

## Plan for your safety

### Information for older people who may be at risk of elder abuse

This Help Sheet will help you to think about planning for your safety in an emergency. You can also use it to record details of your own safety plan. The information here is a guide to help you think about what may work for your circumstances.

### What is elder abuse?

Elder abuse is any act which causes harm to an older person and is carried out by someone they know and trust such as family or friends.

The abuse can be: **physical**—such as hitting or shoving; **financial**—using someone's property, finances or other assets illegally or improperly; **emotional**—such as verbal abuse and threats; or **sexual**—including unwanted sexual acts or touching. It can also include **neglect**, such as failing to provide for someone's care needs and **social** abuse, such as isolating them from family, friends and/or social groups.

Often more than one type of abuse is used. Some forms of elder abuse are criminal acts, for example, theft, fraud and assault.

No one deserves to be abused. Everyone has the right to live in safety and to have control over their own life. If you or someone you know is experiencing elder abuse, remember, you are not alone and help is available.

### What is a safety plan?

A safety plan is a plan of action covering what you can do to protect yourself if you are faced with an abusive situation. It includes who to contact for help and what to take if you have to leave in a hurry.

Of course, safety planning is not a guarantee of safety, but being prepared will help you take the steps you need to protect yourself in an emergency.



**Use the safety plan attached to record the things that will help you to stay safe.**

**Keep it somewhere safe where you can find it easily in an emergency.**

### Feeling isolated, unsafe or controlled?

**Contact Seniors Rights Victoria – Helpline 1300 368 821, 10am–5pm, Mon–Fri**

A free, confidential service with lawyers and advocates to help you understand your rights and take control.

## **Steps you can take to improve your personal safety**

- Contact Seniors Rights Victoria for advice and support
- Consider getting a personal safety alarm
- Ask neighbours to be alert for any signs of a problem
- Make a code-word to signal neighbours or friends that they need to call 000
- Keep a list of up-to-date telephone numbers
- Get a mobile phone (consider a user-friendly, easy-read model)
- Make a safe place where you can go if the person starts to be abusive
- Consider talking to the Police about your safety
- Think about the safest way to communicate with the abuser, perhaps by phone, mail or in the company of someone else.

## **Steps you can take to improve your home safety**

- Improve outside lighting
- Change locks
- Consider adding a second phone: perhaps in the bedroom; perhaps one with automatic dialing or large numbers.

## **Steps you can take to improve your financial safety**

- Review who has access to your bank accounts
- Review or set up Powers of Attorney
- Avoid keeping cash in the house, or lock it up along with other valuables
- Open your own bank account
- Set up direct debits or Centrepay so that bills are automatically deducted in affordable, regular amounts
- Save a bit of money if possible.

## **Other safety steps you can take**

- Consider joining a social group
- Think about supportive people in your circle of friends and family whom you can call on if you feel you need to talk
- Join a community visitor / telephone check scheme or Police Community Register (contact local Police station or local council for details).

### **Planning for an emergency**

#### **Plan where you can go in an emergency.**

Think about safe places in your local area and how you may get there. Perhaps you can walk to a neighbour's home or to a local shop or community centre where you can call for help. Think about where you can stay and how to get there. Try to have a few options for places to go where there are people who can help.

**Prepare an 'emergency bag'.** It may include essential medications, copies of important paperwork, keys, clothing and other items from your list of things to take in an emergency.

**Agree on a code to signal others that you need help.** Share your code with trusted neighbors or family members and ask them to call 000 (or another appropriate response) when you use the code.

**Plan for the safety of pets.** Think about how pets can be removed to safety and be cared for.

**Leave items you may need with someone you trust.** These may include money, spare keys, clothes and copies of important documents. This will help you to leave quickly.

**Plan an escape route out of the house.** Think about the safest way to get out. Consider danger areas such as where weapons are kept, rooms with only one way out and areas with no telephone. Consider your own physical abilities—do you need to avoid stairs. It can help to visualise and practice the way out.

## My Safety Plan in case of emergency

Keep this page in a safe place. Check it from time to time to remind yourself what's in it, keep it up to date and provide a copy to someone you trust.

My name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date plan made/checked: \_\_\_\_\_

My escape route out of the house is:

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My code to signal others that I need help is:

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The people who will respond if I use the code are:

Name	Phone number/s (including mobile)

The places I can go in an emergency are:

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My emergency bag is located at:

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I will place/ have placed (circle) items I may need with a trusted person:

Name of person: \_\_\_\_\_

My safety plan for my pets is: \_\_\_\_\_

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## What I need to take in the event of an emergency:

- Address Book (keep all important numbers up to date)
- ATM / Credit Cards
- Bank Book/s
- Cheque Book/s
- Birth certificate
- Car keys
- Driver licence
- Eyeglasses
- Emergency bag (pre-packed)
- Hearing aids
- Medicare card
- Concession cards
- Medications
- House / garage keys
- House title / lease / rental agreement
- Insurance papers
- Jewelry
- Aids (eg. wheelchair, walking stick, frame, shower chair)
- Money
- Mobile phone
- Passport
- Pension card
- Photographs
- Power of Attorney documents
- Taxi card
- Will
- Immigration papers
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
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My Emergency Numbers		
Police / Fire / Ambulance		000
My Case Manager		
My GP / doctor		
My specialist doctor		
My home care service		
My home nursing service		
My personal alarm provider		
Taxi		
Hospital		
Chemist		
Friend/family/ neighbour		
Friend/family/ neighbour		
Friend/family/ Neighbour		
Friend/family/ Neighbour		
Friend/family/ Neighbour		

## Where to get more help

### Seniors Rights Victoria – 1300 368 821

**10am–5pm, Mon–Fri.**

Free, confidential support, legal advice, information and education to help prevent elder abuse and safeguard the rights, dignity and independence of older people.

### Lifeline—131 114

support in a crisis & suicide prevention. 24 hrs 7 days.

### Women’s Domestic Violence Crisis Service—1800 015 188

Information, support and emergency accommodation. 24 hrs 7 days.

### Home at Last—1300 765 178

Helps older people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or are wanting to plan their housing future.

### Family Drug Help—1300 660 068

Support and information for people concerned about a relative or friend using alcohol or other drugs. 24 hrs 7 days.

### 1800 RESPECT—1800 737 732

**[www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)**

National sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service.

### Sexual Assault Crisis Line—1800 806 292

Confidential, telephone crisis counselling service for victim/survivors of both past and recent sexual assault.

*Seniors Rights Victoria is responsible for the content of this Help Sheet.*

*This publication provides a general summary only of the subject matter covered and is for information only. It must not be relied upon as legal advice. People should seek professional advice about their specific case.*

*Seniors Rights Victoria is not liable for any error or omission in this publication.*

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