

# Safety Planning Tips

**Not all categories or items will fit for you personally. Go through and check the ones that make the most sense for you and your situation. If you have questions or want to go over more safety specifics, contact the Women's Center at (320) 308-4958 and ask to talk to an advocate.**

## Basic Safety Plan Suggestions

### Safety in Your Home

- Keep your doors locked at all times, even when you are in your home.
- Many landlords automatically change the lock, or re-key the locks, on the door to the unit as a part of the standard procedure for preparing the unit for a new tenant. It is appropriate to ask a prospective landlord if that is a part of their procedures.
- The landlords do have a responsibility to provide basic security. This means the locks must be able to reasonably secure the unit, and the landlord must pay for the cost of ensuring the locks do secure the unit. If the lock is broken, or you have a legitimate reason for believing a previous tenant still has a key, you may be able to compel the landlord to fix or rekey the lock.
- If you feel unsafe continuing to live in your apartment, MN has a process for you to break your lease.
- If you are able, consider installing motion security lights outside.
  - If you are looking for an apartment building, ask your landlord if there are motion detectors on the building. If not, look for a building that has motion detectors.
- Secure sliding glass doors with a lock or bar, or place a piece of wood or broom handle in the track.
- Never leave a house key hidden outside of your home.
- Get a dog if you are able to devote the time to taking care of it. They can be excellent alarm systems.
- Place something in front of doors to make noise if someone enters.
- Purchase an alarm system that will alert local law enforcement when set off.
- Install several locks on your entry and bedroom doors. Be sure to secure windows.
- Plan all possible escape routes from your home.

### Safety in Public

- Always be alert, walk upright, and walk in well-lit areas.
- If someone starts harassing or following you, head toward a public place.
- Walk near the curb: stay away from doorways, alleys, and bushes.
- When at a bar, keep your drink in hand at all times.
- NEVER accept a drink from someone you don't know and trust but remember that most sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim/survivor knows.
- Make sure at least one trusted person knows where you are at all times.
- If you have a protective order, carry a copy with you everywhere. If you see the offender, call the police and show them your order. Stay calm and never talk to your offender. Any time the offender spends talking to or looking at you will feed their obsession.
- Every time an offender continues to violate a protective order, the charging degree and punishment for that violation will increase. It is important to report all violations.
- Ask trusted friends and family members to be on the lookout for the offender.
- Try not to find yourself alone where your offender can approach you. It may seem awkward, but asking a stranger to assist you in difficult situations is better than being surprised by your offender when you are alone and vulnerable. For example, if you are out shopping alone, ask a security guard to walk you to your car.

## Safety in Your Car

- Park in well-lit areas.
- Have your keys ready before you get to your car: hold keys between your knuckles pointed out as a weapon.
- Always look around and be alert as you walk toward your car and look around and in your car before getting in.
- Have a charged cell phone with you. 911 can be dialed from any cell phone free even if you don't have a phone plan.
- When possible try to keep the gas tank in your car half full.
- Vary your routes to places you travel frequently to (work, school, the gym, etc). Offenders quickly learn their victim's routine, so make it difficult for them to track you.
- Always lock your car as soon as you get inside (and keep it locked when you're not using it).
- Always leave enough space between you and the car in front of you so that you can change lanes quickly if you are being followed by your offender and drive to the nearest police station or public place.
- If you find yourself in a car with your offender, avoid driving anywhere remote. Use your instincts, but try to remain in a place where others can see you.
- Talk with a locksmith about the methods that can be used to break into your car. Every car is different, and some can be broken into quite easily. Consider installing devices that will make it more difficult.

## Safety While Dating or with Friends

- Be assertive, forthright and definite. Do not go along with any behavior that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- Try not to be alone with someone you don't know well. Socialize and stay in groups.
- Carry cash on you so that you can pay for your bill and leave quickly.
- When drinking, do not under any circumstances leave your drink unattended.
- Alcohol is a date-rape drug: a potential offender may ply you with alcohol to lower your ability to judge situations. Besides watching your drink at all times, watch the amount you drink.
- Make a pact with friends: watch out for each other when you are at the bar or at a party. Ask your friends to take you home if you seem drunk. Ask them to not let you leave with someone when you've been drinking.
- If you are with a friend or date who is pressuring you for unwanted sex say no FIRMLY. This may be enough for the person to stop. If it isn't, use one of the following tactics:
  - Pretend to get sick.
  - Use your words: ask the person to brush their teeth or to get you some water and leave while they're doing so, say you need to use the restroom first and leave through a door or window, etc.
  - If you feel this is an option, physically fight.
  - Lock yourself in another room and call a friend or the police.
  - Run out the door.
- Be aware of a person who wants to keep you away from other friends or family. This is a warning sign of an abusive partner.

## Safety at Work and with Friends or Family

- Tell your co-workers, family, and friends about your situation. Most people don't know much about the crime of stalking. Consider asking an advocate to educate people in your life about stalking. Some things that the people in your life should know:
  - *Never* give out information about you to the offender (or anyone else, as the offender may have someone help them elicit information). They need to know that when someone calls and asks for *any* information about you, they should not give it out no matter how urgent the request seems. Offenders are extremely adept at lying and manipulation, and may say any number of things to get information on you.
  - They should not engage in a conversation with the offender. Consider having everyone in your life use a standard phrase such as "I am not going to discuss this with you." They should avoid using your name at all.
  - If they tell the offender they are going to do something, follow through. Do not say "I'm going to call the police" and then not do it. The offender needs to know that everyone around you means business.

- Have co-workers, family, and friends warn you if they see the offender in the area and to immediately call the police.
- If you are able, relocate to another office and vary your work schedule.
- At work: have someone else record your voicemail message, as offenders will sometimes call just to hear the sound of their victim's voice.
- If at all possible, do not be at your workplace alone. If you have to be, have a safety plan in place: i.e. locking the doors, being near a phone at all times, having someone call to check on you, and having a clear exit plan if you need to get out of there quickly.
- Discuss with your supervisor the option of the workplace getting a restraining order against the offender.

## *If You Are Being Assaulted*

- Go with your instincts, fight if you feel it will help you get out of the situation.
- Try to remember as many details about your attacker and the assault as possible and alert Public Safety or the Police as soon as possible.
- Try to get to a safe place.
- Remember every situation is different; you are the only one who can decide the appropriate course of action.
- While it may be difficult, do not feel guilty about what you did or did not do. Remember that you did what you had to do to survive a traumatic situation.

## *If you are considering leaving a dangerous/abusive relationship*

- Practice leaving the house or apartment quickly.
- Keep a cell phone on you at all times.
- Have a network of friends and/or family whom you trust and can rely on for support.
- Plan a safe place to go.
- Pack an emergency bag with any needed medications and documents.
- Keep your money and keys handy or an extra set hidden.
- Tell neighbors to call the police if they hear strange noises. Practice a code word with friends and family.
- Locate an advocate at the Women's Center Gender Violence Prevention Program to assist you in filing the right protective order.

## *Once you have left*

- File a protective order if you haven't already done so.
- Do not disclose your whereabouts to your offender under any circumstances.
- It is important to be aware of your surroundings.
- Instruct your friends, family, and work colleagues to NEVER give your information or whereabouts to anyone.
- Varying your route can be helpful if your offender is stalking you. It is important to know the safest way home.
- Call the police if you are physically or sexually assaulted, harassed or stalked by your offender.

## *If you are being stalked*

\* Resource taken from the Stalking Handbook by Emily Spence-Diehl from

<http://www.ncvc.org/src/AGP.Net/Components/DocumentViewer/Download.aspx?DocumentID=45093>

If you can, obtain a Harassment Restraining Order or Order for Protection, depending on your relationship to the offender. It is important to report to police all unwanted contact that the offender has initiated. As soon as the offender has been served with the order, all unwanted contact made by the offender is considered a violation of the protective order. In addition it is very crucial to keep a *Stalking Incident Log* of the harassment or stalking that you have endured. The *Stalking Incident Log* will give Law Enforcement a historical context of the inappropriate behavior that the offender has displayed. It will also give insight on how the current behavior is related to past incidents. Keep an "escape bag" in your home that can be easily grabbed if you need to get away quickly. Fill it with clothing, cash, important documents, medications and anything else you would need. If you can, keep a bag with at a friend's home as well.

## Stalkers and Sources of Information

Think about all the ways that the offender could get information on you, and take action to reduce the likelihood of that happening. Here are some possible options:

- **Phone Company:** Call your phone company and explain your situation to a supervisor. Most phone companies have policies that deal with telephone harassment, such as call tracing and call blocking. Explore your options.
- **Utilities:** If these services are registered in your name, ask what privacy options the companies provide. They likely have privacy policies, but ask if your file can be specifically marked confidential. They may be able to erase your address and phone number from the screen and instead have a message that your information is confidential and kept in a file.
- **Home Ownership:** If you own a home your information will be available to the public. Call or stop in to city hall and tell a supervisor about your situation. They should be able to assure your privacy.
- **Post Office:** If the offender doesn't know your home address, consider using a post office box to receive your mail. If you relocate because of the offender, it is important to consider enrolling in the *Safe at Home Program*.
  - *Safe at Home* helps survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and others who fear for their safety by establishing a confidential address that public and private entities must accept as their true address. It helps survivors of harm go about their daily lives without the risk of their abusers discovering their actual address.
- **Internet:** As wonderful as the Internet can be, it likely contains an incredible amount of personal information on you. Offenders know this and will use the Internet in a variety of ways to find information on you. Here are some important suggestions on what you can do:
  - Contact any search engine that may have your personal information (i.e. whitepages.com and google) and ask them to delete it. This will be time-consuming as you will need to re-check every so often to make sure your information isn't out there. However, this is extremely important.
  - Consider deleting social media accounts, a blog, or a personal webpage. If not, make sure you know all of the privacy settings available to you. Be cautious of others taking pictures of you and posting on their sites.
- **Other Sources:** Brainstorm on who else may have personal information on you: pizza delivery services, banks, gyms, pharmacies, medical centers, insurance companies, credit card companies, magazines, landlords, any local or national organizations, insurance companies, schools, video rental stores, cable companies, and anyone else that you can think of. Contact each one and request their assistance. Many places have privacy rules in place, but make sure that under no circumstances do they give information out to anyone who isn't you. For example, an offender may call and pretend to be your spouse. You need to find out what different companies would do in that situation.

## Relocation

If the stalking has reached a level that makes you feel as though you need to re-locate to be safe, the choices you make during relocation are critical. Consider the following suggestions:

- Give everyone you know a photograph and description of the offender and their vehicle.
- Alert the local police department of your situation.
- Using that list you've compiled of all who have your information, carefully choose which ones need to know your new location. *Consider this:* use a different name when signing up for new services, or if you'll be staying with someone else, put as many services in their name as possible.
- Purchase a post office box rather than using your home address. If there is more than one location in your new area where you can get a post office box, don't get one at the post office closest to your new residence.
- Any time you give your name, address, and/or phone number to anyone, make sure they know you are fleeing your offender and need to be assured privacy. You may want to tell only those who know your story and who you totally trust.
- Use cash for your purchases. It is easy to track your whereabouts through credit card traces.
- If you've moved to an apartment complex, do not put your name on your mailbox.
- If you are moving into an apartment or condo and have a choice, live on the second floor or higher.
- If you own a car and are able, trade it in for a different one and get a new license number.

- An offender can access your address if they know your license number by going to your local courthouse. You can request that they never give your information out; do so.
- Consider a residence with 24-hour security. Give a photograph of your offender to the security as well as a description of the offender and their vehicle.
- Shred all of your bills and mail, as they can be obtained from trash cans.
- Before making the difficult decision to re-locate, consult the advice of victim advocates, lawyers, and any other people in your life whom you trust. They may have helpful suggestions that you haven't thought of.
- If you relocate and go to another school, ask about their policies to keep your information confidential.

**\*In all stalking situations:** Consider asking someone you trust if you can call them at a specific time every day. If your contact doesn't hear from you, devise a plan as to what to do (they stop by your home or workplace, try you for 10 minutes then call the police, etc.). If your situation is extreme, you may want to consider having that person call the police fairly quickly if they don't hear from you.

\* Contact an advocate at the Women's Center for more information on technology safety and cyber stalking.

## ***Safety Plan Suggestions Specific to Campus***

### Basic Information

- If the abuser is not a student, consider contacting Public Safety about the possibility of a *No Trespass Order*.
- If the abuser is a student, consider filing a student conduct code violation.
- If you drive, consider purchasing a parking permit so that you don't need to walk through the neighborhood to get to your car. This is important because Public Safety will provide escorts on campus, and a two block radius off campus.
- Consider parking in the ramp attached to the Public Safety offices (hourly or daily fee).
- If you have a protective order against your offender, make sure Public Safety has a copy as well as a description of the offender.
- If you live in the Residence Halls, do not let anyone who doesn't live there into the building. Familiarize yourself with the exits so that if you need to get out quickly, you know where to go. Let residence hall staff know that the offender should not be allowed in. Ask to live in a secure building that you need your ID to get into at all times.

### Know How to Contact Public Safety or the Police

- Regardless of the time of day, if you feel uneasy or unsafe please call Public Safety at 320-308-3333 and request an escort.
- Keep emergency phone numbers near your phone, or program the numbers in on speed-dial.
- Learn where the campus emergency Blue Light Telephones are located on campus and how to use them.

### Walking Around Campus

- Familiarize yourself with the layout of the campus. Plan the safest route to your destination; choose well-lit, busy pathways and streets.
- Share your class schedule only with trusted individuals.
- If you are being followed, change direction and go to the nearest business or home; knock on the door, and request that someone call the Police. It will be helpful to Police if you have a description of the individual who followed you.

### Safety in the Residence Halls

- Always lock your door; even when you're sleeping or just going down the hall.
- Do not allow strangers to enter your room. Do not open your door unless you can identify the person.
- Do not let unknown individuals "tailgate;" ask who they are visiting and offer to call Public Safety.
- Report lost or stolen residence hall keys immediately to your residence hall staff.
- Report any malfunctioning locks, doors or windows to your residence life staff.

- Do not leave messages on your door about when you will be returning to your room.
- Tell your CA or roommate or friend if you are planning to be away overnight or for a few days.
- Report any suspicious persons or activities to your residence hall staff, Public Safety or Police.
- Secure your valuables and engrave expensive items with identifying information.
- Do not leave your identification, keys, wallets, checkbooks, or other valuables in open view.
- Get to know your CA, residence life staff and neighbors.

Consider

Self-defense classes. Ask the Women’s Center about information on Self-defense classes.

# Resources for Help

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**St. Cloud State University** resides in three counties. For that reason depending on where you live, you may have to contact different departments and resources for help.

For all emergencies call.....**911**

Law Enforcement

- St. Cloud Police Department non-emergency .....(320) 251-1200
- Stearns County Sheriff’s Department.....(320) 259-3700
- Benton County Sheriff’s Department.....(320) 968-7201
- Sherburne County Sheriff’s Department.....(763) 241-5245

Hospital/Medical Resources

- St. Cloud Hospital.....(320) 251-2700
- Toll Free .....1-800-835-6652
- Emergency Trauma Center .....(320) 255-5656
- Planned Parenthood of Minnesota .....(320) 252-9504
- Toll Free .....1-800-230-7526

Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking

- Anna Maries Alliance.....(320) 253-6900
- Toll free.....1-800-950-2203
- Central Minnesota Sexual Assault Center.....(320) 251-4357
- Toll free.....1-800-237-5090

On Campus resources

- Public Safety.....(320) 308-3333
- SCSU Women’s Center.....(320) 308-4958
- Gender Violence Prevention Program.....(320) 308-3995
- Health Services.....(320) 308-3191
- Counseling & Psychological Services.....(320) 308-3171
- Residential Life.....(320) 308-2166