



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Justice**  
Court and Tribunal Services

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# Safe Steps

For those experiencing violence  
in a relationship

*Safe Steps*

Our relationships and families are meant to provide us with love, support and a sense of safety.

But there are many adults and children in Australia who live with someone who hurts, frightens or controls them.

This is not OK.

If you are afraid of a partner, a family member, or someone else, there are steps you can take to help keep you and your children safe.

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**Do you need an interpreter?  
The Telephone Interpreter  
Service is a free interpreting  
service for people with little  
or no English. Call 131 450**

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# Is This Family Violence?

Sometimes people are unsure if what is happening to them is family violence.

Family violence is not always physical – it might be behaviour that puts you down, makes you feel worthless or controls you. It includes coercion, financial control and emotional abuse.

It can be hard to believe that a person who you love and trust can hurt you.

## These questions can help you recognise the warning signs.

### Does your partner, spouse, carer or family member:

- Make you feel uncomfortable or afraid?
- Often put you down or make you feel bad about yourself?
- Constantly call or text to find out what you're doing?
- Make you feel scared of saying 'no' to them?
- Get possessive and jealous if you talk to others?
- Stop you having any money?
- Try to control who you see and where you go?
- Constantly check what you do on your phone or online?
- Scare you by being violent?
- Threaten to hurt you, your children, pets or others?
- Threaten that you will never see the children again if you leave?
- Make you do sexual things you don't want to?

Family violence does affect children. Even if they do not see or hear it they know it is happening. They may feel frightened or helpless. They may try to protect you or even think it is their fault.

**Remember, abuse is never your fault. Please don't feel ashamed and never blame yourself.**

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# Family Violence Is Not OK

Family violence is behaviour that in any way controls or dominates a family member and causes them to feel fear for their safety, or that of another family member.

**Get legal help as early as possible. A legal service or lawyer can help you understand the law, your options and help you with Court.**

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## Gathering Support

**It can be hard to know what to do when someone is abusive.**

It is understandable if you feel confused, frightened or overwhelmed.

You might hope the violence will stop, be afraid for your children, or worry about what will happen if you leave. You might feel that you don't have any options.

You are not alone.

There are people and services that can support you. You can get information and resources to help you work out what your options are.

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## In A Relationship

**There are many reasons why you might not be able to end a relationship.**

You might choose to stay because you hope things will get better. You might not know how you can end it, or you might feel it is too dangerous to leave.

If you stay, it is important to know what options are available to keep you and your children safe.

**Trust your feelings. If you feel something is wrong, there is something wrong.**

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# What Are My Options?

## Seek Support

Speak to a trusted friend or family member, a medical professional or a family violence service. Having somebody to talk to can help you cope with the effects of family violence and help you work out how to be safe.

## Gather Information

Learn about family violence and the effects it might have on you and your children. Find out about the people and the service that may be able to help you.



### Tech Tip

#### Use A Safe Computer

If you are looking for information about family violence or services, use a computer at a public library, school or university, community centre, neighbourhood house or internet cafe. If you are using your mobile phone, delete your history from your web browser or call list.

If you don't know how to delete history, you can easily find steps on Google or go to the following websites for additional tips on how to keep safe when using technology:

[www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)  
<https://techsafety.org.au>

## Make A Safety Plan

Think about and write down the things that you can do to improve your safety and the safety of your children.

See page 22.

## Keep A Record

It is important to keep a record or diary of the family violence incidents.

See page 9.

## Thinking About Separating?

Leaving a relationship can be difficult.

Deciding whether or not to separate can take time. Get advice, organise the practical things and work out how to separate safely.

### Seek Legal Advice.

Think about speaking to a lawyer about what the law says about your safety, relationship, children, money and property. This can help answer any questions or concerns that you may have about your rights and options.

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# How Can The Law Help Me?

## Police

If you have been threatened or someone has used violence against you, you can call or go to your local police station. Even if you are not ready to end the relationship, the police can take action to protect you.

The police may issue a Police Order which can provide temporary but instant protection for you. The Police Order is time limited and includes the details of when it will expire. It provides time to allow you the opportunity to obtain a Family Violence Restraining Order.

### The police may be able to:

- Arrest or hold the abusive person in custody;
- Charge the person with a criminal offence; or
- Refer you to appropriate services.

**If you are in immediate danger, call 000 and ask for the police.**

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# Family Violence Restraining Order

**A Family Violence Restraining Order can order a person to stop using violence against you or your children. An Order can have a range of conditions applied to suit your situation.**

You can apply for a Family Violence Restraining Order through your local Magistrates Court. A lawyer can provide legal advice and help you apply for an Order.

The court's Family Violence Service is a free service for those who have experienced family violence and need assistance with court matters. The service can help you when you are applying for an Order, discuss any safety concerns you may have for you or your children, provide support and information, and refer you to other services.

The person does not get a criminal record if you take out an Order against them. But if they disobey the conditions of the Order they can be charged with a crime.

For more information on Family Violence Restraining Orders and how to apply, visit: [www.magistratescourt.wa.gov.au](http://www.magistratescourt.wa.gov.au)

**Ending a relationship does not always mean that you need to leave your home, but for some people leaving home may be the safest option.**

**Speak to the Family Violence Service on 1800 600 476 to get advice and support.**

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## Gathering Evidence

When speaking to the police or the court to get a Family Violence Restraining Order, you may need to show that:

- You and/or your children have experienced family violence;
- It is likely that the family violence will happen again;
- You need a Family Violence Restraining Order to keep you and/or your children safe.

There are some things that might make it easier to tell your story such as:

- A diary of the dates, times and details of what has happened to you and/or your children.
- Photos, text messages, emails, phone call history, or letters that support what you're saying.
- Documents such as medical reports, police reports and statement, and legal documents.
- Witnesses – other people who have seen or heard things that confirm what you are say.

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## What Happens If A Person Breaches A Family Violence Restraining Order?

When a person disobeys a Family Violence Restraining Order or Police Order it is called a 'breach'. This is against the law.

Each time a person breaches the Order, report it to the police. Tell them the time and date and what happened. Request a Incident Report number and keep it in a safe place.

It is important you keep any evidence that shows the person has breached the Order. This might include notes you've made, photos, text messages, emails, social media posts and details of any witnesses.

# Collecting Evidence Diary Page

Include clear, short facts about exactly what happened as though you are telling police or a magistrate. Write down the exact words, actions and behaviours used.

Date of incident ...../...../.....

Location .....

What happened? .....

## Were the children present?

(this includes anywhere in the home)

Yes No

Did they see or hear the effects of the incident? Yes No

What did they see or hear? .....

## Were there witnesses?

Name .....

Contact .....

What did they witness? .....

Did you report this to the police

Yes No

Name and registered number .....

Location of police station .....

What actions were taken? .....

Did you attend any medical appointments as a result of the incident?

Name .....

Type of appointment .....

Date attended ...../...../.....

## Include supporting evidence

(photos, letters, documents, reports, emails, texts, social media activity)

Police action could include: talking with you or other people involved, taking a statement, referring you to a service, issuing or applying for a Family Violence Restraining Order, arresting or charging the offender.

## Safety Tips - Making A Safety Plan

### At Home

#### If You Live Together

- Prepare a way to escape in case you need to leave quickly
- Be aware of where the safest room in the house may be
- Be aware of what household items could be used as weapons
- Prepare and keep a bag of important items in a safe place or with a trusted person, such as money, keys, bank cards, documents, clothes, toiletries, medication, toys

If you are in immediate danger, call **000** and ask for the police.

#### If You Do Not Live Together

- Change the locks and consider putting in deadlocks, window locks, security screens, sensor lights, or alarms and make sure everyone in the house uses the security
- Be aware of anybody following you when you are driving home
- Ask neighbours to tell you if they notice strange activity around your house
- Have your mail sent to another address or PO Box
- If possible, do not park on the street and be careful moving between your car and house
- Keep a record or diary of the family violence or any strange events



#### Self Care Tip

The most important thing you can do for yourself or your children is to look after yourself.

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# Safety Tips – Making A Safety Plan

## At Home

### If You Have Children

- Talk with your children about how to keep safe in an emergency. Children should only need to worry about their own safety plan (like having a hiding place or a neighbour's house they can go to) unless they are older and can handle more responsibility
- Make sure your children know their address, how to phone the police, and what to do if they feel scared or upset
- Consider if it is safe for your children to spend time with the person who is abusing you
- Speak to a lawyer as soon as possible about your rights and responsibilities
- Arrange handover of children to the other parent in a public place and take along a supportive person
- Speak to a lawyer if you're concerned about safety during contact visits

### With Family And Friends

- Agree on a code, word/sentence to use with trusted friends and family if you feel in danger
- Let trusted friends, family and/or neighbours know about what is happening
- Prepare and keep a bag of important items in a safe place or with a trusted person, such as money, keys, bank cards, documents (ie passports, marriage certificate, birth certificates, prescriptions), clothes, toiletries, medication and toys
- Include trusted friends and family in your safety plan

## At Work

- Tell your employer (if you feel comfortable), they may be able to help to keep you safer
- Talk to a manager you trust about your options such as family violence leave, flexible work, hours / arrangements, changing your roster or working at another site
- Let your workplace know that they should not give out your contact details
- You could ask you workplace to block calls from the abusive person

## Out And About

- Change regular appointments and routines that the abusive person knows about (such as where you do your shopping, or how you get to school to pick up the children)
- Carry a personal alarm and use it if you feel threatened
- Keep your car locked at all times
- Park in well-lit public areas or a secured garage
- Be aware of anybody following you and have a plan in case you are followed (eg drive to the nearest police station)
- If you need to attend court, ask the court, police, lawyer or support service how you can stay safe getting to court, at court and leaving court
- If you still need to see the abusive person, have a supportive person with you
- If taking public transport, you can let the guard/driver know if you are unsafe

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# Safety Tips – Making A Safety Plan

## At School/Studies

- Let you/your children’s school know about any safety issues and ask them not to give out any contact details.

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## Other Tips

- Take threats seriously and report them to the police
- Keep a record or diary of the family violence and any other events that make you feel scared or frightened
- Open new bank accounts
- Keep a list of important telephone numbers that you might need or save them to your phone so you can quickly search and find the numbers.
- Change your passwords on your computer, laptop and mobile regularly
- Keep important papers (or certified copies) in a safe place or with a trusted person, such as birth certificates, passports, licence, Medicare card, health care card, bank account details, prescriptions, children’s immunisation records, immigration documents, Family Violence Restraining Orders and family court paperwork etc
- Make sure doctors, lawyers, banks, telephone companies, teachers, the Australian Electoral Commission and other services know they must keep your personal information safe
- Ask Centrelink whether you can apply for a crisis payment, what other payments you can apply for and how they can help keep you safe
- If necessary, talk to a lawyer or to the Department of Births, Deaths and Marriages about changing your identity



### Self Care Tip

#### Support

Spend time with people who make you feel good. Find a support group of other people who meet regularly or get involved with community activities or courses.

*making a safety plan*

## Using Technology Safely

### How do I stay safe online and on my phone?

Your computer and phone, social networks and email services can be helpful and useful, but they can also be used by an abusive person to monitor, control or harass you.

Finding ways to create technology more safely is important.

### Using A Computer

#### Use A Safer Computer

Use the computer at a public library, school or university, community centre, neighbourhood house or internet café. This way, the abusive person cannot access your browsing history or install spyware.

#### Create A New Email Account

A safe email account is important as it often acts as the contact point for your online accounts. Create new accounts on a safer computer – do not create or check these accounts from a computer that the abusive person could access. Make sure you sign out of all your accounts completely when you have finished.

### Keep Anti-Virus Software Up-To-Date

This can help you identify and remove any unknown programs that may be used to monitor you.



#### Tech Tip

**When using your home computer, it's not possible to completely delete your browsing history. Also, the abusive person may notice that you have deleted it.**

If you don't know how to delete history, you can easily find steps on Google or go to the following websites for additional tips on how to keep safe when using technology:

[www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)  
<https://techsafety.org.au>



#### Self Care Tip

#### Relaxation

Take the time to do the things you enjoy, such as reading, gardening or listening to music. Walk in the fresh air, or try meditation, breathing or relaxation exercises.

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# Using Technology Safely

## Using A Mobile Phone

### Get A New Phone

Be careful using a phone that the abusive person has had access to or that was part of a shared plan (including your children's phones). If you can, think about getting a new phone.

### Change Your PIN

Change your PIN regularly and set your phone to 'lock' the handset when you are not using it.

### Check Your Phone Settings

Understand the privacy and security settings of the phones and apps you and your children use. You might want to switch off phone functions that someone can use to track you such as:

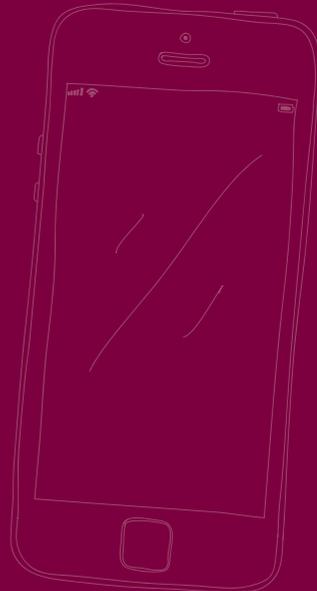
- mobile data, wireless internet, location tracking, GPS and Bluetooth – maybe turn off your phone when you are not using it
- turn off settings on your phone's camera that show your location
- turn off or delete the 'find my phone' function
- say 'no' when an app requests your location
- turn off notifications showing on your 'lock' screen

### Clear Your 'Recent Calls' List

You can clear these so that they do not appear in your mobile phone.

### Consider Using A Prepaid Phone

If the abusive person can access your mobile phone bills, they may be able to see who you have called. Consider using a prepaid phone card.



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# Using Technology Safely

## Using Social Networking Accounts

### Create New Social Networking Accounts

Don't use a computer that the abuser can access, and make sure you sign out of all your accounts when you have finished.

### Change your passwords and passcodes (and your children's)

Choose a new, 'strong' password that cannot be guessed (a mix of letters, numbers and special characters) and provide security questions and answers that no one else knows.

### Check your privacy and security settings (and your children's)

Set your privacy settings as high as you can to stop people seeing what you post or what others post about you, and check these settings regularly. Block unwanted people. For more information, visit:

[www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)  
<https://techsafety.org.au>

### Google Yourself

See what private information about you can be found online. Go to Google and do a search for your name in quotation marks: "your full name".

### Report Abuse

Take screen shots of abusive messages or harassment and save this. Report the abuse to police and to the social networking site.



#### Tech Tip

### Trust your instincts.

If you suspect the abusive person has information about you that you have not told them, it is possible that they are monitoring your phone, computer, email, car use or other activities.

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# Caring For Yourself

Being with someone who hurts, frightens or controls you can affect your health and wellbeing.

## Perhaps you've noticed:

- tense muscles, headaches, rapid breathing and heart rate
- difficulties sleeping, fatigue, nightmares
- withdrawing from others, avoiding situations that you think are stressful
- feeling worried or confused, angry or irritable, overwhelmed or helpless
- feeling like you can't cope
- losing your self confidence
- struggling to concentrate, remember or make decisions
- smoking, drinking or using more drugs than usual
- having a negative attitude towards yourself and life.

These are normal reactions. But over time they can lead to depression, anxiety or other mental health issues. It is important to get help.

Think about speaking to a medical professional, or counsellor – there are free, confidential services available.

**These feelings are normal. But if you feel that it is too difficult or these emotions continue over a long time, it is important to get help.**



## Self Care Tip

### Be Kind To Yourself

A simple rule can be 'Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to anyone else'.

*caring for yourself*

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# What Support Is Available?

## Police

If life is at threat, call 000

Tel: 131 444

## Crisis Care

Tel: 9223 1111

Country Tel: 1800 199 008

(telephone information and counselling,  
24 hours)

## 1800RESPECT

Tel: 1800 737 732

(telephone counselling, 24 hours)

[www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)

### Kids Helpline

1800 551 800

### Men's Domestic Violence Helpline

9223 1199 and 1800 000 599

### Women's Domestic Violence Helpline

9223 1188 and 1800 007 339

## Womens Health And Family Service

Tel: 6330 5440

Email: [info@whfs.org.au](mailto:info@whfs.org.au)

[www.whfs.org.au](http://www.whfs.org.au)

## Multicultural Women's Advocacy And Support

Tel: 9328 1200

Email: [mwas@whfs.org.au](mailto:mwas@whfs.org.au)

## Women's Information Service

Tel: 1800 199 174

## Djinda Services

Tel: 6164 0650

(support to Aboriginal women and  
children in the Perth area)

[www.relationshipswa.org.au](http://www.relationshipswa.org.au)

## Entrypoint Perth

Tel: 6496 0001

Tel: 1800 124 684

(assessment and referral service assisting  
people who are homeless or at the risk of  
homelessness)

[www.entrypointperth.com.au](http://www.entrypointperth.com.au)

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# What Support Is Available?

## Sexual Assault Resource Centre

Tel: 6458 1828

Tel: 1800 199 888

(medical care, counselling for current and past assault, 24 hours)

## Legal Aid

Tel: 1300 650 579

(infoline for free information about the law, Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

[www.legalaid.wa.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.wa.gov.au)

## Women's Legal Service

Tel: 9272 8800

Tel: 1800 625 122

[www.wlswa.org.au](http://www.wlswa.org.au)

## Community Legal Centres

Tel: 9221 9322

[www.communitylaw.net](http://www.communitylaw.net)

## Aboriginal Family Law Services

Tel: 1800 469 246

## Mental Health Emergency Response Line

Tel: 1300 555 788 (metro)

Tel: 1800 676 822 (Peel)

(provides support and advice for people in the metro area experiencing a mental health emergency)

## Telephone Interpreter Services

Tel: 131 450

## Department of Justice, Western Australia

### Family Violence Service

Tel: 1800 600 476

Email:

[familyviolenceservice@justice.wa.gov.au](mailto:familyviolenceservice@justice.wa.gov.au)

[www.justice.wa.gov.au](http://www.justice.wa.gov.au)

Please click on Court Tribunal Support Services.

Department of Communities' website includes a range of useful information about family and domestic violence. For further help and advice, information about services and useful factsheets, go to:

[www.communities.wa.gov.au](http://www.communities.wa.gov.au)

Please click on Family and Domestic Violence Help.

# My Safety Plan

## Important Numbers

Police: 000

Crisis Care: 9223 1111 or  
1800 199 008

My local family violence service:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

## Other Emergency Contacts

What other services or people  
can help me? (eg. Family violence  
services, support workers, police)

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

## Safe Place

Where to go if I'm in danger  
(24/7 options)

.....  
.....  
.....

How to get there

.....  
The safest place in the house if I'm  
unable to leave  
.....  
.....

## Emergency Support Person

People who can help or support  
me in a crisis (eg. Family, friend,  
neighbour)

.....  
.....  
.....

How will I contact them?

.....  
.....  
.....

## Tech Safety Checklist

- Safe mobile phone
- Safe passcode
- Safe phone settings
- Safe computer

Where .....

- Safe email account
- Safe social networking use
- Safe passwords (bank, online services,  
email, social networking sites)
- Children – safe mobile phone, computer,  
email and social networking accounts

## Safety Plan For Child/Children

(children should only need to worry about their own safety, unless they are older and can handle more responsibility).

People who can help my children in an emergency and places they can go

.....

.....

Do they know what to do if they feel unsafe?

Instructions for key contact people (eg. School teacher, childcare worker)

.....

The safest place in the house if I'm unable to leave

.....

## Checklist Of Important Items

### Contents for my emergency escape bag

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Money  | <input type="checkbox"/> Important documents or certified copies (identification, licences, bank account details and cards, copies of birth certificates, Medicare card, passports, immigration documents, Health Care card, Centrelink information, Family Violence Restraining Orders and family court paperwork, children's immunisation records, prescriptions etc) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transport                                    |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safe mobile phone or change for public phone |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spare set of house/car/other keys            |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medication                                   |   |

A safe, accessible place I can hide these items

.....

Safe location to store this safety plan

.....

## My Notes

Visit Safe at Home for more info about staying safe [www.safeathome.org.au](http://www.safeathome.org.au)

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