

# If You're Thinking of Leaving

If you are at-risk of or currently experiencing domestic violence and thinking of leaving your relationship, this information sheet lists some important things to consider in making a plan to leave.

## Talk to Someone You Trust

Your first step is to talk to someone you trust like a friend, family member, co-worker, or spiritual advisor. Share with them what has been happening in your relationship and talk to them about how they can help you stay safe. This will help reduce the isolation you're feeling and provide you with support to seek out the assistance you need to do what's best for you and your family.

## Start Looking for Information and Help

There are many excellent sources of information to help you if you're thinking of leaving an abusive relationship. If you live in an area with a family violence information centre, this is an excellent place to start gathering information. Another great place to start is by calling the Government of Alberta's Family Violence Info Line at 310-1818. They can refer you to services in your area and help you start the safety planning process.

For information on the legal issues that you may need to deal with if you leave an abusive relationship, contact the Government of Alberta's Resolution and Court Administration Services by calling 1-855-738-4747 or visiting [www.rcas.alberta.ca](http://www.rcas.alberta.ca).

## Create a Safety Plan

Start putting together a safety plan that outlines where you can go if you need to leave in a hurry, how you will get there, and what you will need to bring with you. When you're safety planning, you should also think about issues like financial support, health care needs, and schooling for your children. Talk to your children about what they should do in an emergency—this is important to ensuring their safety and yours. More information about safety planning is available by visiting <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/abuse-bullying/15727.html>, calling the Family Violence Info Line at 310-1818, or contacting your local family violence information centre.



Consider creating code words to use with your children and trusted family and friends, if there's an emergency. Having this and other safety planning measures in place, before an emergency happens, will help keep you and your children as safe as possible.

## Consider whether to get a protection order

If you fear for your safety, you may be able to apply for a protection order from the court. Protection orders can require your abusive partner, spouse, or family member to stay away from you and the family home, stop communicating with you, give you temporary possession of personal property like pets or vehicles, among other things.

An Emergency Protection Order (EPO) is an option available if you require immediate protection from your abusive spouse, partner, or family member. A Queen's Bench Protection Order (QBPO) is an option available if you require protection in a non-emergency situation.

To learn more about protection orders and what options might be right for you, call the Family Violence Info Line at 310-1818, contact Legal Aid Alberta's Emergency Protection Order Program at 1-866-845-3425, or call your local victim services unit at 310-0000 then 780-427-3460. You can also read our information sheets on EPOs and QBPOs by visiting [www.willownet.ca](http://www.willownet.ca) or [www.cplea.ca/publications](http://www.cplea.ca/publications).

## Think about safe places to go

If you and your children decide to leave your home, make sure you have a list of safe places where you can stay. Ask trusted family, friends, or neighbours if they would be willing to provide you with accommodation if you decide to leave your home. If you don't have anywhere to turn, locate your nearest emergency shelter by calling the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters at 1-866-331-3933 or visit <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/abuse-bullying/15670.html>.



You may want to consider strategies to keep your abusive spouse or partner from knowing your location, if you're worried about him or her finding you. If you apply for a protection order, keep in mind that it is only valid and enforceable in Alberta. If you leave the province, the order will no longer apply.

## Learn about applying for interim custody of your children

If you have children and decide to leave an abusive relationship, you may need to apply for interim child custody or a parenting order. In some cases, if you don't apply for one of these orders, you could face criminal charges for kidnapping or lose custody of your children.

To learn more about how to apply for interim custody and what you should have prepared before you leave, read our resources **Applying for Interim Custody and Parenting** and **Families and the Law: Child Custody and Parenting**, available at [www.willownet.ca](http://www.willownet.ca) or [www.cplea.ca/publications](http://www.cplea.ca/publications). It is also a good idea to contact a lawyer, Legal Aid Alberta, your local legal clinic, or the Government of Alberta's Resolution and Court Administration Services to answer any questions about the process.

## How will you financially support yourself and your children?

Make a financial plan that you can follow if you decide to leave your relationship. Consider your monthly expenses and income sources. If you want to leave but know you won't be able to pay your bills, there are emergency financial support options available through Alberta Works, call 1-866-644-5135. You can also apply for interim child support and spousal or partner support by making a court application.

To learn more, read **Financial Support Options** and **Families and the Law: Financial Support**, available at [www.cplea.ca/publications](http://www.cplea.ca/publications). If you're thinking of making a court application for financial support, contact a lawyer, Legal Aid Alberta, your local legal clinic, or the Government of Alberta's Resolution and Court Administration Services to answer any questions about the process.

## Know where to turn for information and advice

**Family Violence Info Line** is available 24 hours a day in more than 170 languages. They can provide you with information on safety planning and refer you to your local family violence information centre, call 310-1818.

**Government of Alberta Resolution and Court Administration Services** may be able to help if you need information about preparing for family court applications before you leave. Call 1-855-738-4747 or visit [www.rcas.alberta.ca](http://www.rcas.alberta.ca).

**Alberta Works Emergency Financial Support** may be able to help you make ends meet if you're planning to flee an abusive relationship: Call 1-866-644-5135 or visit [http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/RRM-PUB\\_fs\\_supports\\_fleeing\\_abuse.pdf](http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/RRM-PUB_fs_supports_fleeing_abuse.pdf)

**Legal Aid Alberta's Emergency Protection Order Program (EPOP)** can provide you with information about protection orders in Alberta. In Edmonton, call 780-422-9222; in Calgary, call 403-297-5260; in Lethbridge, call 403-388-3162; other areas, call 1-866-845-3425

**Alberta Council of Women's Shelters** can help you find your nearest emergency shelter and can connect you with local services. Call 1-866-331-3933 or visit <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/abuse-bullying/15670.html>.

**WillowNet: Abuse and the Law in Alberta** provides plain language legal information including all of the information sheets in this series: [www.willownet.ca](http://www.willownet.ca).

**LegalAve** provides plain language information about family law in Alberta: [www.legalave.ca](http://www.legalave.ca).



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