



**domestic violence
coalition**

of Lincoln and Lancaster County, Nebraska

**Information for
Protection Order
Applicants**

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PREFACE

This booklet was prepared by the Domestic Violence Coalition of Lincoln and Lancaster County, a consortium of criminal justice and human service agencies committed to public policies which reduce the incidence and impact of domestic violence in our community. The purpose of this booklet is to provide detailed information to victims of domestic violence and to victims of stalking about protection orders. While much of this information is generally applicable throughout Nebraska, readers should be reminded that exact procedures for applications, hearings, and enforcement of protection orders may vary somewhat among counties and judicial districts. Consult your local authorities for specific details about procedures in your area.

OVERVIEW OF PROTECTION ORDERS

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROTECTION ORDERS

What is a protection order?

A protection order is a special type of order issued by a judge which orders someone who has been harming another person to not harm that person again. Certain behaviors are typically forbidden by the order. They include:

- restraining or detaining you in any way
- threatening you
- assaulting or attacking you
- following or stalking you
- harassing you
- disturbing your peace

In some instances, he or she may even be prohibited from being in or around your residence. This is called an exclusionary order and must be specifically requested if you wish to have such a restriction imposed.

What happens if a protection order is ignored or violated?

It is a crime for a person served with a protection order to violate that order. The maximum punishment they could face is up to six months in jail and/or up to a \$1,000 fine.

ELIGIBILITY FOR PROTECTION ORDERS

Who can get a protection order?

Anyone who has been the victim of abuse by a family or household member, or anyone who has been stalked.

What is the definition of abuse?

Under Nebraska law, abuse means assaulting or attempting to assault someone or placing someone in fear of imminent bodily injury.

What is the definition of family or household member?

Persons who fit into any one or more of the following categories:

- currently married or have been married in the past
- currently living together or have lived together in the past
- have a child in common
- are related to the person by blood or marriage

PROTECTION ORDERS FOR VICTIMS OF STALKING

My relationship with the person I need protection from doesn't fit into any of the "family or household member" categories. What about stalking?

A protection order can be issued against someone who is stalking you or who has stalked you even if they do not fit into one of the categories listed above, such as a stranger or an acquaintance.

How is stalking defined?

Under Nebraska law, the crime of stalking is committed if someone willfully and maliciously harasses another person with the intent to terrify, threaten or intimidate that person. Harass is further defined to mean any series of acts over any period of time, no matter how short, which terrifies, threatens or intimidates another person including acts of following, detaining, restraining or repeatedly telephoning another.

CONTACT WITH THE ABUSER

If I get a protection order, does that mean all forms of contact are prohibited?

Not necessarily, although some orders may specifically prohibit contact. Many people need to have contact because of children, divorce proceedings, shared property, counseling sessions, etc. The key is that these contacts are not to include any abuse, threats, attacks, harassment or other offensive behavior.

If I want to continue to have contact with this person and even invite them over, is the protection order terminated?

No. A protection order can only be issued by a judge and can only be terminated by a judge.

If I invite the person over that I have a protection order against, am I in violation of that protection order?

No. The terms of a protection order are not mutual unless the court specifically makes them mutual. However, by obtaining a protection order, you are sending a message that you do not wish to have contact with this person. Although an invitation is not a violation of the protection order, you may be placing the person in violation, particularly if the order includes a provision that excludes him or her from your residence. It is also confusing to the respondent, the police, and the court for you to want a protection order for your safety and then initiate contact with the abusive person yourself or fail to report violations of the protection order.

Is it a problem if I want the order enforced on some occasions but decide not to on others?

Yes, it is a problem. You have a right to protection from abuse each and every day. This right brings with it a certain element of personal responsibility. If you want the order enforced only part of the time and allow the abusive person into your home when he or she is “good,” then call the police if they are “bad,” your credibility will be weakened. Inconsistent enforcement on your part jeopardizes the ability to prosecute violations, may make it harder to obtain a protection order in the future, and may adversely affect police response. It also communicates to the abuser that you are not serious in your determination to be safe. If you want the most out of your protection order, you need to be consistent in your efforts to enforce it by reporting every violation and by not initiating contact or tolerating contact that is unwanted.

I'm not sure I want to terminate this relationship, but I do want to somehow convince my partner that he or she needs to change his or her abusive behavior. Would a protection order help me or be a good idea?

If you want to maintain a relationship with someone, having a protection order issued against them may not be the best idea. Enforcement of protection orders is easiest and most effective when it is consistent. Enforcing protection orders is a top concern of law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, and the courts. It is very frustrating to members of those agencies when their time, energy, and precious resources are expended to enforce a protection order, only to find out later that the petitioner has changed his or her mind about enforcement of the order. Thus, it is very important for you to carefully consider all the information available and your own unique situation before deciding to apply for a protection order.

THE PROTECTION ORDER PROCESS

APPLICATION

Where do I obtain an application for a protection order?

From any of the following locations:

- District Court Clerk's Office
County-City Building, 3rd floor
441-7328
- Lincoln Police Department Victim/Witness Unit
233 South 10th Street
441-7181
- Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center
2545 N Street
476-2110

How long will it take to apply for a protection order?

It is about a two hour process to complete the forms, and for the application to be reviewed by the judge.

How much does it cost?

There is a filing fee, and the Sheriff's Office requires a deposit for the cost of serving the order. Fees are routinely waived for all applicants who do not have funds available. This is a simple process, and cost should not be a factor in your decision to apply.

Will I need a lawyer to get a protection order?

You are not required to have a lawyer to apply for a protection order, although you certainly may be represented by counsel if you wish.

How can I get help in applying for a protection order?

Although the application packet is designed so that no professional assistance is needed, we have found that it helps to have some guidance. The District Court Clerk is prohibited by law from assisting applicants in completing the forms. Assistance is available from the Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center and from the Lincoln Police Department Victim/

Witness Unit. Locations and telephone numbers are listed on the preceding page and in the appendix.

What will happen with my application?

The completed application will be taken before a District Court judge privately in chambers. The judge will read the application and take one of three actions:

- If the judge determines, based on your application, that an immediate risk of harm exists, he or she may issue an order immediately. If an order is issued at the time of application, the court will give you a certified copy, which you should keep with you at all times.
- In the alternative, the judge may decide that a hearing should be held before the order goes into effect, in which case, a hearing will be scheduled within two weeks.
- If the judge finds no factual basis for a protection order at all, he or she may dismiss the matter at this stage with no further action.

Since the judge's decision is based exclusively on your written application, it is imperative that you describe in detail recent violent acts or threats. A copy of the protection order will be delivered to the Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office is responsible for serving the order, that is, for delivering it personally to the individual whom the order is issued against.

If a protection order is issued, when will it be in effect?

The order is not in effect until it has been served by the Sheriff's Office.

How long will it take for the Sheriff's Office to serve the order?

Most orders are served within 24 hours of the time they are received by the sheriff. The ability of the Sheriff's Office to serve the order depends on the quality of the information you provide in your application. You should provide as much detail as you know about such things as:

- place of residence;
- physical description;
- description of motor vehicles he or she uses;
- place of employment and work schedule;
- other places he or she might be found.

How can I find out if the order has been served?

You can call the Lancaster County Sheriff's Office any time day or night to find out if the protection order has been served. Call 441-7724 for this information.

PROTECTION ORDER HEARINGS

What will happen next?

A hearing will be scheduled approximately two weeks after the initial application. The purpose of the hearing is to determine whether a protection order should be issued. If a protection order was already issued at the time of your application, the purpose of the hearing is to determine whether it should remain in effect.

When and where will the hearing be?

Hearings are usually scheduled at 1:30 p.m., in District Courtrooms number five or six, both of which are on the 4th floor of the County-City Building. The time, date, and location of the hearing will appear on the documents that are given to you by the court, and you should double check these.

Do I have to go to the hearing?

It is important for you to attend the hearing and be prepared to testify if necessary. If you do not appear at the hearing, the order might not be issued. If a protection order was already issued at the time of your application, but you do not appear at the hearing, there is a possibility that it will be dismissed.

Will the person I am seeking the protection order against be there?

He or she must be notified of the hearing and may attend and testify. This is not required, however. Experience shows that the adverse party appears in about 60% of the cases.

Will I have to see him or her or be present in the same room?

You might encounter him or her in the hallways, and if he or she attends, you will both be present in the courtroom at the same time. A waiting area for protection order applicants who arrive before the hearing time is available in the County Attorney's law library, across the hall from the cafeteria entrance. For safety purposes, the door is not marked, so if you need help finding the room, ask the staff in any of the 4th floor offices for directions. The sheriff's court security staff includes deputies who patrol the hallways adjacent to the courtrooms from time to time, and a uniformed deputy sheriff will be present in the courtroom.

Who else will be present at the hearing?

A District Court judge presides over the hearing. Court proceedings are open to the public. Several hearings may be scheduled during the same court session, so other applicants and people involved in those cases will usually be present.

What will happen at the hearing?

At the hearing, you will have the opportunity to testify. The judge will call you to the witness stand and will ask questions about your application and situation. The person that you are seeking to have the order issued against has a right to be heard as well, and if he or she comes to the hearing, will be allowed to testify. Immediately after the testimony at the hearing, the judge will announce his or her decision on whether the protection order will be issued. If an order was already issued at the time of your application, the judge will either decide to continue the order in effect or dismiss the order.

If the protection order is issued after the hearing for the first time, what will happen with it?

A certified copy of the protection order will be given to you before you leave the courtroom. You should keep this with you at all times. The deputy sheriff in the courtroom will also receive copies of the protection order, so that these may be served upon the other party immediately if he or she is present. Otherwise, the Sheriff's Office will attempt to serve the protection order as previously outlined. Copies of the protection order will also be delivered to the local law enforcement agency where you live.

When will the protection order be in effect?

If a protection order was already issued before the hearing and has been served by the Sheriff's Office, and at the hearing the judge decides to continue the protection order in effect, it simply remains in force without any further action. If there was no order in effect at the time of the hearing, or if the Sheriff's Office has not been able to serve the order, the protection order will be in effect as soon as the Sheriff's Office serves the order by personally delivering it to the person the protection order is issued against.

How long will the protection order be in effect?

Protection orders are valid for one year from the date of issuance. If you need protection beyond one year, you must apply for a new protection order.

ENFORCEMENT OF PROTECTION ORDERS

VIOLATIONS OF PROTECTION ORDERS

What constitutes a violation of a protection order?

It is a violation of the order when the party:

- imposes any restraint upon your person or liberty, such as grabbing you, holding you against your will, blocking your way, etc., or;
- threatens you, such as verbal threats in person, by telephone, or written threats in a note or letter;
- assaults, molests or attacks you by hitting, kicking, slapping, shoving, threatening you with a weapon or any other acts of physical violence;
- otherwise disturbs your peace, for example, calls you repeatedly to annoy you, follows you, accosts you, etc.

If he or she just shows up at a place where I am, is that a violation?

Just being present at the same place is not in itself a violation in most circumstances. Some orders, however, may exclude the person from specific places, such as your residence.

What if he or she drives by my residence or workplace, or follows me around?

While merely driving by on a public street would not ordinarily constitute a violation of the protection order, if this occurs repeatedly as a pattern of conduct, it may very well constitute a violation if it disturbs your peace. You should keep track of such incidents, in order to document the events, in case such a pattern develops. Write a note of the times, dates, and locations, and any other people who were present that saw the person. If this continues to occur, by all means report the conduct to law enforcement.

REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION OF VIOLATIONS

What should I do if he or she violates the protection order?

Contact your local law enforcement agency.

- In an emergency, call 911.
- If the incident has already occurred, is over, and there is no present risk, call the non-emergency number of the Communications Center, 441-6000. An officer will be dispatched when available.
- If you would just like to discuss matters with a law enforcement officer, contact the information and administration number:
 - Inside the Lincoln city limits, call the Lincoln Police Department, 441-7204.
 - Outside the Lincoln city limits, but within Lancaster County, and in all other Lancaster County cities and towns, call the Lancaster County Sheriff's Office, 441-6500.

What will officers do when I report a violation of the protection order?

Officers will investigate the crime like any other offense, by interviewing you, speaking to any witnesses, collecting any physical evidence that may be present, and by attempting to locate the suspect. Officers will attempt to interview the suspect, if he or she can be located. Officers may initiate a bulletin for the suspect if he or she cannot be immediately located.

ARRESTS FOR VIOLATIONS OF PROTECTION ORDERS

Will he or she be arrested?

If the investigation reveals sufficient evidence to conclude that the protection order has been violated, and the suspect can be located, he or she will be arrested. Alternatively, officers may seek an arrest warrant.

If the person is arrested, what will happen?

When a person has been arrested for violating a protection order, the law requires that he or she appear before a judge prior to being released. Suspects arrested in this county are

booked into jail, and except in unusual circumstances will be held there until their first court appearance.

PROTECTION ORDER VIOLATION CASES IN COURT

When will he or she go to court?

The defendant will ordinarily appear for the first time at the next scheduled County Court arraignment time and date. Usually this is at 2:00 p.m. on the next working day. This may be only the first of several court appearances, however, since additional dates may be set for further action on the case.

What happens when he or she goes to this first court appearance?

The purpose of the initial court appearance is for the defendant to enter a plea to the charge, to determine if there is sufficient grounds to hold the defendant, to establish conditions for the person's release from custody, and to set the next court appearance date. The conditions of release will probably include a provision that he or she have no contact with you. All defendants have a Constitutional right to bond, and bond must be set at a reasonable amount necessary to ensure the defendant's future appearance in court. Bond amounts are typically relatively small, and many defendants are released on their own promise to appear. It is unusual for defendants in misdemeanor cases to remain in jail very long after the initial court appearance.

Do I need to attend these court sessions?

No. You only need to attend if the case results in a trial. This would typically be several weeks after the initial court appearance. You will be notified in advance by letter and with a subpoena if your attendance is required for trial.

What will happen if he or she is found guilty of violating the protection order?

Violation of a protection order is a class II misdemeanor. The maximum penalty is six months imprisonment and a \$1,000 fine, but there is no minimum penalty. The actual sentence is set by the judge and varies from case to case. In practice, very few offenders receive maximum sentences. Many offenders ask for probation in lieu of a fine or jail sentence. In these cases, the judge may order the Probation Department to conduct a pre-sentence investigation, and sentencing may be delayed while this is done. Judges have wide latitude to establish conditions which the offender must follow if granted probation. These conditions can include such things as participating in treatment programs.

ASSISTANCE FOR VICTIMS

RESOURCES

Where can I get help in preparing a protection order application?

From the Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center or the Lincoln Police Department Victim/Witness Unit.

What about counseling, or just someone to talk to?

The Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center provides counseling, crisis intervention, and support groups.

If the need arises, where can I get shelter for myself and my children?

Friendship Home provides emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence and their children.

I need legal help, but I can't afford an attorney. Is there anyone who can assist me?

Yes. Legal Services of Southeast Nebraska provides legal assistance and referrals to those who cannot afford a lawyer in civil matters.

Are other kinds of help available?

Yes. Lincoln and Lancaster County have numerous human service agencies which may be able to provide specific kinds of assistance. The staffs of the Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center and the Lincoln Police Department Victim/Witness Unit will be able to advise you on many other kinds of help which may be appropriate to your circumstances.

FEES AND COSTS

How much do these services cost?

The services of the Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center and the Lincoln Police Department Victim/Witness Unit are offered free of charge. Almost all other kinds of human services in Lincoln and Lancaster County are offered either free or on an income-based sliding fee scale.

PLANNING FOR SAFETY

If I get a protection order, does this mean that I will be safe?

No. Although a protection order is definitely a good step, you must remember that it is only a piece of paper. Most abusers obey protection orders, but some do not. It is impossible to predict who will obey and who will violate a protection order. If your abuser violates the protection order, you could be assaulted before you are able to call law enforcement for assistance. You must take other steps to ensure your safety to the best of your ability. Protection orders also have some shortcomings.

What are those shortcomings?

For example, the law provides that a judge cannot exclude a person from his or her residence prior to a hearing, so you may need a safe place to stay until the hearing. Also, a protection order cannot contain provisions for temporary custody of any children or for child support. Your partner could continue to demand to see your children or take the children with him or her if custody has not already been established in Domestic Relations Court.

What can I do to protect myself?

One of the best things you can do is to complete a Personal Safety Plan and to update it regularly. This will help you make decisions in advance which will maximize your safety. A Personal Safety Plan is attached to this booklet as an appendix.

I don't think my abuser will continue to be a problem after the protection order is issued. Why do I need a Personal Safety Plan?

You cannot predict the future. The best indicator of the possibility of future violence is past behavior. Anyone who has been the victim of violence needs to consider the strong possibility that there will be a continuing risk in the future. A safety plan is an excellent precaution.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Lincoln Police Department

EMERGENCY 911
 to request police in a non-emergency situation 441-6000
 to discuss matters or obtain general information 441-7204

Lancaster County Sheriff's Office

EMERGENCY 911
 to request sheriff in a non-emergency situation 441-6000
 to discuss matters or obtain general information 441-6500
 to determine if protection order has been served 441-7724

Lancaster County Attorney's Office 441-7321

Clerk of the District Court 441-7328

CRISIS INTERVENTION AND ADVOCACY

Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center, 2545 N Street

24-hour crisis line 475-7273
 office 476-2110

Lincoln Police Department Victim/Witness Unit 441-7181
 233 South 10th Street

EMERGENCY SHELTER

Friendship Home

emergency shelter 475-7273
 office 474-4709

COUNSELING AND SUPPORT GROUPS

Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center 2545 N Street

24-hour crisis line 475-7273
 office 476-2110

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Legal Services of Southeast Nebraska 435-2161

Name: _____

Date: _____

Review

Dates: _____

PERSONAL SAFETY PLAN

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility of further violence. Although I do not have control over my abuser's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to him or her and how to best get myself and my children to safety.

Step 1: Safety during a violent incident.

Victims of abuse cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, you may use a variety of strategies.

I can use some or all of the following strategies:

- A. If I decide to leave, I will _____.
(Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, fire escapes, etc., would you use?)
- B. I can keep my purse/wallet and car keys ready and put them
(place)_____ in order to leave quickly.
- C. I can tell _____ about the violence
and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from
my residence. I can also tell _____
and _____.
- D. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and the fire
department.
- E. I will use _____ as my code word with my
children or my friends so they can call for help.

F. If I have to leave my home, I will go to _____.
(Decide this even if you don't think there will be a "next time.")

If I cannot go to the location above, then I can go to _____ or _____.

G. I can also teach some of these strategies to some or all of my children.

H. When I expect we are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as _____. (Try to avoid arguments in bathrooms, garage, kitchen, near weapons, or in rooms without access to an outside door.)

I. I will use my judgement and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my abuser what he or she wants to calm him or her down. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

Step 2: Safety when preparing to leave.

Victims of abuse frequently leave the residence they share with the abuser. Leaving must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. Batterers often strike back when they believe that a victim is leaving a relationship.

I can use some or all of the following safety strategies:

A. I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____ so I can leave quickly.

B. I will keep copies of important documents at _____.

C. I will open a savings account at (bank) _____ by (date) _____ to increase my independence.

D. Other things I can do to increase my independence include:

_____.

E. The Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center's hotline number is 475-7273. I can seek shelter by calling this hotline.

F. I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, the following month the telephone bill will tell my

batterer those numbers that I called after I left. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I must either use coins or I might get a friend to permit me to use their telephone credit card for a limited time when I first leave.

- G. I will check with _____ and _____ to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- H. I can leave extra clothes with _____.
- I. I will sit down and review my safety plan every _____ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence.
_____ (domestic violence advocate or friend) has agreed to help me review this plan.
- J. I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.

Step 3: Safety in my own residence.

There are many things that you can do to increase safety in your own residence. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step.

Safety measures I can use include:

- A. I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
- B. I can replace hollow-core wooden doors with solid wood doors, or wooden doors with metal doors.
- C. I can make sure that the door frame is at least as strong as the door itself, and that all exterior doors have a good quality lock with a bolt that extends at least one inch into the door frame.
- D. I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against the doors, electronic alarm systems, etc.
- E. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from 2nd floor windows.
- F. I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.
- G. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my home.

- H. I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to _____ (friend, minister, etc.,) in the event that my partner takes the children.
- I. I will tell those who take care of my children which people have permission to pick up my children and that my partner is not permitted to do so. The people I inform about pick-up permission include:
- _____ (school)
 _____ (teacher)
 _____ (day care staff)
 _____ (babysitter)
 _____ (others)
- J. I can inform _____ (neighbor),
 _____ (pastor), and
 _____ (friend) that my partner no longer resides with me, and they should call the police if he is observed near my residence.

Step 4: Safety with a protection order.

Many batterers obey protection orders, but one can never be sure which violent partner will obey and which will violate protection orders. I recognize that I may need to ask the police and the courts to enforce my protection order.

The following are some steps that I can take to help the enforcement of my protection order:

- A. I will keep my copy of the protection order (location)
 _____. (Always keep on or near your person.)
- B. I will give a copy of my protection order to law enforcement agencies in the community where I work, where I live, and where I usually visit family and/or friends.
- C. I can check to make sure that my protection order has been served and is on file by calling the Lancaster County Sheriff, Civil Division, at 441-7724.
- D. I will inform my employer, my minister, my closest friend, and
 _____ and _____ that
 I have a protection order in effect.
- E. If my abuser destroys my copy of the protection order, I can get another copy from the District Court Clerk, 3rd floor of the County-City Building.

- F. If my abuser violates the protection order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.
- G. If the police do not help, I will speak to the supervisor in charge. I can call my advocate or attorney and will file a complaint with the law enforcement agency.
- H. I can also make a private criminal complaint with the County Attorney for a violation of the protection order and all the crimes committed in violating the order. I can call the domestic violence advocate to help me with this.

Step 5: Safety on the job and in public.

Each victim of abuse must decide if and when he or she will tell others that he or she has been battered and that he or she may be at continued risk. Friends, family, and co-workers can help protect victims. Each person should consider carefully which people to tell about the abuse.

I might do any or all of the following:

- A. I can tell my boss, the security supervisor, and _____ at work about my situation.
- B. I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work.
- C. When leaving work, I can _____
_____.
- D. When driving home, if problems occur, I can _____
_____.
- E. If I use public transit, I can _____
_____.
- F. I can use different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business at different times than those my abuser may be familiar with.
- G. I can use a different bank and take care of my banking at different hours than those my abuser may be familiar with.
- H. I can also _____.

Step 6: Safety and drug and alcohol use.

Most people in this culture use alcohol. Many use mood-altering drugs. Much of this use is legal and some is not. The legal outcomes of using illegal drugs can be difficult for you, may hurt your relationship with the children, and may put you at a disadvantage in other legal actions. Therefore, you should carefully consider the potential cost of the use of illegal drugs. Beyond this, the use of any alcohol or other drugs can reduce your awareness and ability to act quickly to protect yourself from the abuser. Furthermore, the use of alcohol or other drugs by the abuser may give him or her an excuse to use violence. Therefore, in the context of drug or alcohol use, you should make specific safety plans.

If drug or alcohol use has occurred, I can enhance my safety by some of the following:

- A. If I am going to use, I can do so in a safe place and with people who understand the risk of violence and are committed to my safety.
- B. I can also _____.
- C. If my abusive partner is using, I can _____.
- D. I might also _____.
- E. To safeguard my children, I might _____ and _____.

Step 7: Safety and my emotional health.

The experience of being battered and verbally degraded is exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life for myself takes courage and incredible energy.

To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to avoid hard emotional times, I can do some of the following:

- A. If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can _____.
- B. When I have to communicate with my abuser in person or by telephone, I can _____.
- C. I can try to use, “I can. . . ,” statements with myself and in order to be assertive with others.
- D. I can tell myself, “_____,” whenever others are trying to control or abuse me.

- E. I can read _____ to help me feel stronger.
- F. I can call _____,
_____ and _____
as other resources of support to me.
- G. Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are _____
_____ and _____.
- H. I can attend workshops and support groups at the Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center or _____ to gain support and strengthen my relationships with other people.

Step 8: Items to take when leaving.

When you leave an abusive partner, it is important to take certain items with you. It is also a good idea to give an extra copy of papers, extra keys and clothing to a friend, just in case it is necessary to leave quickly.

Items marked with an asterisk (*) on the following list are the most important to take. If there is time, the other items might be taken or stored outside the home. These items might best be placed in one location, so that if you have to leave, you can grab them quickly.

When I leave, I should take:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| * identification for myself | green card |
| * children's birth certificates | passports |
| * my birth certificate | divorce papers |
| * social security cards | medical records for all family members |
| * school and vaccination records | lease/rental agreement, house deed |
| * money | mortgage payment book |
| * checkbook, automatic teller card | bank books |
| * credit cards | insurance papers |
| * keys - house, car, office | address book |
| * driver's license and registration | pictures |
| * medications | jewelry |
| welfare identification | children's favorite toys and/or blankets |
| work permits | items of special sentimental value |

*Adapted from "Personalized Safety Plan"
(Quincy, Mass., May 1993.)*