Planning to Leave

Are you at-risk of or experiencing domestic violence? Are you thinking of leaving your relationship? Has the situation gotten worse and you need to leave immediately?

This info sheet talks about making a safety plan before you leave and what to think about if you must leave in an emergency.

Make a Plan

Talk to someone you trust

This may be a family member, friend, co-worker or spiritual advisor. Share with them what is happening in your relationship and talk to them about how they can help you stay safe. Sharing will help you feel less alone and give you support in getting help to do what's best for you and your family.

Create a Safety Plan

A safety plan outlines what to do if you need to leave in a hurry:

1. Where will you go?

Make a list of safe places you can go. Ask trusted family, friends or neighbours if you can stay with them if you decide to leave your home. You can go to an emergency shelter.

2. How will you get there?

Think about how you can get away quickly. Will you call someone to come get you? Or take a taxi or public transit? Do you have a bus pass or bus tickets?



Find an emergency shelter by calling the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters hotline at 1.866.331.3933 or visiting **www.acws.ca**

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3. What should you bring with you?

If you have time to collect belongings, try to take with you:

- health care cards
- birth certificates
- passports and immigration documents
- marriage certificate
- debit and credit cards, and other banking information
- keys
- medication and prescription eyeglasses
- insurance policies
- change of clothing
- items that will comfort your children
- irreplaceable mementos or items of emotional value

4. Do you need a protection order?

If you fear for your safety, you may be able to apply for a protection order from the court. These kinds of orders can require the person causing harm to stay away from you and your children. It can require the person to stay away from the family home, your work and other places you regularly go, and to stop communicating with you.

An **Emergency Protection Order (EPO)** is a protection order for emergency situations. You can get an EPO 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Remember that a protection order is only valid and enforceable in Alberta. If you leave the province, the order will no longer apply.

5. Have you talked to your children?

If you think your children are mature enough to understand, talk to them about what they should do in an emergency. Doing so is important for their safety and yours.

Think about creating **code words** to use with your children and trusted family and friends. Code words can help you safely communicate in an emergency.



For more information on protection orders, see the **Keeping the Abuser Away info sheet** at: **www.willownet.ca**

See the **Emergency Protection Orders info sheet** for more information on EPOs at: **www.willownet.ca**

Find more information about safety planning on the Government of Alberta website: **bit.ly/3nfkMO4**

6. Do you need help with money?

Do you have savings? Do you need emergency financial help? See the **Help with Finances info sheet** in this series for more information, available at www.willownet.ca.

Make sure you know who to contact if you need to protect your banking info – such as changing passwords or pins and removing other people's access to your account.

7. Do you have children?

If you have children and decide to leave an abusive relationship, it is important to consider the laws about parenting. It is a good idea to get legal advice before leaving or as soon as you safely can after you do leave.

For more information, see the **Children and Parenting info sheet** in this series, available at www.willownet.ca.

8. Have more questions?

See the other info sheets in this series for more information on:

- getting exclusive possession of the family home
- ending your lease early, if you are renting your home
- going to the police and pressing charges

See also the last page of this info sheet for resources that can help you.

Leaving in an Emergency

Call the police

If you or your children are hurt or in danger, call 911. Tell the operator what is happening and follow their instructions.

Put your safety plan into action

If you need to flee an abusive relationship and you have a safety plan, put it into action. If you do not have a safety plan, call the Family Violence Info Line at 310.1818 for help.

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About CPLEA

The Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta is dedicated to making the law understandable for Albertans. We provide legal information on a wide variety of topics through our websites, print resources, workshops and more. For more information, visit our website: www.cplea.ca

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Legal Resource Centre of Alberta Ltd., Edmonton, Alberta

Operating as: Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta

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We would like to thank the Alberta Law Foundation and the Department of Justice Canada for providing operational funding, which makes publications like this possible.

Alberta LAW FOUNDATION

Department of Justice Canada
Ministère de la Justice Canada

Help is Available

Find more information about domestic violence and the other info sheets in this series on **WillowNet** – a CPLEA website about violence and abuse laws in Alberta. **www.willownet.ca**

- **Family Violence Info Line: 310.1818**
  Get help anonymously. Available 24/7 in over 170 languages.
- **Alberta Council of Women's Shelters: 1.866.331.3933 or www.acws.ca**
  Find a shelter in Alberta.
- **Victim Services Alberta: 780.427.3460 or www.alberta.ca/victim-services-units.aspx**
  Connect with local supports.
- **Court and Justice Services: www.alberta.ca/court-and-justice-services.aspx**
  Get help finding court forms or information on the court process.
- **Community Legal Clinics in Alberta: www.lawcentralalberta.ca/clinics**
  Get free legal advice if you earn a low income.
- **Legal Aid Alberta's Emergency Protection Order Program (EPOP): 1.780.422.9222 (Edmonton area) or 1.403.297.5260 (Calgary area) or www.legalaid.ab.ca/services/family-violence-matters/**
  Get free legal help applying for an EPO.

We want to know what you think!
To take our one minute survey:

- capture this QR code with your phone camera, or
- go to bit.ly/3g8tby9