

Safety When Living on Your Own

Upgrade your security system

Change the locks on the doors and windows as soon as possible. Consider engaging a security service to install a home alarm, security sensor lighting at the front and back door, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and a peek hole in the front door.

See if you have a Staying Home Leaving Violence service in your area. The WASH House currently has a Staying Home Leaving Violence worker who you can talk to about your situation.

Do a safety audit of your home

Walk around your home and check all the entrances, including doorways, windows and anything that is not secure. Make a note of what needs to be fixed and arrange for this to occur as soon as possible. You should also check outside including the backyard and back door, fencing, gates and garbage storage areas. Can anything be done to make these areas more secure? For example, a bell on the front or back gate can alert you to anyone entering.

Other things to consider are: Is the house number visible from the street so it can be easily found by Police? Are there bushes in the yard that can be trimmed so that no-one can hide in them? Does the letter box have a lock on it so your mail cannot be stolen?

Home audit checklist

- Intruder alarm system installed
- All doors and windows secure
- Peek hole installed
- House number visible from the street
- Telephone pre-programmed for emergency numbers
- Answering machine to screen calls
- Garage can be locked
- All gates can be secured
- Power board cabinet able to be locked
- Letter box can be locked
- Outside sensor lights installed
- Telephone lines tamper proof

Have a safety plan

A safety plan will help you have a better sense of control over the situation for yourself and your children. When you have a safety plan you create options and choices for yourself that give you ways to reduce the danger. You may never have to

use your plan however having one that you update regularly with each change of circumstance will give you great peace of mind.



An Australian Government Initiative

You could make a safety plan yourself or ask someone from a domestic violence service to help you. The important thing about a safety plan is to include all the places and times when you feel unsafe. This should include times when the children could be unsafe and those times when you are in a public space, like the supermarket, post office or the pub. It is also important that people at work know what is happening so decide who you think can support you. This person does not need to know the whole story but they need to know which calls to block and they may need to limit who is allowed to see you while you are at work.

In your safety plan you need to think and plan clearly. Ask yourself, **when do I feel unsafe? What risks have I identified? How have I been managing these risks up to now?**

For each location or situation, complete a plan with strategies you will use. Don't forget to think about:

- Home
- Work
- The shopping centre
- The kids
- Social situations (the pub, the gym etc)

Location or situation:
I will use the following prevention strategies... <ul style="list-style-type: none">••••••

Use this same method for each location or situation. It does not matter if you have a lot of situations as long as you have a plan for each that will work for you.

Change your phone number

Screen your calls if you have an answering machine and caller ID. Save all messages which include threats or that violate any orders. Contact your local phone company about getting an unlisted number. Be selective about who you give your new contact details to and ask family and friends to keep them confidential.

Talk to neighbours and landlords

Inform them that the abuser no longer lives with you and that they should call the police if they see the abuser near your home.

Children

Talk to the school and child care centre your children attend. Also talk to your work about the circumstances of your children. Let each of them know your situation and who has permission to pick them up or walk them home.

Teach your children or grandchildren how to call the police or someone they can trust. Teach them what to say when they make these calls.

Have a secret code word that you and your children agree on to communicate trouble and for people who are allowed to pick them up.

Teach your children to be able to say their full name and address as well as how to use the telephone to contact the police and say, "someone is hurting my mummy/daddy/sister/brother".

Teach the children where to go in the house during a violent incident, how to get out of the house (backdoor or a low window) and where to go if they leave the house if you are being attacked.

Get legal advice and contact domestic violence support services

Find a solicitor, legal aid service or women's domestic violence service to explore custody, visitation and divorce provisions that protect you and the children. Discuss getting a restraining order as an option. Talk to domestic violence service agencies for support, legal advice, resources and information. These are confidential services.

Find out about support services in your local area.

Family Violence Service

9677 9628

WASH House

9677 1962

Blacktown Women and Girls Health Centre

9831 2070

Mt Druitt Community Health Centre

9881 1200

DV crisis cards are available at these services that are small and discrete and contain important numbers you may need.