

A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SAFETY GUIDE



Presented in partnership by York Regional Police and Victim Services of York Region.
Sponsored by the Victim Safety Project.



We are here to help you

YORK REGIONAL POLICE

If you are in immediate danger, call 9-1-1

NON-EMERGENCY POLICE LINE

Toll free Number 1-866-8POLICE (876-5423)

TTY 1-800-668-0398

Integrated Domestic Violence Unit/Community Support: Ext 6778

#1 District	240 Prospect Street, Newmarket	ext. 7100
#2 District	171 Major Mackenzie Dr. West., Richmond Hill	ext. 7200
#3 District	3527 Baseline Road, Sutton	ext. 7300
#4 District	2700 Rutherford Road, Vaughan	ext. 7400
#5 District	8700 McCowan Road, Markham	ext. 7500

VICTIM SERVICES OF YORK REGION

(905) 474-2955

www.victimservices-york.org

Victim Services of York Region works in partnership with York Regional Police to assist victims of domestic violence to cope, safety plan and connect with community resources.

www.yrp.ca

We are here to help you... you...

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence can be defined as a pattern of behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner.

Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviours that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure or wound someone. Domestic violence can happen to anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion or gender. It can happen to couples who are married, living together or who are dating.

Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels.

What Do I Do?

If you feel that you are in an abusive relationship call York Regional Police or Victim Services of York Region or the Assaulted Women's Helpline 1-866-863-7868

If you are in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.




Checklist - Am I At Risk?

Never underestimate the potential for violence by minimizing the warning signs. If any of these factors apply to your situation, it is important that you seek out options and support for your safety and that of your children.

- Actual or pending separation
- History of domestic violence
- Escalation of violence
- Displays obsessive / stalking or jealous behaviour towards you
- Threatens / attempts to commit suicide
- Threatens to kill you or your family
- History of violence outside of the home
- Has choked or strangled you
- Violent toward you during pregnancy
- Access to firearms
- Depressed
- You have an intuitive sense of fear
- Excessive drug and / or alcohol use
- Controls most of your daily activities
- Denies / isolates you from your personal property, friends and family
- Grew up in a violent environment
- Fails to comply with court orders
- Forced you to participate in sex acts

What Happens When Police Become Involved?

- When you phone the police the call-taker will ask you a series of questions. Try to answer all the questions to the best of your ability so that the officer will understand the safety issues you are facing in your situation
- Upon police arrival, the officers will investigate the complaint. All parties will be spoken to separately. Tell them exactly what happened as police will complete a report for every domestic incident
- If you have injuries, police will encourage you to attend the hospital and / or the York Region Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Care Centre. An ambulance will be called if necessary to help you
- If police determine that an offence has occurred, they will lay charges as mandated
- The officer will provide you with a Victim Information Pamphlet, including the officer's name and the incident number. Officers will refer you to Victim Services of York Region
- Police are required to contact the York Region Children's Aid Society if any children under the age of 16 are involved. Children's Aid Society assist with child welfare and family support in domestic violence situations
- The officer will encourage you to provide a video statement at the police station. Interpreter services will be provided in your language if necessary
- An officer may need to take photographs of your injuries or damaged property in order to document all evidence related to the charges



Violence against women occurs across all ethnic, racial, religious, age, social and economic groups. Some women are more vulnerable however, and are more likely to experience violence, including women with disabilities, geographically-isolated women, young women and Aboriginal women.



What Happens if my Abuser is Arrested?

- Police will transport your abuser to a police facility
- Your abuser will be held in custody for a bail hearing or released with certain conditions by police. All concerns for your safety will be taken into consideration
- The Victim / Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) is designed to support victims and witnesses in a criminal case. You will be assigned a caseworker to assist you while the case is before the courts
- If your abuser is held for a bail hearing, he / she will either be held in custody or released with certain conditions. Common conditions of bail include no contact with you, for your abuser to live at a separate address from you and not to attend within specified distances of your known place of employment or education
- In most bail circumstances, the abuser is required to have a surety. A surety is to make certain your abuser attends court and abides by the conditions of release. The surety must provide some measure of supervision over your abuser's daily activities
- The Victim Notification Officer will contact you with details of the release. It is important to give the investigating officer all of your contact information and to notify police if this information changes. Keep a copy of your abuser's bail conditions and report any breaches immediately to police



Safety Planning

A safety plan is important whether you are currently living with your abuser, considering leaving, or have left the relationship. Safety planning is a process of thinking about and trying to increase your own safety to help reduce risk to yourself and your children. Planning increases your awareness of your own vulnerability.

Assess your partner's potential for violent behaviour. Don't increase your risk by denying or minimizing the possibility of danger. Think about your partner's past use and level of force. This will help you predict what type of danger you and your children are facing and when to leave. Try to avoid an abusive situation by leaving before it escalates to violence. But remember that not all incidents will be predictable.

You are encouraged to call Victim Services of York Region or other community agencies found in the resource section on pages 19 and 20 to help you develop a safety plan.

When the family is together:

- If possible leave the home or call police before any violence starts. Trust your instincts and use your best judgement
- Know the best escape routes and practice your emergency exit plans in case you need to leave your home or workplace. Teach children the escape routes
- Create a safe room in your house. This room should have a lock, a chair to prop under the door handle, a first-aid kit, a means to escape out the window and access to a phone
- Have a fully-charged cell phone accessible and / or access to your home phone at all times
- Plan where to go if you need to leave. This needs to be a safe place for you and your children in a time of crisis. Ensure your children know whose house they can run to if necessary
- Keep your purse / wallet nearby in case you need to leave quickly
- Keep spare keys for your home and car with you or in a safe place at all times

- Keep copies of important documents and money in a safe place
- Keep a small bag of clothes packed and hidden
- Tell trusted friends, neighbours or relatives about the abuse and create a code word or signal with them which indicates that they are to call the police if you need help
- Have a code word or signal with your children that will let them know to leave and get help
- Let children know where the home phone and cell phone are and how to use them

When the abuser is separated from the family:

- If possible keep a fully-charged cell phone with you at all times
ANY CHARGED CELL PHONE WILL CALL 9-1-1. Even if you don't have a cell phone plan or minutes on your pay-as-you-go plan, 9-1-1 will still work
- Tell a trusted neighbour to call police if they see your spouse near the residence
- Ensure your children's school is aware of court orders, restraining orders, custody and access orders. Give them a picture of the parent or person with child-access restrictions
- Accompany your children to school or the bus stop.
- If possible, change your daily routines
- Change your locks, install an alarm system, add window bars, secure locks on windows and doors and install outdoor lighting
- Identify people before answering the door. Wide-angle viewers can be installed in all exterior doors



- Make your boss or co-workers aware of the situation and ask them to call police if they see your spouse in or around your workplace. Ask them not to give out any personal information about you or your routine
- Arrange for security or a co-worker to walk you to and from your building to your car
- If a problem happens while you are driving, use your cell phone to call police. If you don't have a cell phone, honk the horn continuously to gain attention and drive to a police station or a well-lit, heavily-populated area
- If you use public transit, try to sit close to the front by the driver. Arrange for someone to meet you at the bus stop and walk you home. Once at home call a relative or friend and let them know that you got home safely



During a Violent Incident

Make Yourself Small

- If an assault is occurring and you cannot escape, make yourself a small target - curl up like a ball with your face, head, neck and ears protected and arms around each side of your head, fingers intertwined

Call 9-1-1

- Call 9-1-1 and ask for police. If you cannot talk, leave the phone open. Police will be dispatched immediately



Children's Safety Plan

The most important thing children can do is to get away from the area of violence. Tell your children that violence is never right, even when someone they love is being violent. Reassure them that the violence is not their fault.

Stay Safe / Leave Danger Area

- Tell your children not to get between you and your partner if there is violence. The best thing children can do during a violent episode is to get away and protect themselves. Teach your children which room or location to go to

Code Word / Signal

- Develop a code word or visual signal for your children to know that there is danger so that they will not enter the house or the room if the code is used. Make sure they have an identified place to go if there is danger

Safe Room

- Help your children pick out a safe room, preferably with a lock and access to a cell phone and on the ground floor, so they can leave through the window if necessary

Safe People

- Review safe people with your children. These are people with whom your children feel safe and who can be trusted. These people may include family members, teachers, a guidance counsellor, neighbours or family friends

Meeting Place

- Children must always run to safety, even without you. Teach them the safest route to the planned place of safety

Teach Your Children How to Phone 9-1-1

- Rehearse with children how to phone 9-1-1 for help. Keep emergency numbers by all phones and ensure your children know how to operate the home and cell phones

Answering the Door

- Teach your children to tell you if someone is at the door and not to answer the door themselves

Review / Rehearse Plan

- Practice and role-play safety plans with your children including what to do and where to go if something violent happens

If You Are Planning to Leave the Abuser

Leaving must be done strategically in order to increase safety. The point of separation and immediately thereafter is often the most volatile and potentially violent time period.

Supported Safety Planning

- Contact support agencies to discuss how to leave safely and what resources are available to you. Being prepared is key to maximizing your safety

Don't Tell Your Abuser

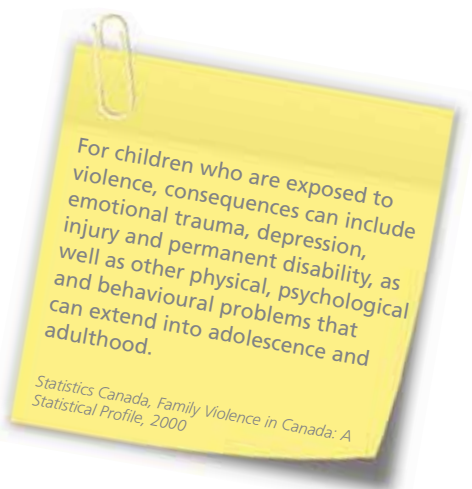
- Do not tell your abuser you are leaving. Leave quickly. It is crucial that your whereabouts remain confidential and unknown to your abuser. You will need time to plan and safe time to get yourself organized. Tell someone whom you trust where you are staying; someone who will not disclose this information to your abuser

Leave a Note

- Leave your abuser a note that says you have gone and taken the children. Your lawyer will contact your abuser shortly. Let someone you trust know that you have left the note

Prepare Answers to Inquiries from Abuser

- Develop some excuses to leave the home in case your abuser catches you leaving, e.g. need groceries, visiting a friend, etc.



If You Are Planning to Leave the Abuser con't

Back-Up Plan

- Have a back-up plan if your abuser finds out where you are going. Make a plan of how you will respond if your abuser learns of your intent to leave

Phone Calls

- Use a pay phone to make calls that you do not want the abuser to know about
- Clear your phone of the last number you called to avoid the abuser utilizing redial

Temporary Place to Stay

- It is important to know where you and your children will go if you leave and to know how to get there. If you decide to go to a friend's or relative's home, consider how likely it would be that your partner would look for you at that location. You might wish to discuss your safety plan with those friends or relatives before you go to stay with them

Emergency Funds

- If possible, save and set aside money. Victim Services of York Region and community agencies can assist you with access to emergency funding if required

Contact a Family Lawyer

- If you have shared children with the abuser, contact a family lawyer to assist you with any family court orders required regarding access and custody

Important Documents

- Know the location of important documents for you and your children, so you can find them quickly and take them with you when you go. Consider making photocopies of the documents and storing them at a safe, off-site location

Stored Items

- Leave money, an extra set of keys, copies of important documents, extra medicine and clothes for you and your children with someone you trust so that you can leave as quickly as possible. (Refer to *What to Take with You* for a more detailed list, see Page 12).

If You Are Planning to Leave the Abuser can't

Never Confront Your Abuser

- If you are returning to the shared residence to pick up property, consider being accompanied by police or a third party. Get legal advice before taking anything more than your own personal belongings

What to Take With You

In An Emergency, Just Leave.

However, in a planned exit, try to remember the following:

- Personal Clothing / Children's Clothing and Comfort Item
- Driver's License
- Health Cards
- Social Insurance Cards or Numbers
- Birth Certificates
- Passports
- Immigration Papers / Citizenship Certificates / Permanent Residence Papers
- Necessary Prescribed Medications
- Medical Supplies
- ATM / Debit Cards / Credit Cards
- Marriage Certificates / Separation Papers or Divorce Papers
- Court Orders
- Custody Documentation and Access Information
- Any Evidence or Documentation of Past Abuse (threatening notes, tapes of threatening telephone messages, photographs, police reports, medical records, etc.)

Home Security

Environment

- Install motion-detector lighting or keep exterior lights on at all times
- Keep bushes and trees that can be used to hide in, or to block view of residence, trimmed back
- Make sure your street address is clearly visible and well-lit for emergency calls.
- Install smoke detectors, carbon-monoxide detectors and fire extinguishers on each floor
- Create a safe room with access to a window
- Consider rearranging your furniture as this is something your abuser may not anticipate, causing him / her to bump into it and give you warning that he / she is in the house
- Install a security system (e.g. additional locks, electric sensors, electronic system with panic button, etc.) anything to provide added security
- Consider the advantages of getting a dog
- Change / add locks on the doors, garage and mailbox, as soon as possible. Invest in a good dead-bolt or chain lock on all outside doors
- Automatic door openers (for vehicle or garage door) can be reprogrammed



Home Security con't

- Make sure all windows are locked and that sliding glass doors are blocked with a dowel or a similar device. There are locks for sliding doors that prevent them from being lifted out of the door frame
- Secure spare keys and remove any hidden keys outside. Keep locks engaged at all times, even when you are at home
- Make your home look occupied even when you're not there by putting the kitchen, living room, bedroom and bathroom lights on timers. Ask friends or neighbours to park in your driveway so it always looks like you have company

If You Have Moved to a New Residence:

- Ensure your name is not on your mailbox or in an apartment directory
- If you live in an apartment or condominium, check the hallways before getting off the elevator or stairs. Look in mirrors and be aware of doorways
- Never leave your apartment unlocked, even when travelling within the building. Keep the door closed and locked when dealing with persons in the hall or outside
- Consider advising your new neighbours / building security of your situation
- Keep control of your home by not allowing your abuser to enter, no matter how much he / she pleads or bargains

Personal Security

Be Alert

- Be aware of your surroundings
- Know the names of the roads you are travelling
- Be aware of anyone possibly following you
- Avoid secluded areas
- Know where the closest police station is to your location
- Carry a fully-charged cell phone at all times



Phone / Computer Security

- If you have call display on your phone, be careful about who can get access to the stored numbers (e.g. last number dialed, etc.)
- Never leave your cell phone or hand-held devices accessible to your abuser, because then you become vulnerable to spyware / tracking mechanisms
- Change your e-mail password and username and only share them with those you trust
- Keep personal information to a minimum on social networking sites
- Change your phone number and have one that is unlisted. Make sure your phone is connected before moving into a new place
- Don't phone home to check on the welfare of your abuser or to say that you and the children are okay. It may be possible for your abuser to trace the call and find out where you are



Car / Commuting

- Always keep the gas tank at least half full
- Park your car in a secure, well-lit area, close to your destination or near parking security
- Change your parking spot often
- If your abuser is following you, drive to the nearest safe place, e.g., a friend's house or police station
- Ask someone to walk you to your car.
- Carry your keys in your hands and scan the parking lot for signs of your abuser or unusual circumstances. Lock the door again as soon as you're inside



Car / Commuting con't

- Scan the area before you get out of the car or, if you are out of the car, before you get back in
- Don't use a remote to unlock the car door from a distance
- Have a plan for your commute to and from your home
- When you do go out, let someone know that you're leaving. Tell someone what time you plan to be back and ask him / her to call police if you are late

Walking / Public Transportation

- Identify a safety plan for when you leave your home, work, school, or other location
- If you are walking take a route that is populated. Use a variety of routes to go home if possible
- If you see your abuser on the street, try to get to a public place, e.g. a store. Call attention to yourself and request help
- If taking public transit, wait in designated areas, sit close to the driver or in an area where you have a clear view of your surroundings

Vary Schedules and Routines

- Change your work or school schedule if possible.
- Vary your route and schedule to make routine less predictable.
- Reschedule personal and children's appointments if the abusive partner is likely to know of them
- Shop at different grocery stores and shopping malls; try to do your shopping during the day or on your way home from work

Support Person / Emergency Contact

- Tell someone you trust about the abuse
- Give a spare set of keys to your emergency contact

Disposal of Documents

- Be very careful about what you throw out in the garbage; destroy discarded mail

Safety in Special Circumstances

Persons with a Disability or Illness

- If you have a disability or illness that makes it difficult or impossible for you to leave on your own, arrangements can be made for someone to assist you through a support agency, or you can ask a friend or family member to assist you
- This also applies if you are the primary caregiver of a person with an illness or disability

Don't Speak English

- If you do not feel comfortable speaking English, ask a friend or family member to translate for you
- Many agencies are multilingual, or have access to a confidential interpreter service, including York Regional Police

Other Useful Tools

Calendar / Journal

- Keep track of the abuse and harassment by keeping a calendar or diary. This can be useful in trying to identify patterns of the abuse

Safe Room

- Having a room that you have designated as your safe place will ensure you are prepared in an emergency
- This room should contain everything that you would need in the immediate situation:
 - a way to contact police
 - access to the outside (both to call for help or to escape if necessary)
 - a lock
 - an object (such as a chair) to prop the door shut
 - and a first-aid kit
 - cell phone

Family Law in Ontario

Criminal Courts and Family Courts are two different systems. Victims of abuse often seek assistance in Family Court in regards to restraining orders, custody orders and exclusive possession of the home. Please refer to www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/family/famlawbro.asp for information you should know about family law. The information is available in multiple languages.

Restraining Orders

You can obtain a restraining order that requires the abuser to stop molesting, annoying or harassing you and / or your children under the Family Law Act. This court is located at 50 Eagle Street West in Newmarket. If the abuser violates this order you should contact police immediately as charges may apply.

Custody

Family Courts establish custody and access orders relating to your children. Police are often called to settle disputes about these orders. However, unless specified in the custody and access order, police cannot take the children into custody or force participants to comply with the order. You may have to return to family court for further measures. If your abuser does have access to the children, arrange for the exchange of the children to take place in a public location and / or to be completed by a trusted third party. Remind your children not to disclose your new address or other private information to the other parent.



Resources

Victim Services of York Region (VSY)

(905) 474-2955

Victim Services of York Region works in partnership with York Regional Police and the Ontario Provincial Police to provide 24-hour emotional support and practical assistance to victims of crime or tragic circumstances. Victim Services operates the Support Link program which is specialized services for individuals at high risk for domestic violence. VSY can also access funds through the Victim Quick Response program for the emergency needs of victims.

Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Care Centre of York Region (DASA)

1-800-521-6004 ext. 2

The Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault Care Centre is located at York Central Hospital at 10 Trench Street in Richmond Hill. DASA can provide acute care to victims of sexual violence or partner abuse. As it is located within a hospital, the resources of the Emergency Room are immediately available as well. DASA also handles non-acute assessments, counselling and referral services for those who have suffered domestic violence.

24-hour Crisis Lines and Counselling

Assaulted Women's Helpline	(866) 863-7868
310-COPE	(905) 310-2619
Kids Help Phone	(800) 668-6868
Women's Centre of York Region	(905) 853-9270
Women's Support Network of York Region	(800) 895-7313

Court / Legal Supports

Victim / Witness Assistance Program	(905) 868-8355
Newmarket Criminal Court	(905) 853-4801
Family Law Information Centre / Family Court	(905) 853-4809
Legal Aid Ontario	(800) 668-8258

Interpreter Services

Multilingual Community Interpreter Services	(416) 422-5984
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Women's Shelters

Yellow Brick House	(800) 263-3247
Sandgate Women's Shelter	(800) 661-8294
E.T.A. Vaughan	(877) 382-1888
Blue Doors Shelters	(905) 898-1015

Family Services York Region

Georgina Location	(905) 476-3611
Markham Location	(905) 415-9719
Newmarket Location	(888) 223-3999
Richmond Hill - Bayview Location	(888) 820-9986 /
Yonge Location	(866) 780-9927

Children's Aid Societies

York Region Children's Aid Society	(800) 718-3850
Jewish Family and Child Services	(905) 882-2331
Catholic Community Services of York Region	(800) 263-2075

Online Resources

Family Law Education For Women	www.onefamilylaw.ca
Neighbours, Friends and Families	www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca
Shelternet	www.shelternet.ca

Online Resources for Teenagers

Chatdanger	www.chatdanger.com
Equality Rules	www.equalityrules.ca
Love is Respect	www.loveisrespect.org
That's Not Cool	www.thatsnotcool.com



Ontario



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www.safetybound.ca