

Domestic Abuse & Divorce — Safety & Legal Checklist

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If you are experiencing domestic abuse and considering divorce, this checklist is for you. Work through it carefully and at your own pace — your safety comes first.

Safety Planning — Before You Leave

- ☐ Tell a trusted person your plan — a friend, family member, or advocate
 - ☐ Know where you will go and how you will get there
 - ☐ Keep a charged phone with emergency numbers saved
 - ☐ Pack a go-bag with essentials if it is safe to do so
 - *Include medication, a change of clothes, cash and any items your children need*
 - ☐ Identify the safest time and way to leave your home
 - ☐ Have a code word with a trusted contact to signal you need help
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Important Documents — Gather and Store Safely

- ☐ Copies of your ID, passport and Social Security card
 - ☐ Children's birth certificates, passports and school records
 - ☐ Marriage certificate and any existing court orders
 - ☐ Last 3 years of tax returns — joint and individual
 - ☐ Bank and financial account statements
 - ☐ Retirement account statements and investment records
 - ☐ Mortgage or lease documents and property records
 - ☐ Health insurance cards and medical records for you and your children
 - *Store copies with a trusted person or in a safe deposit box your abuser cannot access*
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Digital Safety

- ☐ Use a private browser or a device your abuser does not have access to
- ☐ Change passwords on all important accounts — email, bank, social media
- ☐ Enable two-factor authentication on all accounts
- ☐ Check your phone for tracking apps or spyware
- ☐ Check your car for GPS tracking devices
- ☐ Review location sharing settings on your phone and apps

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- ☐ Create a new email account your abuser does not know about

Financial Safety

- ☐ Open a bank account in your name only at a different bank
 - *Do not use a shared computer or device to do this*
- ☐ Begin setting aside small amounts of cash when it is safe to do so
- ☐ Get a copy of your credit report to identify all accounts in your name
- ☐ Identify any accounts or credit cards opened in your name without your knowledge
- ☐ Note all marital assets — home, vehicles, retirement accounts, investments

Legal Steps — Protecting Yourself in Court

- ☐ Contact a family law attorney before taking any legal steps
- ☐ File for an Order for Protection (OFP) if you are in immediate danger
 - *You do not need a police report or prior conviction to file for an OFP in Minnesota*
- ☐ Document all incidents of abuse — dates, times, what happened, any witnesses
- ☐ Save all threatening texts, emails and voicemails — do not delete
- ☐ Photograph any injuries and store images somewhere your abuser cannot access
- ☐ Request police reports if law enforcement was ever called to your home
- ☐ Notify your attorney of any existing OFPs or prior legal history

If an Order for Protection Is Violated

- ☐ Call 911 immediately
- ☐ Document the violation — date, time, what happened
- ☐ Report the violation to your attorney as soon as possible
- ☐ Do not engage with the abuser — let law enforcement handle it
- ☐ Each violation is a criminal offense and strengthens your legal case

Minnesota Resources

- ☐ National DV Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 (24/7)
- ☐ Day One Crisis Hotline (MN): 1-866-223-1111

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- ☐ The Domestic Abuse Project (Minneapolis): domesticabuseproject.com
- ☐ Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women: mcbw.org
- ☐ Cornerstone Advocacy Service (Hennepin County): cornerstonemn.org

Need legal help? RWI Law is here. Visit rwilaw.com or call 612-688-1649.