

Warning signs of a high risk situation:

- Abuser has threatened or attempted to kill victim and/or others close to the victim (e.g. victim's children, parents, etc.)
- Abuser has prior history of violence towards others
- Abuser has access to weapons and/has used or threatened to use them
- Abuse has included attempted strangulation
- Abuse has included stalking/monitoring of victim's activities
- Abuse has included forced or coerced sexual activity
- Violence has recently escalated in intensity or severity
- Violence has taken place while victim was pregnant
- Abuser is using drug or alcohol
- Abuser has isolated victim and/or is violently jealous and controlling of victim's daily activities
- Victim recently left or attempted to leave the relationship

If someone is at imminent risk of serious harm, **Safety Planning** is essential.

Safety planning:

What is safety planning?

To develop a practical plan to increase the security of the victim.

The victim usually knows best her/his/their situation. Let her/him/them know that she/he/they should trust her/his/their instincts and intuitions about situations and to take action when she/he/they feel she/he/they should.

In cases where a victim still lives with her/his/their abusive partner, the important elements of a safety plan are listed below. The victim should:

- Have a plan of where to escape to when she/he/they need to leave the home.
- Pack a bag of personal items and important documents and leave it in a safe location.
- Let a neighbor or a friend know about the violence and arrange to have that person call the police if strange noises are heard or suspects something is wrong in the victim's home. It might help to make a code word with the neighbor/friend, so that the friend can call the police immediately if she/he hears that code word.
- When an argument starts, the victim should avoid areas that she/he/they cannot easily get out of, or where there is something that can be used against her/him/them (for instance, it is not a good idea to be in the kitchen, because it likely contains many objects that can be used as weapons).
- Practice how to exit from her/his/their house when there is danger.

- Always carry car keys or cell phones so that she/he/they can drive away when she/he needs to escape or call the police immediately from outside of the home.
- Trust her/his/their instincts and intuitions. The victim is often the person who understands best how dangerous her/his/their partner can be.
- In some cases, if it appears helpful, to try to de-escalate the situation by not being confrontational.
- Should never hesitate to call the police.
- Get a restraining order, even if the situation has occurred after hours and the court is closed. (The victim has to go to the police department, where they can issue an emergency order.)

A victim is often overwhelmed by her/his/their situation. So, don't overwhelm her/him/them with too much information. The most important thing is that she/he/they should act based on her/his instinct/intuition and should call the police wherever she/he/they feel any danger.

If the patient is at imminent risk, wants to leave the situation, and does not have family or friends they can stay with where the perpetrator will not find him/her/them, the victim can call SAFELINK to find out where there are current DV shelter openings.

Understanding the victim's current life situation and safety risk helps you to develop a treatment plan.

Stabilization

What is the purpose of stabilization?

To make sure that, when she/he/they leave, a victim feels supported and respected as well as connected to resources. For stabilization, the provider should:

1. Ask the victim what she/he/they want to do.
2. Never tell the victim what she/he/they should do.
3. Provide information about resources (without overwhelming the victim).
4. Together with the victim, make a follow-up plan (such as making their next appointment or giving a hotline number).
5. If there is a serious concern about the victim's safety, express that concern clearly. Safety is the priority.

Available Resources

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARC) 24 hour Hotline: 1-800-841-8371
SafeLink 24-Hour State DV Hotline: 1-877-785-2020
The Victim Resource Center (VRC) non-emergency line: 617-665-2992

Mandated Reporting:

Department of Children and Families 24 hour hotline: 1-800-792-5200

Massachusetts Elder Abuse 24 hour hotline: 1-800-922-2275

Disabled Persons Protection Commission 24 hour hotline: 1-800-426-9009