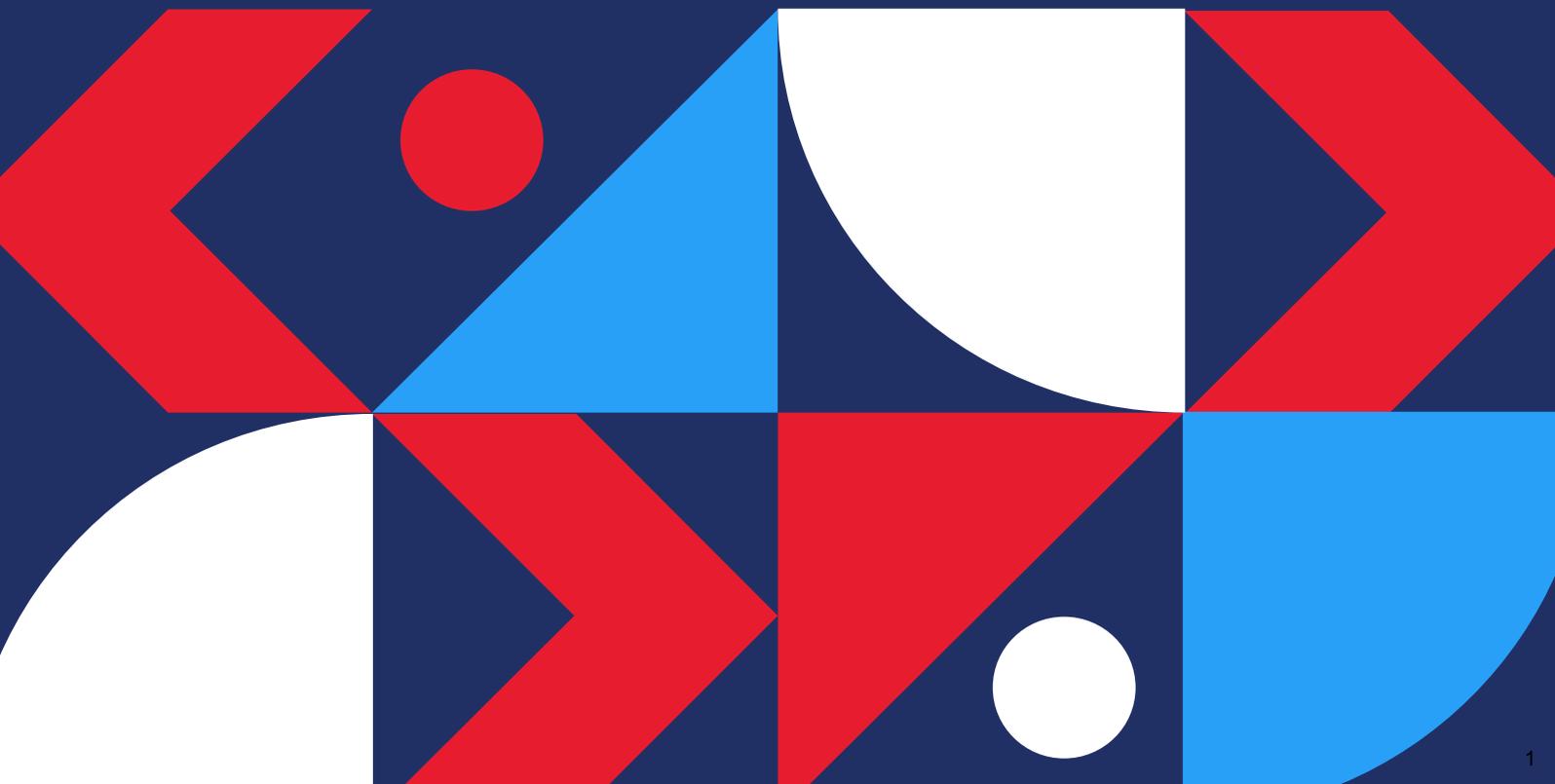




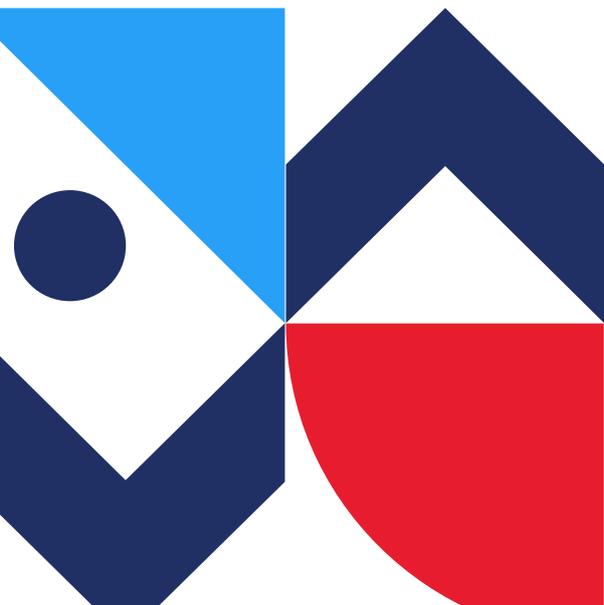
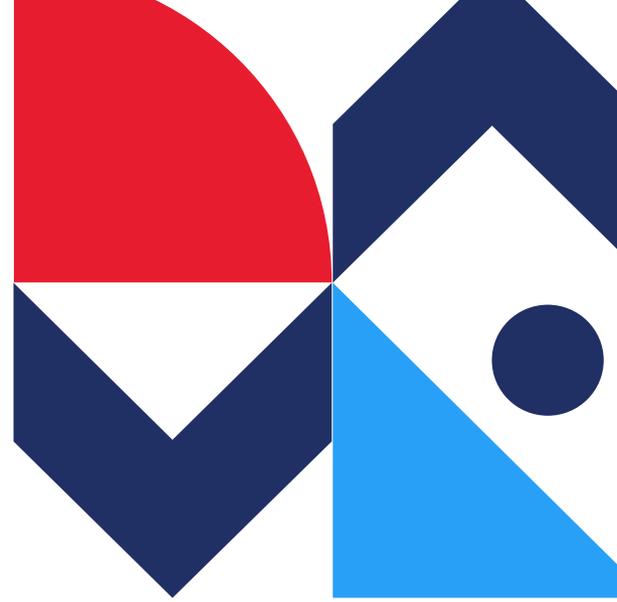
FORT BEND
WOMEN'S CENTER

Domestic Abuse Moving Safety Guide

3 Men Movers + Fort Bend Women's Center



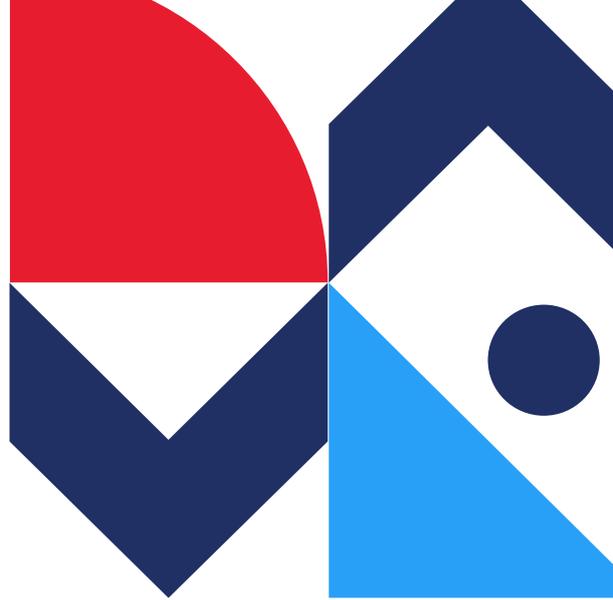
The most dangerous and difficult time for domestic violence victims is when trying to leave toxic situations and move out.



“What we do know is that because of COVID-19 there has been a dramatic increase in domestic violence, not only in our county but around the world... it is a particularly dangerous time for victims who are still with their abusers.”

Peggy Wright
*Director of Sexual Assault Counseling
Program at Fort Bend Women's Center*

To stop the spread of domestic violence, 3 Men Movers and Fort Bend Women's Center are offering this free moving safety guide.



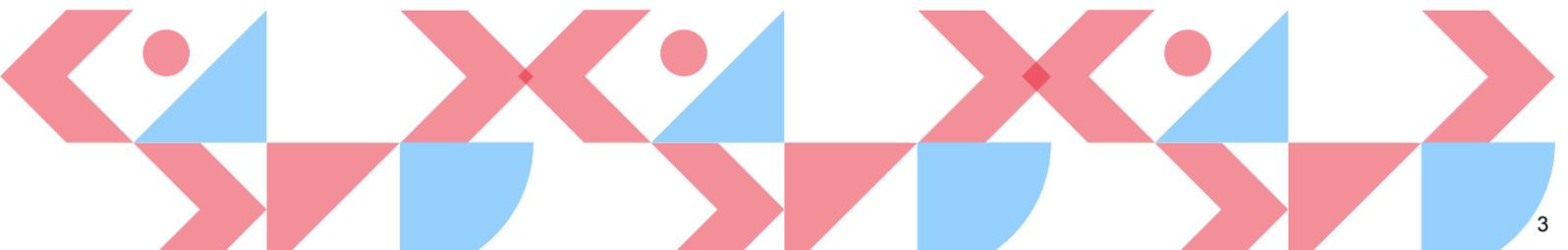
A Survivor's Guide to Moving Out Safely

If you're experiencing domestic violence and need to leave quickly, you may be too anxious or frightened to consider the details.

Oftentimes, people escaping abuse don't have lots of time to plan. So, below is a plan to follow.

Do what works for your situation and stay safe.

If abuse has escalated to the point that you fear for your life or that of any children in the house, please call 9-1-1.



Before Moving: Plan Your Exit

1. SET ASIDE MONEY WHEN YOU CAN

Shelters offer services free of charge. It's still a great idea to have your own money and be independent. Set up a **checking or savings account** in your own name at a bank that is separate from your partner.

2. GATHER YOUR MOST IMPORTANT AND VALUABLE ITEMS

It doesn't have to be all at once, but set aside what you can. Make copies of important documents so your abuser won't find them missing and catch onto your plan.

Example: extra car keys, emergency cash, insurance cards, birth/marriage certificates, social security cards, health records, extra medications, debit/credit cards, extra clothes, children's clothing or supplies, any photos/journals or other evidence of physical abuse.

3. CREATE A CODE WORD, PHRASE, OR SIGNAL

If you have children or other loved ones living with you and your abuser, they need to know **exactly** what to do when you say this. Also fill-in any trusted adults who are helping you move.

Examples of a plan: Go to a neighbor's home, ask your school staff to call/text me, call grandma.

ON AVERAGE, NEARLY 20 PEOPLE PER MINUTE ARE PHYSICALLY ABUSED BY AN INTIMATE PARTNER IN THE UNITED STATES. DURING ONE YEAR, THIS EQUATES TO MORE THAN 10 MILLION WOMEN AND MEN.

— NCADV

(National Coalition Against Domestic Violence)

4. IF POSSIBLE, GET YOUR OWN CELL PHONE

Some studies estimate that up to 94% of abusers spy on their victim's cellphone. Many IPS (intimate partner surveillance) apps can be installed without even touching a cell phone.

If you can get your own phone, use a passcode that can't be easily guessed. **DO NOT** ditch the old phone, it could enrage the abuser.

5. TO PLAN YOUR MOVE, USE A PUBLIC COMPUTER AT A LIBRARY, SCHOOL, OR FRIEND'S HOUSE

If you know where you'll be moving, set up mail forwarding through your local Post Office, or [do it online](#). If you don't know where you're going, you can get help from a shelter when you're there. **Log out of all services and clear your history** when you're done.

6. KNOW YOUR OPTIONS: CALL SHELTERS IN ADVANCE

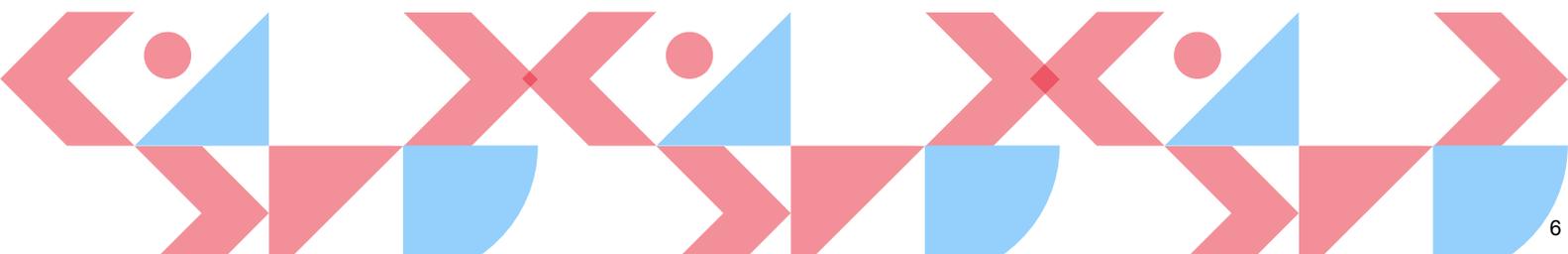
Call shelters to learn the policies about whom they allow to stay or visit. Even if there isn't room, **no shelter will turn you away**. Hotels can be used when centers are full. Shelter staff will assist you with things like meals, health or child care, training, counseling, waivers and more.

7. KNOW THE BEST TIME TO LEAVE

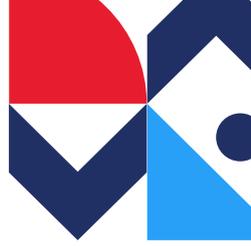
If you live with your partner, ask yourself: when do they go to work or leave the home for extended periods of time? Are there any rooms you feel safe in that you can exit from in case you have to move quickly? **If you don't live with your partner, consider:** *When is the best time for you to be alone or have privacy?*

8. AVOID REVEALING ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR PLAN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

You'll need to *memorize* important information, like phone numbers or addresses of trusted neighbors, friends, family, or shelters. **If you have children, tell them to memorize it too.** Agree on a **code word/phrase** that will let *everyone involved know what to do* when it is used.



On Move Day: Time is of the Essence



9. CONFIRM THE DETAILS WITH YOUR MOVERS & OTHERS

Review how you want your move to work. Go over your code words or escape plan with your kids or people who are helping you move. Use a public computer (like at most shipping stores) to print out the destination in case your phone is being spied on.

10. MAKE SURE YOUR ESSENTIALS ARE READY TO GO

Grab the essentials that you packed previously and go. Remember those copies you made? Leave them in case you don't want your abuser to catch on that you've left.

11. IF YOU DON'T HAVE BOXES (OR THE MONEY TO GET TO THEM)

Ask your local grocery store. It's a good fix if you have no money. Your moving company can also provide these—especially if they have packing services.

12. LOCK UP ANYTHING THAT CAN BE USED AS A WEAPON

Make sure they are as hard to reach as possible.

Also, review where your exits and windows are in case you have to escape quickly.

Example: putting things like guns, knives, or bats in a safe, on top of kitchen cabinets or in a toilet water tank.

13. REVIEW YOUR DESTINATION

Know where you will go and how you will get there.

Have your printed directions ready—especially if you think your cell phone is being used to spy on you.

14. IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

Ask the front office to change release privileges so an abusive partner cannot pick them up after finding out you have left. Sometimes when abusers feel they have lost control, they may try to lash out and retaliate by hurting your loved ones. Do this at the day and time you're planning to leave a shared home.

15. DITCH THE COMPROMISED CELL PHONE

Remember: it's *highly* likely that your abuser is spying on your location and any info passes to/from your phone. Once you are safely on your way to your destination, that is the time to ditch it or do a factory reset. But first, **log out of every online and app account you own.**



NOTE: Resetting your phone will remove your current apps and settings, so you'll have to download them again. If you think your email was hacked, **only access it through a computer.**



Update each account password and its security questions—to something the abuser can't guess. **Change your email password first.** Social media and other apps will often send location info to your email to authorize any changes.

16. CAN'T DITCH THE COMPROMISED PHONE?

Disable your Bluetooth, Bluetooth scanning, and location (usually called Location Sharing in your Settings or menu bar). This way, your phone can't communicate with other devices. Disable Bluetooth scanning under settings. Apps can share your location using this even if your Bluetooth is off. **Check each application in your privacy and security settings** to ensure suspicious-looking apps cannot access and share your information. Download Google Voice, a free service that generates a virtual phone number you can use to make/screen calls or send texts.

Ensure that no one can make changes to your wireless service. If you're the account holder for your wireless service, call and **ask them to change their verbal PIN**. Many providers will waive fees if you are domestic violence victim and setting up new service.

"No anti-spyware tool effectively detects IPS-relevant apps."

—*The Spyware Used in Intimate Partner Violence*, Cornell University.

17. DISABLE LOCATION TAGS ON YOUR PHOTOS

Cellphone cameras often tag locations to your pictures. This could be used to find your location, so **disable it under Camera Settings**.

18. HAVE YOUR PERSONAL PHONE EASILY AVAILABLE & SET UP EMERGENCY SOS

Using your phone's SOS feature is easy and will call the police first. Then it will alert your emergency contacts in case you are in danger.

iPhone

- *PRESS + HOLD SIDE BUTTON AND ONE VOLUME BUTTON UNTIL THE EMERGENCY SOS SLIDER APPEARS.*
- *DRAG THE EMERGENCY SOS SLIDER TO CALL EMERGENCY SERVICES.*
- *CONTINUE TO HOLD DOWN THE SIDE BUTTON AND A VOLUME BUTTON. A COUNTDOWN WILL START AND AN ALERT WILL SOUND.*

Android

- *OPEN YOUR PHONE'S SETTINGS, GO TO "PERSONAL," SELECT "PRIVACY AND EMERGENCY," AND CLICK "SEND SOS MESSAGES."*
- *ENABLE THE SOS FEATURE BY CLICKING THE TOGGLE AT THE TOP RIGHT. IT WILL PROMPT YOU TO AGREE TO A DISCLAIMER.*
- *ONCE YOU ACCEPT THE TERMS, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO SET UP SOS MESSAGES.*

19. IN CASE OF DANGER DURING YOUR MOVE

Use your Emergency SOS buttons or call 9-1-1 on your phone. Use the secret code/phrase/signal with any children or people who are helping you move. Do not run to where your children or pets are in case your partner tries to hurt them. If you must go to another room, make sure it has an exit.

20. IF YOUR ABUSER SHOWS UP UNEXPECTEDLY

If s(he) is already home or shows up when your friend or movers arrive, **they should be prepared**. For movers, this means acting on their privacy move policies.

For anyone else helping you move, this means acting on your emergency code word or signal. If your partner becomes threatening or violent, **call 9-1-1**.

Example: Per our 3 Men Movers privacy policy, this includes appearing as if they have the wrong house.

21. HAVE IN-CAR NAVIGATION? DISABLE IT

Turn off any GPS navigation in your car or if you have it on your phone. This is where the printed directions to your destination will come in handy.

22. REACH OUT TO YOUR SAFE PLACE

Whether you're going to a shelter or a friend's home, **reach out first**. They may be able to help you with transportation. **One of the first things you should do is get a protective order** (take any evidence you gathered previously.)

If you have **pets**, ask if the shelter is pet-friendly. Typically, service and support animals are welcome. If not, you can foster your pet with someone you trust. Keep them out of the abuser's reach in case he or she tries to retaliate.



After Moving: Protect Your Future

23. GET & KEEP COPIES OF YOUR PROTECTIVE ORDER

A domestic violence attorney or the domestic attorney's office can help you get a protective order. Shelter advocates may be able to assist you with paperwork or provide legal referrals. Children and pets can be included on these orders, too. Carry a certified copy wherever you go. Addresses may be on these documents or police reports, so consider using a P.O. box or a friend's address for your mail. Be careful who and where you submit your new phone number and address.

24. ASK FOR SERVICE DEPOSIT WAIVERS

In Texas, the deposit for utilities (like gas, electricity, and wireless/phone service) can be waived or reduced for domestic violence survivors or low-income individuals.

You must get a waiver signed by a Certifying Entity and fax it to the utility company. Entities that can sign utility waivers are:

- a. Family violence centers
- b. Treating medical staff
- c. Law enforcement personnel
- d. Office of Texas District or County Attorney
- e. Office of the Attorney General
- f. Grantees of the Texas Equal Access to Justice Foundation

"It is crucial that you do not tell your abuser, his family, his friends, or any mutual friends of your plans to leave. This could sabotage your plans, or even worse, cost you your life."

Peggy Wright

Director of Sexual Assault Counseling Program at Fort Bend Women's Center

25. CHANGE UP YOUR ROUTINE

If you take the same route to/from work, take a *different* route. Avoid going to the places your abuser knows. If you normally work or shop at nights, try switching to the daytime. The most vulnerable time for survivors is when they leave and the abusive partner has lost control. Ensure your abuser can't predict where you're going.

26. NOTIFY YOUR WORKPLACE

Give a photo of the abuser to your work supervisors, security staff, or coworkers that you trust *and* work closely with at the same times. They don't have to know the details, but they should be aware that (s)he isn't allowed near the premises to harass, stalk, or threaten you, via a protective/restraining order. You can also alert authorities at your children's school, even if you changed their schools. Give them a copy of the protective order if necessary.

27. UNLIST YOUR NEW PHONE NUMBER. LOCK DOWN NEW EMAILS OR SOCIAL ACCOUNTS

Abusers will often show lots of remorse, cry, or even threaten suicide in order to get back in your life. **This is a manipulative tactic to regain control**, and they may also try this through mutual friends or family. Unfortunately, you'll have to **increase your security** to avoid being pressured:

- First, **set up two-factor authentication**.
- Then do a **social media cleanse**. Block your abuser and their friends. Don't allow yourself to be **tagged in photos** without reviewing them. Don't share location tags or check-ins so they can't see where you now live.
- If you **share mutual custody** of children, shelters can connect you with a family violence attorney.
- Ask your wireless company to **change or unlist your new phone number**.
- Avoid giving your personal information to companies who **state in their privacy policy** that it could be sold for marketing purposes.

28. SET UP SECURITY IF YOU HAVE YOUR OWN SPACE

Pick security systems (like cameras and alarms) with **motion-sensitive lighting** and backup that **won't fail in bad weather** or **can't work without WiFi**. Ask companies to make sure a **simple laser can't disable the security system**. Alarm companies may also provide survivors discounts or waivers. **Replace wooden doors with steel or metal doors**. Secure doors, windows, and garages with security bars or locks so they **can't be opened from the outside**. Security bars can be found at hardware stores like Lowe's or Home Depot.

GET HELP FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS IN AN ABUSIVE SITUATION, PLEASE CONTACT THE FOLLOWING:

- * [Signs You're in an Abusive Relationship](#)- Mayo Clinic
- * [Get help for digital spying](#)- DIY Cybersecurity for Domestic Violence
- * [Fort Bend County Women's Center](#)-

24/7 FREE & CONFIDENTIAL HOTLINE:

281-342-HELP (4357)

WAYS TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS

- * [Houston Area Women's Center](#)

24/7 FREE & CONFIDENTIAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE:

1-800-256-0551

SEXUAL ASSAULT HOTLINE:

1-800-256-0661

*** National Domestic Violence
Hotline**

24/7 FREE & CONFIDENTIAL HOTLINE:

1-800-799-7233

See your legal rights in Texas:

*** RAINN**

(RAPE, ABUSE & INCEST NATIONAL NETWORK)-

[THE LAWS IN YOUR STATE: TEXAS](#)

REDROVER

HELP FOR SURVIVORS WITH PETS

SHOP ON AMAZON & DONATE

HOW TO GET A PROTECTIVE ORDER

GET A UTILITY WAIVER LETTER HERE

BROUGHT TO YOU BY 3 MEN MOVERS AND FORT BEND WOMEN'S CENTER

