

Perinatal Safety Planning

What is a perinatal safety plan?

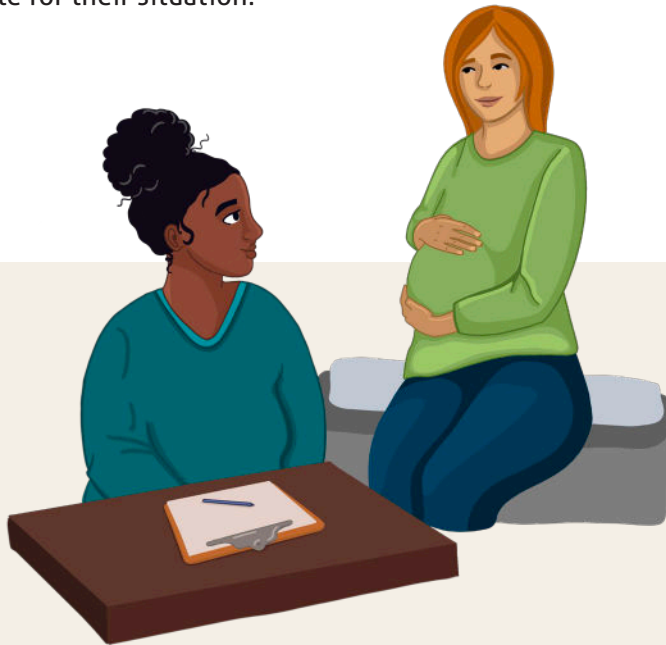
A perinatal *safety plan* is a set of possible strategies a client selects to help prevent further harm from an abuser. Every safety plan is unique and may help clients take steps to increase their safety within the relationship or if they decide to leave.

How should I create a perinatal safety plan with my client?

Work with the person in your care to make a plan that meets their needs. Know your limitations as a midwife; a trained intimate partner violence advocate is more likely to help sort through everything the client needs to do and will help create a safety plan that makes the most sense. Going through the process of making a plan can increase agency in the situation.






There is no one-size-fits-all safety plan. Some of the preparations for a safety plan might seem obvious however it can be hard to think clearly or make logical decisions during moments of crisis. It's important to know that not all these suggestions will work, and some could cause even greater risk. Survivors will know what is best for them, and what actions are or are not appropriate for their situation.

Remember not to judge or make decisions for them. 'Just leaving' is not always a safe option. Leaving an abusive partner is considered the most dangerous time for a survivor. As an abuser feels they are losing power over their victim, they can become increasingly more controlling, threatening, violent, or may even turn lethal.



KEY THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

Become familiar with a perinatal safety planning template (see resources below) as a starting point for a personalized perinatal safety plan. When creating a perinatal safety plan, it is crucial to:

-  **Start from the client's perspective about the violence**
-  **Listen effectively**
-  **Consider their concerns and questions in the process**
-  **Avoid legal or medical jargon**
-  **Communicate simply and effectively**

Look through these safety tips and work with the client to take the actions that make the most sense when creating a tailored perinatal safety plan for their specific situation. When children are involved, you may need to create a separate safety plan with input from the children.

Review and/or revise perinatal safety plans regularly.

Interview guidelines

In the situation where a client wants to talk to you, the following interview guidelines can help elicit a perinatal safety plan based on the strengths and experience of a survivor:

- Ask questions that help you learn about their coping strategies and resources
- Ask what the person has done in the past and what the outcome was
- Ask specific questions about support people, such as: does anyone in their life know about the violence? Can they think of even one person they trust to talk to about their situation? How have other people in their life reacted to their situation?

In response, a midwife should consider responses that:

- Comfort the client by explaining that the perpetrator is solely responsible for any abuse or violence and that the client does not deserve the abuse
- Let them know that they have a right to feel the way they do, whether this is feeling overwhelmed, terrified, angry, bitter, exhausted, tearful, desperate or some other emotion
- Let the person know that you know how much courage and strength it is taking for them to be talking with you about their situation

MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO ASSESS:

The most important aspects of the disclosure that need to be assessed by the midwife are:

1. The potential of the abusive partner for re-abusing and homicide
2. How committed the survivor is to the abusive relationship- i.e., whether the survivor plans to leave or stay. Whether the survivor is in the process of leaving or has already left
3. The emotional status of the survivor
4. The resources available to the survivor from their family, employer, and public
5. The children of the survivor

SUPPORTING RESOURCES:

- [Detailed and Brief Safety Planning Template](#)
- Interactive guide to safety planning: <https://www.thehotline.org/plan-for-safety/create-a-safety-plan/>

REFERENCES:

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