



## **Safe Harbour: NY Fast Facts: Safety Planning**

Safety planning is an ongoing process, not a one-time event. A youth's safety should be assessed when s/he is considering leaving a trafficking situation, immediately after leaving, and periodically thereafter. If there is an imminent threat to the client's safety the service provider should arrange for emergency shelter and/or contact law enforcement as necessary. Once the client is stabilized a more thorough safety assessment and plan can be completed.

**An assessment of safety should be conducted at various points of case management, including<sup>1</sup>:**

- At initial contact with the youth;
- During standard case planning meetings; and
- Before discharge.

**A successful safety plan will<sup>2</sup>:**

- Assess current and potential risks and safety concerns;
- Create strategies for avoiding or reducing the threat of harm; and
- Outline actionable steps for a client to take to stay safe in potentially dangerous situations.

**Threats against safety may be posed by<sup>3</sup>:**

- the trafficker(s);
- the traffickers' network, including other members of an organized crime network or gang; or
- family members or friends who were complacent in the trafficking situation.

**Safety for the following persons may be threatened<sup>4</sup>:**

- the youth/client;
- the youth's family members or caretakers;
- the service agency's staff.

**When brainstorming safety strategies with a survivor contemplating leaving a trafficking situation, consider the following<sup>5</sup>:**

- If in immediate danger, call 9-1-1;
- Plan an escape route or exit strategy and rehearse it if possible;
- Keep any important documents with you in preparation for an immediate departure;
- Prepare a bag with any important documents/items and a change of clothes;
- Contact trusted friends or relatives to notify them or ask for assistance; or
- Contact the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline to obtain local referrals for shelter or other social services.

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<sup>1</sup> Safety Planning Standards for Trafficked and Enslaved Persons, Safe Horizon, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Safety Planning and Prevention, National Human Trafficking Resource Center, Polaris Project, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Walts KK, French S, Moore H, Ashai S. Building child welfare response to child trafficking. Chicago, IL: Center for the Human Rights of Children and the International Organization for Adolescents; 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Safety Planning and Prevention, National Human Trafficking Resource Center, Polaris Project, 2011.



**When brainstorming safety strategies with a survivor after s/he left a trafficking situation, consider the following<sup>6</sup>:**

- Vary travel habits and daily routine;
- Consider taking out a protective order against the trafficker so he or she is legally prohibited from making contact;
- Keep any court orders and emergency numbers on hand in cases of emergency;
- Avoid visiting the same geographical area or cultural community as the trafficker;
- Consider changing phone numbers to a number unknown by the trafficker; or
- Keep an emergency cell phone at all times.

**When safety planning for an agency or staff member, consider<sup>7</sup>:**

- If your client is based in the same area as the trafficker, see the client in a space away from this region.
- Using rental cars for client-related travel when necessary so that vehicles cannot be traced to the organization, staff person, or survivor.
- Make your agency's location confidential, if appropriate (for example shelters, group homes, or other residential facilities). Do not list your agency's address on your website or identify your building with signs.
- Keep direct phone numbers or extension confidential.
- Block office and cell phone numbers from being displayed when making outgoing calls.
- When working in the community or conducting home visits, tell a colleague where you are going and when you expect to be back. Carry a cell phone when working in the community.
- When visiting a location or home which is known for violent activity consider a law enforcement escort, if necessary and appropriate.
- Avoid publicity and media. This can compromise staff and client safety, and can hinder ongoing law enforcement investigations.

**Just as no two youth are the same, no two safety plans will be exactly the same.** When working with a youth and non-offending family members to develop a safety plan consider a variety of strategies for enhancing safety. These strategies should range from how a youth can regulate his or her emotions during times of stress (i.e. grounding exercises) to strategies for leaving a trafficker.

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<sup>6</sup> Safety Planning Standards for Trafficked and Enslaved Persons, Safe Horizon, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.