

Bergen County has two lead Domestic Violence (DV) agencies and both have hotlines:

- Bergen County's **Alternatives to Domestic Violence** 201-336-7575
- **Center for Hope and Safety** 201-944-9600 www.hopeandsafetynj.org

Additional Bergen County Services are **Women's Rights Information Center** (WRIC) www.womensrights.org. Victim's Advocate works with all victims and survivors of crime. Being a women's center, there are a high number of women seeking services from WRIC that have been subjected to DV, Sexual Assault and other forms of exploitation. Direct line for this advocate during the Corona crisis is 201-731-6434. WRIC has also established a Self-Help Support Group through Zoom (pre-registration is required) on Friday afternoons. I will send more info when we fine-tune this process. We had our first one last Friday and had 8 participants. Expect it to grow.

Also in Bergen County <https://www.neveraloneagain.org/> **Never Alone Again** offers empathic support and other services for victims of DV.

NJ State DV Hotline is 1-800-572-SAFE (7233)

National DV Hotline is 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

Related **National** resources are

National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-4673

National Human Trafficking Resource Center 1-888-373-7888

While there are a plethora of organizations and web sites, these are the top three for reliable domestic violence resources:

- New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence <https://njcedv.org/> Will give info of every reputable DV service in NJ.
- National Network to End Domestic Violence <https://nnedv.org/>
- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence <http://www.ncadv.org/>

From NJCEDV:

The **National Domestic Violence Hotline's Deaf Videophone** is available to assist Deaf survivors at **1-855-812-1001**. You can also **chat or text with an advocate** by going to the **National Domestic Violence Hotline**, click on "Chat Now"; or text **LOVEIS** to **22522**.

Avoiding public spaces and working remotely can help to reduce the spread of COVID-19, but for many survivors, staying home may not be the safest option. Abuse is about power and control. During times of crisis, and especially forced isolation, incidents of domestic violence often rise, and violence may escalate. The following tips can help survivors plan for their safety during this crisis, and a potential quarantine with an abusive partner.

Remember that survivors are the experts on their own lives, and should be empowered to make their own decisions about what is best for them and their children.

Here are a few suggestions for survivors that may help this uncertain time feel a little bit safer:

- Create a safety plan. You and your partner may be told by either or both of your employers to work remotely to limit social interaction. Having a safety plan laid out can help you to protect yourself during this stressful time.
- Identify your partner's use and level of force so that you can better assess the risk of physical danger to you and your children.
- Identify safe areas of the house where there are no weapons and there are ways to escape. If arguments occur or your partner's behavior escalates, try to move to those areas.
- Don't run to where the children are, as your partner may try to hurt them as well.
- If violence is unavoidable, make yourself a small target. Dive into a corner and curl up into a ball with your face protected and arms around each side of your head, fingers entwined.
- If possible, have a phone accessible at all times and know what numbers to call for help. Try to memorize the phone number to your local shelter, or the statewide hotline (800-572-SAFE). If you fear your life is in danger,, call 911.
- Let trusted friends and neighbors know of your situation and develop a plan and visual signal for when you need help, such as turning on the porch light.
- Teach your children how to get help. Instruct them not to get involved in the violence. Plan a code word to signal to them that they should get help.
- Tell your children that violence is never okay, even when someone they love is being violent. Tell them that neither you, nor they, are at fault or are the cause of the violence, and that when anyone is being violent, it is important to stay safe.
- Practice how to get out safely. Practice with your children.
- Plan for what you will do if your children tell your partner of your plan, or if your partner otherwise finds out about your plan.
- Keep weapons like guns and knives locked away and as inaccessible as possible.
- Make a habit of backing the car into the driveway and keeping it fueled. Keep the driver's door unlocked and others locked — for a quick escape.
- Try not to wear scarves or long jewelry that could be used to strangle you.
- Domestic violence shelters are open, but in some locations, there may be limited availability due to COVID-19. So, consider alternatives such as staying with family or friends, staying in motels/hotels, or if no other options exist, sleeping in your vehicle. Be extra mindful of good hygiene practices if you're leaving as well – wash your hands regularly, avoid touching your face, minimize contact with surfaces that other people have had contact with, etc.

For friends and family of survivors

- **If you're a friend or family member of someone experiencing abuse, you may not be able to visit them in person during this COVID-19 crisis. Seeing someone you care about being hurt is stressful. Remind yourself that you can't make decisions for someone else, but you can encourage your loved one to think about their wellbeing, safety plan and practice self-care while they are in their home.**

Even if you are isolated, try to maintain social connections online or over the phone if it is safe to do so, and try to stick to your daily routine as much as possible.

If you would like to talk with an advocate, please call the New Jersey statewide hotline 24/7 at 1-800-572-7233 (SAFE). If you are unable to speak safely, you can log onto <https://thehotline.org> or text LOVEIS to 22522. Also, if you are Deaf and need support, please call the National Deaf videophone at 1-855-812-1001, which is also available 24/7.

This is the Safety Plan utilized by Women’s Rights Information Center. While no safety plan is a 100% guarantee, it can help reduce risk. Think of it like a car seatbelt; seatbelts increase one’s safety, but serious injury can still occur if one is in a car accident. (Also, if you need, we also have this Safety Plan in Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Macedonian, Polish, Russian, Spanish and Urdu:

SAFETY PLANNING – REDUCING YOUR RISK

No battered woman has control over her partner's violence, but women can and do find ways to reduce their risk of harm. This safety plan is a tool to assist you in identifying options, evaluating those options and committing to a plan to reduce your risk when confronted with the threat of harm or with actual harm.

There's no right or wrong way to develop a safety plan. Use what applies. Change it or add to it to reflect your particular situation. Make it your own, then review it regularly and make changes as needed.

If you can't find a safe place to keep a written safety plan where your partner won't find it, maybe you can ask a friend to keep a copy for you. If not, you can ask your local domestic violence program to keep your plan for you. Whether it's safe to *write down* your plan or not, it's still important to *make* one.

**You don't have to figure it all out on your own.
You can ask a domestic violence advocate for help.**

During an Explosive Incident

- If an argument seems unavoidable, try to stay in a room or area with an exit, and try to stay out of the bathroom, kitchen or anywhere near dangerous instruments, utensils or weapons.
- Practice how to get out of the home safely. Identify which windows, elevators or stairs would be best to use in a bad situation.

Being ready for a crisis:

I can get help

- I can tell _____ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear noises coming from my house.
- I can teach my children how to contact the police. I will make sure they know our address and telephone number. If I had a programmable phone, I can program emergency numbers and teach my children how to use the auto dial.
- If it is not possible to use the phone, I can teach my children how to go to a _____ (eg., neighbor, business, etc.) for help

I can use my judgment

- When I expect my partner and I are going to argue, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as _____. (Try to avoid the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons or in rooms without an outside exit.)
- I can also teach some of these strategies to some/all of my children, as appropriate.

Planning to Leave

- If I decide to leave, I will _____. (Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes would you use?)
- I can keep my purse and car keys ready and put them _____ so I can leave quickly.
- I will leave money and an extra set of keys _____ so I can leave quickly.
- I will keep copies of important documents or clothes _____.
- The domestic violence hotline number is _____. I can call it if I need shelter or information.
- If it's not safe to talk openly, I will use _____ as the code word/signal to my children that we are leaving, or to my family or friends that we are coming.
- I will use _____ as my code word with my children or my friends so they will call for help.
- I will keep important numbers and try to keep a charged cell phone at all times. Since my partner can learn who I've been talking to by looking at phone bills, I can see if friends will let me use their phones.
- I can leave my pets with _____.

- I will check with _____ and _____ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- I can increase my independence by opening a bank account and getting credit cards in my own name; taking classes or getting job skills; getting copies of all the important papers and documents I might need and keeping them with _____.
- I can rehearse my escape plan and, if appropriate, practice it with my children.
- Other things I can do to increase my independence include:

After I Leave

- I can change the locks on my doors and windows.
- I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.
- I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- I can install smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and put fire extinguishers on each floor in my home.
- I will teach my children how to use the phone to make a call and who to call if they are concerned about their safety.
- I can tell people who take care of my children, including their school, which people have permission to pick them up and make sure they know how to recognize those people.
- I will give the people who take care of my children, including their school, copies of custody and protective orders, and emergency numbers.

At Work and in Public

- I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and/or Employee Assistance Program about my situation.
- My workplace security office phone number is _____.
- I can ask my coworkers to screen my calls at work.
- When leaving work, I can _____.
- When traveling to and from work, I can vary my route.

- I can change my patterns— avoid stores, banks, doctor’s appointments, Laundromats, _____, and places where my partner might find me.
- I can tell _____ and _____ that I am no longer with my partner and ask them to call the police if they believe my children or I are in danger.

With an Order of Protection

- I will keep my order of protection _____. (Always keep it on or near your person, purse, car, home, workplace, children’s school/daycare, supportive family, close friends, religious advisor)
- I will give copies of my order of protection to police departments in the community in which I live and those where I visit friends and family.
- If my partner destroys my order of protection or if I lose it, I can get another copy from the court that issued it.
- If my partner violates the order of protection, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.
- I can call a domestic violence program if I have questions about how to enforce a court order or if I have problems getting it enforced.

Items to Take When Leaving (safety is the most important aspect when leaving but if you can gather important paperwork, it will make it easier for you)

- Identification for myself
- Birth certificates (self and children)
- Social Security cards
- School/vaccination records
- Money, checkbook, bank books, ATM cards, tax returns, credit cards
- Medication
- Keys - house, car, office
- Cell phone and charger
- Driver’s license/car registration
- Insurance papers
- Public Assistance ID/Medicaid Cards
- Passports, green cards, work permits
- Divorce or separation papers
- Lease, rental agreement or house deed
- Car/mortgage payment book
- Children’s toys, security blankets, stuffed animals
- Sentimental items, photos

My Emotional Health

- If I am feeling down, lonely or confused, I can call _____.
- I can take care of my physical health needs by getting a checkup with my doctor, gynecologist and dentist. If I don't have a doctor, I will call the local clinic.
- If I have concerns about my children's health and well-being, I can call _____.
- If I have left my partner and am considering returning, I will call or spend time with _____ before I make a decision.
- I will remind myself daily of my best qualities. They are:

_____.
- I can attend support groups, workshops, or classes at the local domestic violence program in order to build a support system, learn skills and get information.
- I will look at how and when I drink alcohol or use other drugs. If I need help around my drinking or drug use, I can call _____.
- I can read a book about domestic violence that was written for battered women.
- Other things I can do to feel stronger are:

_____.

Adapted from the *Personalized Safety Plan* developed by Office of the City Attorney, City of San Diego, CA, April 1990.

Technology and Safety

As a safety device, all cell phones have the ability to call 911 as long as they are charged, even if the service is disconnected.

Cyber/Electronic Stalking: An Abuser Can Discover Your Internet Activities

If you think your activities are being monitored, they probably are. Abusive people are often controlling and want to know your every move.

Many browsers have features that display recently visited sites. Your abuser could install hardware that tracks every keystroke you make, so not only will he know what websites you visit, but he can also track what you write in an email.

If you don't want anyone to know which Internet sites you have visited, consider using a computer at a local library, a friend's house or at work. Also, you can learn how to hide or delete the sites you visited from the computer history/cache file and install anti-virus and anti-spyware software on your computer.

If you think you are being monitored, it may be dangerous to change your computer behaviors such as suddenly deleting your entire Internet history. You may want to keep using the monitored computer for innocuous activities, like looking up the weather. Use a safer computer to research an escape plan, look for new jobs or apartments, bus tickets, or ask for help.

E-Mail: If an abuser has access to your e-mail account, he/she may be able to read your incoming and outgoing mail. If you believe your account is secure, make sure you choose a password that your abuser will not be able to guess.

If your abuser sends you threatening or harassing e-mail messages, they can be printed and saved as evidence of the abuse.

Cell Phones: Be aware that cell phones track incoming and outgoing calls, so you may want to constantly delete those records from your phone if you don't want anyone to know whom you've been in contact with. The cell phone bills also have detailed records of all calls made and received.

If your abuser leaves threatening message on your voicemail or sends you threatening texts, save them because they can be used as evidence of the abuse.

GPS (Global Positioning System) Devices: Most cell phones are equipped with a GPS chip that an abuser can use to track your location. Your phone company may have more information.

Your abuser could install a GPS in your car to learn your travel patterns including what time you left/arrived and what route you took. Some systems can allow someone, from a remote location, to unlock your doors, disable the starter, honk the horn and check your speed. The police or your mechanic *may* be able to locate a hidden GPS device in your car.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/07/opinion/coronavirus-child-abuse.html?searchResultPosition=1>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/24/us/coronavirus-lockdown-domestic-violence.html?searchResultPosition=5>