

# COURTESY REMINDER

## THIS TRAINING IS BEING RECORDED

- 1. Please keep your microphone and cameras off while others are presenting
- 2. For attendance purposes, please type your name and agency in the chat
- 3. Please type Questions in the chat. There will be time for Q&A at the end of the presentation

# CONTENT WARNING

The discussion today is about serving survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, and other forms of gender-based violence. This presentation does not contain explicit imagery or language. However, content does not need to be explicit to be triggering. Attendees are encouraged to take breaks and practice self-care as needed.

# SAFETY PLANNING TRAINING



- Presented by: Amber Deffenbaugh, M.A., LPC-A



# OBJECTIVES

- Understand what safety planning is
- Recognize the stages and key components
- Explore trauma-informed approaches
- Identify resources and tools for support



Family  
Violence  
Prevention  
Services, Inc.

The Battered Women  
and Children's Shelter

# WHAT IS SAFETY PLANNING?

- A personalized, practical plan to increase safety in situations involving abuse.
- Victim/survivor-centered and flexible.
- Includes strategies for:
  - - During the abuse
  - - Preparing to leave
  - - After leaving

# WHY IT MATTERS



- Safety planning can be lifesaving.
- Leaving an abuser is the most dangerous time.
- Homicide risk increases significantly during separation (TCFV).
- Survivors face barriers: fear, finances, custody, etc.

# KEY COMPONENTS OF A SAFETY PLAN



- Safe locations and escape routes
- Emergency contacts and documents
- Safety for children and pets
- Code words and signals
- Technology and digital safety considerations

# SAFETY DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT



- Plan where to move that is safer (room with a door or window).
- Know how to exit each room.
- Have keys and wallet accessible.
- Teach children what to do and use code words.
- Identify trusted people who can call police.

## Safety During a Violent Incident

Choosing the actions now that you would take if something happens may help you make quicker decisions in the moment.

Question	If you think there is going to be an argument or a violent incident, where can you move that is safer (a room with a door or window to the outside)?	Answer	
Question	Think about how to get out of each room in advance. What is the safest way to leave (which specific door, window, stairwell, etc.)?	Answer	
Question	If you need to leave, where would you go?	Answer	
Question	If you can't go there, where else might you go?	Answer	
Question	Where can you keep your keys and wallet so that you will be able to find them?	Answer	
Question	What might you tell your children about what they should do?	Answer	
Question	Is there a neighbor or trusted person who you could talk to about calling the police? How would you alert them (call, text, if they hear suspicious noises)?	Answer	
Question	Is there a code word you can use with children, family, or friends so they know to call for help?	Answer	



# PREPARING TO LEAVE

- Escalation risk increases when leaving.
- Keep documents and essentials in a safe place.
- Open a separate bank account.
- Use prepaid/alternate phones.
- Plan who you can stay with and notify.

## Safety When Preparing to Leave

If you decide to leave your partner, plans and preparation can be critical. Abusive partners too often escalate their violent behavior if they believe their partner is leaving the relationship.

Question	Do you have someone or somewhere, besides your house, you can leave some money, an extra set of keys, extra clothes, and copies of important documents?	Answer	
Question	Can you open a separate bank account to increase your independence?	Answer	
Question	Can you get an alternative/prepaid cell phone to make phone calls without your partner knowing?	Answer	
Question	Who can you talk to about staying with them when you leave?	Answer	
Question	What are some other steps you can take when preparing to leave?	Answer	

Items to think about taking or keeping with a trusted person:

- Cell phone/tablets
- ID card
- Birth certificates for you and your children
- Social Security cards
- School records
- Medical records
- Car title/registration
- Credit/debit cards
- Lease/rental agreement or deeds
- Work permits
- Passport
- Insurance papers
- Jewelry
- Medications
- Financial documents
- Sentimental items
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# AFTER LEAVING

- Change locks and passwords.
- Install security features at home.
- Notify employer and childcare of safety concerns.
- Join the Address Confidentiality Program.
- Avoid routine public locations.

## Staying Safe After Leaving

If you live away from your abusive partner, there are steps you can take to increase your safety. Some of them might work well for you and others may not. Think about other factors specific to your location and situation that will help you stay safe.

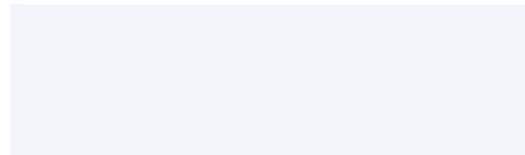
Consider the following ways to increase your safety:

- Change locks
- Change passwords on all accounts and social media
- Turn off GPS on all devices
- Make sure all windows are secure
- Have an outside lighting system with motion sensors
- Install a security system
- If available, give your workplace security a photo of your abuser
- Change store locations or public places (coffee shops, restaurants, etc.) that you frequently visit
- Talk to an advocate about how to keep your address confidential, including enrolling in the Address Confidentiality Program, if necessary

Question

What are some other steps you can take to stay safe after leaving?

Answer



# CONSIDERATIONS FOR SAFETY PLANNING WITH INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

## Supporting Immediate Safety

- Identify safe, low-barrier locations that feel accessible: 24/7 public spaces, shelters, day centers, hospitals, transit centers.
- Offer emergency contacts: 911, DV Hotline (1-800-799-7233 / text START to 88788).
- Share local crisis lines: FVPS (210-733-8810), Community Connections (210-207-1799).
- Discuss ways to reduce isolation: staying near well-lit, populated areas when possible.
- Encourage keeping essential items in a small bag (ID, medications, safe contacts, list of resources).
- Explore the option of 'location buddies'—trusted peers or case managers who can support safety check-ins.

# COMMUNICATION, SUPPORT, AND STABILIZATION PATHWAYS

- Promote safe communication: using public Wi-Fi, clearing phone history, and setting simple code words to signal “I need help.”
- Share approachable service options: day centers (Corazon, CAM), Homelink Access Points, emergency shelters, mobile outreach teams.
- Transportation support: taking time to review safe bus routes, requesting bus passes, exploring relocation support when helpful.
- Legal empowerment resources: Family Justice Center, FVPS Legal, TRLA, St. Mary's Legal, LAASA. Discussing ways to keep copies of documentation (ID, restraining orders, medical records).
- Collaborative future planning: discussing options of connecting with a case manager to access transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and long-term safety strategies.

# PROTECTING CHILDREN



- Teach children when/how to call 911.
- Have plans for safe exits or hiding spots.
- Restrict who can pick up children.
- Inform schools, daycare, and places of worship.

## Protecting Your Children's Safety

Sometimes it is important to restrict who has permission to pick up your children, including your partner. This can require a court order in some instances. If applicable, you can inform the following about pick-up permission:

- School and/or teacher
- Day Care staff and/or babysitter
- Place of worship
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Other things to consider about safety and your children:

- As appropriate, teach your children when and how to call 911.
- You can plan with your children when and how to leave if violence escalates, or that they might go to a specific place at home if they feel afraid.
- If you are worried about your partner finding your current location, talk to an advocate about how to protect your children's school or place of activity from publishing personal information and from posting pictures of your children.

Question

Where can you meet for visitation or exchanges that feels safe?

Answer

Question

Sometimes abusers use family phone plans or gifts to children as a way to track your whereabouts. How can you screen gifts or talk to your children about this?

Answer

# TECHNOLOGY SAFETY



- Turn off GPS on all devices.
- Use private email and secure passwords.
- Check for tracking apps on devices.
- Clear browser history safely.
- Use trusted public or friend's computer when needed.

## Understanding Your Technology Safety

Some things to consider about cell phones:

- Do you know how to turn off the GPS on your phone?
- Do you have a shared family plan where your partner could track you or monitor who you call?
- Is it safer for you to have a separate alternative or prepaid phone?
- Do you know how to check your list of apps to make sure something was not downloaded on your phone?

Question

What are some other ways to increase safety with your cell phone?

Answer

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Some things to consider about online safety:

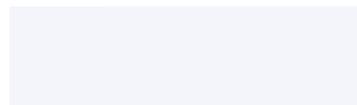
- Can you create a private email account?
- Is it safe for you to change account passwords that your abuser knows?
- Is there a public computer or a computer of a trusted friend you can use if you're worried about your online activities being monitored?
- Do you know how to delete history on your computer and how that can be unsafe in certain situations?
- If you are trying to keep your location confidential from your partner, try Googling your name to see if your location is easily found. Keep in mind to not Google your name often.

Question

What are some other ways to increase safety with your computer and/or online accounts?

Answer

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# PROTECTIVE ORDERS



- File with District or County Clerk.
- Register in new counties if moved.
- Give copies to workplace, schools, etc.
- Report violations and document them.
- Ask advocates for legal support.

## Staying Safe with a Protective Order

Abusers may obey Protective Orders, but one can never be sure which partner will obey and which will not. The following are some steps that you can take to help the enforcement of the Protective Order.

Question

Keep a copy of your Protective Order with you at all times. Where are some other places that you can keep copies?

Answer

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Make sure that your Protective Order is filed with either the District or County Clerk and you know the process of how to get a certified copy if needed. If you move to a different county in Texas, you can register your Protective Order with the county and local law enforcement. If you are worried about filing your Protective Order with your address information, talk to the Court Clerk or an advocate about how to avoid that.



### District or County Clerk

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You can give your Protective Order to local law enforcement in the city or county where you work, live, and places where you often go.



### Local Law Enforcement

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You can inform your employer, close friends, children's schools, and others that you have a Protective Order in effect and can give them copies if needed.



- Employer
- Close friends
- Children's schools
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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The local family violence program can help if issues come up with your Protective Order.



### Local Family Violence Program

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If your partner violates the Protective Order, call the police to report the violation, contact your attorney and advocate, and document all violations.



# EMOTIONAL SAFETY

- **Trust your instincts** – You are the expert on your own safety.
- **Create a support network** – Identify friends, family, or professionals you can safely talk to.
- **Plan for self-care** – Identify what helps you feel calm, grounded, and safe.
- **Limit contact with the abuser** – Block or screen communication if possible.
- **Practice positive self-talk** – Remind yourself you deserve to be safe and respected.
- **Consider professional support** – Counseling, advocacy, or support groups can help.

## Protecting Your Emotional Safety

The experience of being abused physically and/or verbally is exhausting, scary, and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life for yourself takes much energy and incredible courage. Write down some options to help you during this difficult time.

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**Question** | When you have to communicate with your partner in person or over the phone, what positive things can you do before and/or after to feel better?

**Answer** |

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**Question** | What can you do if you feel upset?

**Answer** |

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**Question** | What is one phrase that you can use to remind yourself of all your strengths?

**Answer** |

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**Question** | How can you create a peaceful space for yourself?

**Answer** |

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**Question** | What is one thing you can tell yourself when you feel like others are trying to control or abuse you?

**Answer** |

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**Question** | What are some other things that make you feel stronger?

**Answer** |



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and Children's Shelter

# TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

- The survivor is the expert in their situation.
- Listen without judgment.
- Empower with choices.
- Validate fears.
- Avoid pressure or assumptions.



# HELPFUL PHRASES

- "Would you like to create a safety plan together?"
- "You're not alone in this."
- "Is there someone you're concerned about finding you?"
- "It's okay to go at your own pace—we'll take this one step at a time."
- "Your feelings are valid—it's okay to feel overwhelmed."

# COMMUNITY ROLES



- Be prepared to respond supportively.
- Front desk/intake staff set the tone.
- First impressions build trust and safety.
- Training improves intervention and referrals.

## Ad·vo·cate, n.

A domestic violence *advocate* is a person who works toward social change and has been trained to support victims of domestic violence. They provide victims with information, referrals to resources, emotional support, and more. They may accompany victims to court or other appointments, obtain information for the victim from other organizations, answer hotline calls, facilitate a support group, or provide counseling.

# EMOTIONAL SAFETY FOR ADVOCATES

## *SUPPORTING SURVIVORS WHILE CARING FOR OURSELVES*



- **Acknowledge the impact** – Recognize how trauma exposure may affect your emotions.
- **Set healthy boundaries** – Know your limits and communicate them clearly.
- **Use supervision and debriefing** – Regularly check in with peers or supervisors.
- **Practice self-awareness** – Notice signs of burnout or compassion fatigue early.
- **Engage in regular self-care** – Prioritize rest, movement, nourishment, and joy.
- **Stay connected** – Build supportive relationships inside and outside of work.
- **Know it's okay to pause** – Take breaks when needed to regroup emotionally.
- **Honor your purpose** – Remind yourself why this work matters to you.

# PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

- Disclaimer that this is a tool to empower not a strict plan to safety
- Utilize warm handoffs

# HOMELINK INTERVENTIONS FOR SURVIVORS

- **Prevention:** Households who are at imminent risk of losing their current housing or becoming homeless within 14 days and lack the supports needed to obtain housing or remain stably housed.
- **Example:** Short-term rental assistance until survivors can resume paying rent independently
- **Diversion:** is a strategy that diverts people experiencing homelessness by helping them identify immediate alternate housing arrangements through housing problem-solving conversations and, if necessary, connecting them with services and a small amount of financial assistance that will help them return to permanent housing within a short, 14-day, period.
- **Examples:** Diversion can assist with security deposit and first month's rent for an approved unit or to relocation to safe and stable housing

# HOMELINK INTERVENTIONS FOR SURVIVORS

- **Housing:** Homelink Housing is rental assistance that may be time-limited or extended, depending on the program type with supportive services meant to assist clients in maintaining permanent housing.
- **Examples:** There are housing projects that are funded specifically to support Category 4 participants.
- **PLACE:** The Provider Liability and Assurance for Community Empowerment (PLACE) program is a risk mitigation fund that agencies can register for and enroll in for households facing housing barriers based on rental history
- **Examples:** Survivors may have a history of evictions or poor rental history due to experiencing DV.
- **Vouchers:** A variation of the housing choice voucher program that the Public Housing Authority and the Continuum of Care partner to distribute into the community.
- **Example:** Another permanent housing option for survivors

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESOURCES



**Are you afraid to go home? Does your partner hold finances against you? Are you being threatened? Have you been physically harmed or stalked?**

*If you are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence and answered "Yes" to any of the questions above you may be eligible to receive housing assistance through Homelink.*

*Homelink is San Antonio and Bexar County's Coordinated Entry model — a unified, community-wide approach that connects individuals and families who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness, as well as those fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, to housing and support resources.*

## HOMELINK ACCESS POINTS IN -PERSON ASSESSMENTS

### AMERICAN GI FORUM

610 N. Main  
Mon, Wed, Fri: 8:30a-11:30a

### YASS CENTER

(ages 18-24)  
1919 NW Loop 410 Suite 100  
Mon-Fri: 10:00a-6:00p

### SA HOPE CENTER AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

404 N. Alamo Street  
Mon, Wed: 9:00a-4:00p  
closed 12-1p for lunch

### HAVEN FOR HOPE

1 Haven for Hope Way  
Mon-Fri: 7:00a-3:00p

### BEXAR COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDERS OFFICE

101 W. Nueva St. Suite 310  
Mon, Wed: 12:00p - 4:00p

## CALL-IN ASSESSMENTS



### BEXAR COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDERS OFFICE

(210) 355 - 0859  
Mon, Wed: 12:00p - 4:00p

### SA HOPE CENTER AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

210-271-2702  
Mon, Wed: 9:00a-4:00p,  
closed 12:00-1:00p for lunch



*For a full list of  
services  
and to learn more  
about eligibility,  
scan the QR code*



# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESOURCES



*No one deserves to be harmed.*

*If you ever feel threatened or in danger, call 911 or reach out to other community partners listed below for help.*

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

### FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION SERVICES BATTERED WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S SHELTER

24/7 Local Crisis Hotline: (210) 733-8810 or visit [www.fvps.org](http://www.fvps.org)

### BEXAR COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

For an emergency 911. For non-emergency, call (210) 335-6000.  
For Bexar County Star Program Advocates [www.bexar.org/contactstar](http://www.bexar.org/contactstar)

### SAN ANTONIO POLICE DEPARTMENT

For an emergency 911. For non emergency or to contact a Victim Advocate, call (210) 207-7273.

### BEXAR COUNTY FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

Call (210) 631-0100 or visit [www.bcfjc.org](http://www.bcfjc.org)

### THE RAPE CRISIS CENTER

24-Hour Hotline: (210) 349-7273 or visit [www.rapecrisis.com](http://www.rapecrisis.com)

### COLLABORATIVE COMMISSION ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

For a comprehensive list of local Domestic Violence Resources, visit [www.ccdv.org/get-help-now/](http://www.ccdv.org/get-help-now/)

### SACRD - SAN ANTONIO COMMUNITY RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Visit online at [www.sacrd.org](http://www.sacrd.org)

### NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

Call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or Text "START" to 88788. You can also visit online at [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)



# RESOURCES

- **Family Violence Prevention Services: [FVPS.org /resources](https://www.fvps.org/resources)**
- **Texas Coalition Against Family Violence: [tcfv.org/safetyplanning](https://www.tcfv.org/safetyplanning)**
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233**
- **<https://www.thehotline.org/plan-for-safety/create-your-personal-safety-plan/>**
- **SACRD.org**
- **[Home - LASSA](#)**

## emergency checklist:

what you need to take when you leave

### Identification

- Driver's license
- Birth certificate
- Children's birth certificates
- Social Security cards

### Financial

- Money and/or credit cards (in your name)
- Credit cards, debit cards, checking and savings account numbers

### Legal Paper

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

### Other

- Medications
- House and car keys
- Valuable jewelry
- Address book
- Pictures and sentimental items
- Change of clothes for you and children
- \_\_\_\_\_

## emergency numbers

Police - 911



Battered Women and Children's Shelter  
Crisis Hotline  
210-733-8810



National Domestic Violence Hotline  
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)  
1-800-757-3224 (TDD)



Victim's Advocacy Section  
San Antonio Police Department  
210-207-2141



Texas Department of Human Resources  
Abuse Hotline  
1-800-252-5400



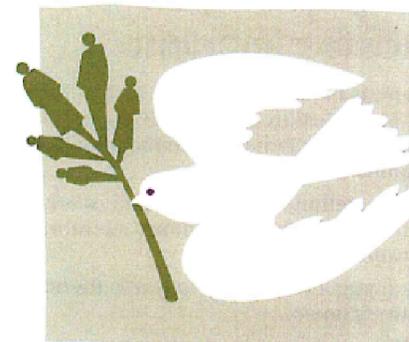
Rape Crisis Center Hotline  
210-349-RAPE

## therapeutic programs

Victim/Survivor's Counseling  
210-930-3669 x2201



Violence Intervention Program (BIPP)  
210-930-3669 x2101



*Family Violence*

# personal safety plan

*You have a right to be safe*

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Family Violence  
Prevention Services, Inc.  
7911 Broadway  
San Antonio, Texas 78209  
Phone (210) 930-3669

## safety during an explosive incident

- If there is an argument, try to be in a place that has an exit to the outside 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.
- Pack a bag and have it ready at a friend's or relative's house.
- Identify one or more neighbors you can tell about the violence and ask them if they can call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.
- Devise a code word 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 judgment. In a dangerous situation, give the abuser what he wants to calm him down.

**remember – you don't deserve to be hit or threatened.**

## safety when preparing to leave

- Open a checking or savings account in your own name.
- Leave money, an extra set of keys, copies of important documents, extra clothes and medicines in a safe place or with someone you trust.

- Get your own post office box.
- Identify a safe place where you and your children can go and people who can lend you money.
- Always keep the shelter phone number or a calling card for emergency calls.
- Verify if pet accommodations are available. If no accommodation can be provided, please plan for them to be cared for in a safe place.

**remember – the most dangerous time is when you leave your batterer.**

## safety with a protective order

- If you or your children have been threatened or assaulted, you can request a Protective Order from the District/County Attorney's Office.
- 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.

## safety in your own residence

- If you stay in your home, lock your windows and change the locks on your doors as soon as possible
- Develop a safety plan with your children for when you are not with them.
- Inform your child's school, daycare, etc., about who has permission to pick up your child.
- Never call the abuser from your home; he may find out where you live. Never tell the abuser where you live.
- Request an unlisted number from the telephone company.

## safety on the job and in public

- Decide who at work you will inform of your situation, including the office building security (if possible, provide them with a picture of your abuser).
- When at work, if possible, have someone screen your telephone calls.
- Have someone escort you to and from your car, bus stop, etc.
- If at all possible, use a variety of routines to go to work and come home.



United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County

# FINAL THOUGHTS



- Safety planning is a shared responsibility.
- Your response can save lives.
- Be present, prepared, and nonjudgmental.

You Have The Right To  
Speak Out  
You Have The Right To  
Be Treated With Respect  
You Have The Right To  
Get Out  
Support Domestic  
Violence Awareness  
Help Save A Life!

# QUESTIONS & REFLECTIONS



Thank you for your attention  
and care

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

## •**Trauma-Informed**

- An approach that recognizes the impact of trauma and prioritizes safety, trust, and empowerment in all interactions.
- Seeks to avoid re-traumatization and promote healing and resilience.

## •**Victim**

- A person who has experienced harm, abuse, or violence, particularly in the context of domestic violence.
- This term is often used in legal or law enforcement contexts.

## •**Survivor**

- A person who has lived through and continues to recover from abuse or violence.
- Emphasizes strength, resilience, and the ongoing process of healing.

## •**Perpetrator**

- An individual who has committed an act of domestic violence or abuse.
- May also be referred to in legal or criminal justice contexts.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **Abuser**

- A person who uses patterns of power and control to harm, intimidate, or manipulate their partner or family member.
- Often used in advocacy and support settings to describe behavior rather than label the whole person.

- **Address Confidentiality Program (ACP)**

- A state-run program that provides a legal substitute address for survivors to help keep their location confidential and enhance safety.
- Helps survivors avoid being located through public records.

- **Advocate**

- A trained professional or volunteer who supports survivors by offering resources, emotional support, safety planning, and system navigation.
- Works from a survivor-centered, trauma-informed approach to empower those impacted by violence.