**Crime Victims Safety Tips:**

**Personal Safety Plan**

* If there is an argument, try to be in a place that has an exit and not in a bathroom, kitchen, or room that may contain weapons.
* Practice getting out of your home safely. Identify which doors, windows, elevator, or stairwell to use.
* Identify one or more neighbors you can tell about the violence and ask them to call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.
* Devise a code to use with your children, family, friends, and neighbors when you need the police.
* Decide and plan where you will go if you ever have to leave home.
* Use your instincts and judgement (your ‘gut’ feeling). In a dangerous situation, placate the abuser if possible, to keep him or her calm.

***Remember: You do not deserve to be hit or threatened***

**When Preparing to Leave**

* Open a checking account or savings account in your own name.
* Leave money, an extra set of keys, copies of important documents, and extra clothes and medicines in a safe place or with someone you trust  IF IT IS SAFE FOR YOU TO DO SO. Do not do this if you think your batterer might find out and retaliate against you.
* Get your own post office box.
* Find a safe place where you and your children can go or a person who can lend you money.
* Always keep the shelter phone number and some change or a calling card on you for emergency phone calls.
* If you have pets, make arrangements for them to be cared for in a safe place. The Women’s Shelter may be able to help with these arrangements.

***Remember: Leaving your batterer is the most dangerous time***

**WITH A PROTECTIVE ORDER**

* If you or your children have been threatened or assaulted, you can request a protective order from the District Attorney’s Office Crime Victims Unit.
* Always keep your protective order with you.
* Call the police if your partner violates the protective order.
* Inform family members, friends, and neighbors that you have a protective order in effect.
* Think of alternative ways to keep safe if the police do not respond immediately.

**IN YOUR OWN RESIDENCE**

* If you stay in your home, lock your windows and change locks on your doors.
* Develop a safety plan with your children for when you are not with them.
* Inform your child's school, day care, etc., about who has permission to pick up your child.
* Inform your neighbors and the landlord that your partner no longer lives with you, and that they should call the police if they see him/her near your home.
* Never call the abuser from your home; he/she may find out where you live. Never tell the abuser where you live.
* Request an unlisted/unpublished number from the telephone company.

**ON THE JOB AND IN PUBLIC**

* Decide who at work you will inform of your situation. Include the office building security (if possible, provide them with a picture of your batterer).
* When at work, if possible, have someone screen your telephone calls.
* Have someone escort you to and from your car, bus, or train.
* If at all possible, use a variety of routes to come and go from home

**WHAT YOU NEED TO TAKE, IF IT IS SAFE TO DO SO.**

***REMEMBER, ALL OF THE THESE ITEMS CAN BE REPLACED, YOU CANNOT***.

**IDENTIFICATION**

* Driver's license
* Birth certificate
* Children's birth certificates
* Social security cards

**FINANCIAL**

* Money and/or credit cards (in your name) Remember, though, that credit cards may be ‘traced’
* Checking and/or savings account books

**LEGAL PAPERS**

* Protective order
* Marriage license
* Lease, rental agreement, house deed
* Car registration and insurance papers
* Health and life insurance papers
* Medical records for you and your children
* School records
* Work permits/Green Card/Visa
* Passport
* Divorce and custody papers

**OTHER**

* Medications
* House and car keys
* Valuable jewelry
* Address book
* Pictures and sentimental items
* Change of clothes for you and your children
* If you need assistance with developing a safety plan, contact the Crime Victims Unit or The Women’s Shelter

**WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN:**

Parents who are caught up in the chaos of domestic violence often fail to recognize the impact that living in a home with violence has on children. Parents may believe that the children are unaware of the violence and therefore unaffected. In fact, most children who live with domestic violence in their families are aware and are affected.

**How children feel:**

* Frightened- children can become frightened when adults are out of control. They may fear for their safety, or the safety of parents, or that a parent may go to jail. They worry about whether the adults in their life can keep them safe, or about who will take care of them.
* Guilty- children may feel responsible for the violence, or for not being able to protect a parent. They may also feel guilty for having loving feelings toward the abusive parent
* Ashamed- they may feel that this does not happen to other children, or be embarrassed to have other children visit their home because of the violence.
* Confused- they may receive mixed messages, “Everything is fine” when they know it is not, or being told that violence is unacceptable and then having violent behavior modeled for them by a parent.
* Hopeless- because children of violent homes live with such uncertainty, they may feel that life will continue to be unpredictable, and therefore, they worry about their future. They may give up hope and decide it is not worthwhile to set goals or learn self-control.

**How children may behave:**

* Acting out- children may believe that it is okay to hit or threaten in order to get what they want. They may show little self-control. They may parrot the abusive parent’s criticism, sarcasm, and verbal abuse, toward others or toward the abused parent. They may act out in order to try to divert parents’ attention from an argument.
* Withdrawal- they may have few friends and show little emotion. They may show decreased interest in activities. They may be afraid to ask for what they need.
* Regression- they may begin or resume thumb sucking, nail biting, or bed-wetting. They may become very needy and not want to be separated from a parent.

**How children are affected:**

* Development- there is evidence that brain development even in infants is affected negatively by living with exposure to violence. Children may appear nervous, anxious, have a short attention span, and may appear to be hyperactive.
* Physical- children may develop problems with eating and sleeping, causing them to suffer from inadequate rest and nutrition. Children may develop stress related illnesses, including headaches, stomachaches, ulcers, and rashes. They may be sick more often, have more colds, flu, etc.
* Learning- children who are worried about their own safety or the safety of a parent may worry most during school hours when they are away from home. This may lead to difficulty concentrating on schoolwork, following simple directions, or staying focused on simple tasks.

**How children are at greater risk:**

* For child abuse- more than half of children whose mothers are battered are likely to be abused themselves. 45 to 70% of victims in shelters report that their abusers have also committed some form of child abuse. Child abuse is 15 times more likely to occur in families where domestic violence is present.
* For injury- children may be injured ‘indirectly’ when objects are thrown or weapons are used. Older children may be injured trying to protect a parent
* For violent behavior- 76% of all crimes against persons committed by juveniles are committed by juveniles from violent homes
* For suicide- children from violent homes are 7 times more likely to commit suicide than children from non-violent homes
* For domestic violence in their adult relationships- children who witness domestic violence between parents are up to 1000 times more likely to be in violent relationships themselves. Violence is learned behavior.