

Safety Planning Guide

With Children and Young People

Children and young people have a right to safety and freedom from violence. It's important when working with families experiencing domestic and family violence to develop safety plans and to ensure that any plans made are easily understood, comfortable and appropriate in relation to the physical and developmental age of the child or young person you are working with. Below are some questions to ask yourself about the child or young person you are working with to assess what kind of safety measures can be put in place.

Children



1. How can my child recognise when a situation or person is not safe.

- Does my child know what "not safe" means?
- Does my child know what feelings or signs in their body might tell them that they are feeling unsafe?
- Talk through the physiological symptoms of distress in the body. Eg. Would they feel worry in their stomach or fear in their chest?
- Can my child understand the reasons that safety plans need to be kept between a select few people?
- Are there any adults that my child feels are safe but I do not view them as safe? Consider ways to manage this.

2. Considerations for the adult wanting to make a safety plan with a child.

- What kind of situations might my child be in that could be unsafe? Eg. Court ordered contact visits with someone using violence.
- Do I know the physical layout of the space that the unsafe situation is likely to occur in?
- Do I have some suggestions ready for where a safe person, or safe place to go to in an emergency or even place to hide in might be?
- Am I able to take into consideration what my child views as safe and unsafe, even if this does not align with my ideas on this?
- Am I able to manage any thoughts, feelings or triggering topics that might come up for me while I am safety planning with my child?
- Is my child capable of taking action when needed in a situation or with a person they feel unsafe with, for example phoning 000 and or telling safe adults what has or is happening?
- Does your child know their full name and and home address?
- Can you provide your child with a phone they can use in times of emergency and keep in a safe place?



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3. Making a safety plan with your child.

- Are my child and I feeling okay enough to talk about this topic right now?
- Can we manage to find a solution together where we both feel as though this plan can be useful and we both agree to it?
- Can we practice this plan at home together to familiarise putting it in place? Even write it down together as a step by step list if needed.
- Make sure that the plan is as easy and specific as possible.
- Does your child need a go-bag packed for in case of emergency and if so do they know where it is if they need it in a hurry?
- Make a list of 5 safe adults with your child and talk to them about contacting these people in an emergency, going down the list until they are able to access a safe adult for assistance.
- Alert all relevant safe adults of your child's safety plan as needed such as the school, after/before school care, family and or friends houses where the child is likely to be often.
- Continually check in, review, revise and remind about the safety plan every few weeks if the plan has not needed to be used. Increase this frequency depending upon the level of current risk.
- Attempt to help your child not to be fearful of needing, having or using a safety plan. Normalise this process where possible and try to help your child understand the reasons why this plan might be needed one day.

Useful links:

1800RESPECT – Children and Young People

<https://www.1800respect.org.au/violence-and-abuse/children-and-young-people>

NAPCAN – Domestic and Family Violence Hurts Children Too Brochure

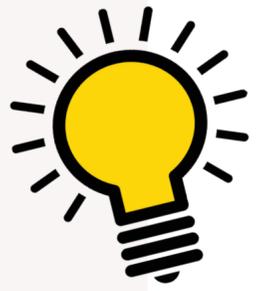
<https://www.napcan.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/FINAL-DVbrochure-NATIONAL-1.pdf>



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Young People



1. Can the young person recognize when a situation or person is not safe.

- Does the young person understand the need for safety?
- Does the young person know what feelings or signs in their body might tell them that they are feeling unsafe?
- Talk through the physiological symptoms of distress in the body. Eg. Would they feel worry in their stomach or fear in their chest?
- Talk with the young person about who is the likely person or situation that the safety plan is required for.
- Are you able to talk to the young person about their involvement, actions or reactions within an unsafe situation and the way that could impact or escalate the situation/person further?
- Is the safety plan in regards to harm from another person or self-harm?
- Does the young person need to support another child with their safety plan if they are present together in an unsafe situation or with an unsafe person?

2. What to think about for the adult making a safety plan with young person.

- What kind of situations might the young person be in that could be unsafe? E.g. being exposed to unsafe use of drugs or alcohol, physical or verbal abuse by an unsafe parent.
- Do I know the physical layout of the space that the unsafe situation is likely to occur in to better help the young person plan an exit?
- Do I have some suggestions ready for actions that the young person could take?
- Am I able to take into consideration what the young person views as safe and unsafe, even if this does not align with my own ideas?
- Am I able to manage any thoughts, feelings or triggering topics that might come up for me while I am safety planning with the young person?
- Does the young person have access to a means to be able to contact a safe person or emergency services as needed?
- What are the young person's attitude, values and belief around calling 000?
- Will enacting a safety plan put this young person at any further future risk?



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Young People

3.

Making a safety plan with the young person.

- Is the young person and myself feeling okay enough to talk about this topic right now?
- Can we manage to find a solution together where we both feel as though we get a say, this plan can be useful and that we can both agree to it?
- Can we practice this plan at home together to familiarize putting it in place? Even write it down together as a step by step list if needed.
- Make sure that the plan is as easy and specific as possible.
- Does the young person need a go-bag packed for in case of emergency and if so do they know where it is if they need it in a hurry?
- Does everyone who needs to know the safety plan in the young person's support network know about it?
- Continually check in, review, revise and remind about the safety plan every few weeks if the plan has not needed to be used. Increase this frequency depending upon the level of current risk or use of plan.
- Attempt to make the safety plan something that can be open for discussion at any time to help reduce fear and or anxiety around it.
- Using developmental age appropriate language, have an open and calm discussion about the reasons the safety plan is needed. During this discussion focus on "I worry..." statements to help the young person to understand concerns you might have and your reasoning for the importance of the safety plan.
- Listen to the young person and help support them with any worries about the plan.

