For more information, review the NWAC’s safety planning guidebook: <https://www.nwac.ca/assets-knowledge-centre/NWAC-You-Are-Not-Along-Handbook-with-weblinks.pdf>

## **XV. Additional safety considerations for Immigrant, Refugee, or Non-Status People**

Current safety strategies or resources:

- What are some of the ways you currently keep yourself safe?
- Are there places where you feel more supported or safe that you can go to when you need support?
- Are there people you trust to help you if or when you need support? e.g. friends, legal/immigration advocates, faith-based/ethnic community, service providers.
- Are there aspects of your immigration status or migration journey that would be helpful for me to know, to help understand the kinds of things you need to help stay safe?

Questions to consider:

- Can your immigration status be impacted by the person who caused harm? If so, have you talked to an immigration lawyer?
- Has the person who caused harm threatened to deport you or report to immigration or other agencies? (It is essential to know how your status in Canada can be affected by your spouse. There are legal clinics that can help you).
- Do you have no status in Canada? It is essential to know the implications of calling the police if you have no status in Canada. There are clinics that can help you.
- Can your child's immigration status or mobility from abroad be impacted by the person who caused harm?

- Has the person who caused harm threatened to harm your family members here or abroad? If so, which safety measures can you and/or your family members take?
- Do you have papers about your legal status in Canada? (e.g. PR card, Birth Certificate, Passport). What steps can we take to help keep your legal documents secure? 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 may also keep them for you.

Removing barriers to support:

- Do you need assistance with a language interpreter when interacting with service providers?
- Do you have support from people you trust? Would you be interested in having referrals to ethno-specific agencies and/or support groups?

## **XVI. Additional safety considerations for People with Disabilities**

Current safety strategies or resources:

- What are some of the ways you currently keep yourself safe?
- Are there places where you feel more supported or safe that you can go to when you need support?
- Are there people you trust to help you if or when you need support? e.g. friends, disability advocates, caregivers, service providers.
- Are there aspects of your disability that would be helpful for me to know, to help understand the kinds of things you need to help stay safe? (e.g. access to medications, equipment, nature of the disability, ways that it impacts your day-to-day life).
- If you have a physical disability, are there physical barriers in your environment that would prevent a safe exit or access to safety? Do you require any personal support to manage activities of daily living, such as bathing, making meals, dressing?
- Are there types of equipment, technology, or assistive devices that help you to stay safe? What are some steps we might take to help ensure you have access to them?

Questions to consider:

- If the person(s) who caused harm is your caregiver, are there other emergency back-up caregivers that we can identify together, who may be able to support you?
- Does the person who caused harm do things that take away your independence?
- Does the person(s) who caused harm assist with your use of medication? Do they control the use of your medication? If yes, what are alternative supports or ways that we can help ensure you have access to your medications?
- Does the person(s) who caused harm take advantage of your disability/disabilities? If yes, what steps can be taken to help prevent or address this harm?
- Does the person(s) who caused harm restrict or interfere with your communications with others (including restricting the use of technology or ASL interpreters)? If yes, what steps can be taken to help prevent or address this harm?

Removing barriers to support:

- How accessible are support services like this one? Are there ways that we can make our services more accessible to you? Are there accommodations we can help provide?
- Do you have any concerns about transportation for going to appointments? If yes, what are some steps we can take in address your concerns or find alternative ways to help with transportation?

## **XVII. Additional safety considerations for 2SLGBTQIA+ and gender-diverse communities**

People from the 2SLGBTQIA+ and gender-diverse communities may experience additional abuse regarding their sexual orientation and gender expression. Some of the questions below can explore how these might impact your safety and/or barriers when seeking services.

Current safety strategies or resources:

- What are some of the ways you currently keep yourself safe?
- Are there places where you feel more supported or safe that you can go to when you need support?

- Are there people you trust to help you if or when you need support? e.g. friends, family or chosen family, safe spaces, service providers.
- Are there aspects of your gender identity, gender expression, or sexuality that would be helpful for me to know, to help understand the kinds of things you need to help stay safe? (e.g. experiences of discrimination based on your gender or sexual identity, concerns about being “outed,” access to medications or healthcare related to gender transition or other health needs).

Questions to consider:

- Has the person(s) who caused harm made you feel uncomfortable by criticizing or making fun of your appearance or gender expression?
- Has the person(s) who caused harm ever threatened to disclose or disclosed your sexual orientation/ gender expression to others without your consent?
- Does the person(s) who caused harm have access to your medications or other things you may need for healthcare (e.g. hormones for gender transition). If yes, what steps can we take to help keep your medications safe?
- Does the person(s) who caused harm access the same support services in your community? If yes, what steps can we take to help you stay safe and/or find alternative spaces of support?

Removing barriers to support:

- Do you have any concerns about being outed while you're seeking support? If yes, what steps can we take to help ensure you feel safe coming here for support?
- Are there 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations or other specialized services that you would like to receive additional support from? Would you like us to make a referral on your behalf?

## **XVIII. Additional safety considerations when living in Rural, Remote, or Northern communities**

In remote communities, clients face additional barriers to seeking support and services. It is important to explore with your client potential barriers and alternatives.

Current safety strategies or resources:

- What are some of the ways you currently keep yourself safe?

- Are there places where you feel more supported or safe that you can go to when you need support? If yes, how close are these places? What are some steps we can take to ensure you can travel to these places with short notice?
- Are there people you trust to help you if or when you need support? e.g. friends, neighbours, community members, faith-based groups, service providers, law enforcement. If yes, how close are these individuals or groups? What are some steps we can take to ensure you can travel to them with short notice?
- Do you have access to transportation? (e.g. car, public transit, taxi). What concerns, if any, do you have about transportation? Are there steps we can take to help ensure safe access to transportation if you need to get around on short notice?
- Do you live in a northern region of Canada with extreme weather that can affect your transportation? If so, what safety strategies can you think of when transportation is unavailable due to extreme weather conditions?
- Are there other places or people whom you can turn to for help with childcare, transportation, or advice?
- How comfortable do you feel calling 911 in case of emergency? What is the average emergency response time in your community? If not sure, we can work together to find out.

Questions to consider:

- Does the person(s) who caused harm control your movements or make attempts to isolate you from others?
- Does the person(s) who caused harm have access to firearm(s) or weapon(s)? Do you know where these are stored?
- Are there friends, neighbours, family members, community members whom you do not trust to help keep you safe? What concerns do you have, if any, about staying safe in a small or close-knit community? What steps can we take to help you protect yourself from these concerns?
- Is there anyone you have a dual relationship with that you don't want to be a part of your safety planning?

## **XIX. Additional safety considerations for Older people**

There are additional safety considerations you may want to consider if you are in an older age group (e.g. 65+ years old).

You may want to share the following safety planning guide with your clients or use the information within to help guide your client to plan for their safety.

The Safety Planning Toolkit was produced by Elder Abuse Ontario in partnership with METRAC Action on Violence funded by The Law Foundation of Ontario. Access it here: <https://eapon.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/EAO-Safety-Planning-Toolkit-2020.pdf>

Sample strategies from this resource (directly quoted):

*Questions about Mental Health and Cognitive Ability to Make Decisions to Manage Personal Care and Property:*

- Has anyone told you that you are incapable of making decisions? If so, have you been assessed by a physician or capacity assessor? Do you have a copy of the medical report?
- Do you have a Substitute Decision Maker or legal guardian? Have you prepared a Power of Attorney (POA) for Property and/or Power of Attorney for Personal Care? If yes, do you have access to the documents? When was the last time you reviewed and/or updated your POA?

\*If the person who has Power of Attorney is the Person(s) who caused harm, discuss options of revoking the POA and make new legal documents if the older adult is capable of making this decision.

*Questions about Physical Health and Mobility:*

- If you have a physical disability, are there physical barriers in your environment that would prevent a safety exit or access to safety?
- Do you require help for activities of daily living, such as bathing, getting out of the house, making meals, and dressing? If so, who helps you to manage them?

*Questions about Documentation and Personal Information:*

- Do you have papers about your legal status in Canada, including sponsorship, permanent residence (PR), or citizenship? (e.g. PR card, Birth Certificate, Passport)
- Do you have access to a mobile phone or vehicle?



## **XX. Additional safety considerations in cases of Forced Marriage**

- Has anyone else in your family experienced forced marriage?
- Has anyone avoided being forced into a marriage in the family? If yes, what happened?
- Is the client being highly monitored (physical movement, social media, phone, computer, email, etc?)
- Do you have access to her ID and passport?
- Are male family members, siblings/father/uncles extremely controlling?
- Are there any plans to travel abroad? –if yes, which country?
- Have you been there before? When how long ago?
- Do you know if the country has exit Visa requirements?
- Can you bring or get access to a SIM card in the country and make phone calls?
- Is there someone you trust where you are going?
- Is there a nearby Canadian embassy?
- Are there contacts within the client’s community who may pose a risk or are supportive? Who can provide support and how?
- What is your biggest fear? What do you think can happen?
- What can be done now?

## **XXI. Additional safety considerations in cases of Economic Coercion or Human Trafficking**

- Keep all important documents and identification in your possession at all times. You may consider scanning them and emailing these to yourself.
- Make sure you have a cell phone or phone card to communicate with a trusted person.
- Try to memorize some important phone numbers, including the number of someone you trust and can contact if you need help and support.

- ❑ Do not allow anyone to have access to your bank account or any medication that you might need to take in a regular basis. (Open a separate bank account if you don't have one in your name)
- ❑ If an environment, location, or situation makes you suspicious or nervous, try to remove yourself from the situation if you can.
- ❑ If your partner or someone else asks you to do things you do not like or you are not comfortable about (photographing or videotaping sexual activity, nudity, forceful sex acts, engaging in sex acts with strangers or friends, abusing drugs), try to remove yourself from the situation and seek help.
- ❑ If you think you are in immediate danger call 911, you also can contact the National Human Trafficking Hotline 24-hour at 1-888-3737-888.