

HOW DO I CREATE a Safety Plan with Farmworker Victims of Sexual Violence?



WCSAP

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Creating a plan that will enable victims to be safe from the perpetrator and from potential future harm is vital. Safety planning involves working with victims so that they will know how to react in the moment if confronted with violence. Creating a safety plan does not mean that the victim will not face violence again. Rather, the primary goal is to aid individuals in protecting themselves when and if they are in danger in the future. Some victims may feel constant fear and anxiety over a possible future assault by the perpetrator. Safety planning can reduce fears by providing victims with safeguards that will permit them to feel safe even when they are not directly confronted with a violent situation. Safety plans may also instill a greater sense of calm, and reduce victim reaction time when responding to future incidents of violence. A planned response may also help to prevent future incidents of violence and reduce the level of harm inflicted. Planning for safety may reduce overall fear and restore a sense of control in victims' lives; this can empower victims and aid their healing.

Safety planning with farmworkers is a unique process. Existing safety plans for nonfarmworker victims may not be appropriate for farmworkers. Farmworker-specific plans should address the life and work circumstances distinctive to farmworkers, and take into account the limited resources available to them. Safety planning with farmworkers may require lengthier discussions, additional questions and more detailed explanations about resources, institutions,

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legal remedies and processes than safety planning with non-farmworker victims of sexual assault. For example, a non-farmworker client may need to know the location of the nearest bus stop when seeking the best route to safety. A farmworker client, however, may also need to know how to ride the bus, including understanding the routes, the cost, and transportation time. In most cases, the communities that farmworkers work in do not have public transportation systems. Therefore, it is necessary to consider additional methods of transportation and discuss how, where and when to access this transportation. You may need to not only determine what transportation assistance is available but also what assistance the farmworker victim will need in order to learn the process of using public transportation or finding other transportation.

Safety planning means assisting victims in thinking through their response if confronted by the perpetrator in various settings, such as at home, work, in transit or in public. Additionally, it involves helping victims to think through their options related to responding to the violence, including reporting to law enforcement, seeking healthcare, seeking legal assistance, changing employers or moving to a new location. Most safety plans are oral or written, though they can take any format which is most helpful to the victim.

Safety planning at the outset may help to interrupt ongoing violence and give victims new tools to help protect themselves and their families.



ADDRESS SAFETY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

It is critical to discuss safety planning as soon as possible. For some organizations, this could be during the intake process while for others it is at the first meeting. Take the time to address safety planning at the first possible moment. The first time you meet with a farmworker victim of sexual violence, including sexual harassment or assault, may be the only opportunity you have to create a safety plan as victims may not return for services or there may be another incident or an escalation of violence between your meetings. Safety planning at the outset may help to interrupt ongoing violence and give victims new tools to help protect themselves and their families. An important first step will be to ask victims if it is safe for them to have evidence of their meeting with you, such as your business card or the safety plan itself. Ask if there is a safe place away from the perpetrator to keep this information. Giving victims physical materials may place them in greater danger.

As individuals know their own circumstances best, they are in the best position to make decisions for their lives.



DISCUSS SAFETY.

To help explain safety and safety planning to a farmworker victim, consider using the Spanish-language fotonovela created by and for farmworkers that is available in Spanish at www.crla.org/svi. Through photos, the fotonovela tells the story of a young farmworker woman experiencing sexual violence at work and how she reaches out for help to address the violence and feel safe. Use the fotonovela as a discussion piece to begin the conversation and to build trust with victims. Also, convey that every individual has the right to be free from violence and to be safe in their housing, at work, at school and in the community at large.

CUSTOMIZE THE SAFETY PLAN.

Aim to customize a safety plan based on the farmworker's unique circumstances and available resources. Each person will present distinctive safety needs and require an individualized safety response. The more knowledgeable you are about farmworkers' lives and the barriers they face in accessing resources, the more success you may have at building trust and presenting appropriate safety options. Be aware of the types of employment, housing and transportation available to farmworkers. Similarly, the more knowledgeable you are about the resources available that are appropriate for farmworkers in your area, the more successful the safety plan is likely to be. For example, know where the nearest sexual violence shelter is located, and if it has language, cultural and transportation capacity to assist farmworkers. Where capacity is lacking or minimal, it is important to work with local shelters to build capacity.

Safety plan with farmworkers who voice concerns about sexual harassment and sexual assault of others so that they have a plan if confronted by the perpetrator.



BE A GUIDE.

Remember that you are only a guide in the safety planning process. Present farmworkers with options to address safety concerns and then help them think through the options and make choices that are best for them. As individuals know their own circumstances best, they are in the best position to make decisions for their lives. Be cognizant of any of your own expectations that may arise about how victims “should” respond and focus instead on ways to empower your clients to make their own choices.

CONDUCT A SAFETY ASSESSMENT.

After explaining safety generally, assess the risk the perpetrator poses to the victim. The level of danger and likelihood of additional harm will influence your response and the safety plan itself. Evaluate the nature and severity of risk by asking questions about the:

1. Threats to victim’s physical safety
2. Other threats, such as threats to report a victim to immigration or the police
3. Threats to harm others, such as family members, friends or pets
4. Violence that has already occurred
5. Frequency of incidents
6. Last occurrence
7. Perpetrator’s use of weapons
8. Perpetrator’s mental health history
9. Perpetrator’s use of drugs and alcohol

Is the perpetrator your landlord? The property manager? A roommate? A work supervisor who lives with you or has access to your housing? A co-worker who lives with or near you?



USE SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR DISCUSSION.

Below you will find questions designed to help guide your discussion with a farmworker victim to create a safety plan. They help illustrate some of the appropriate topics, questions and options for your discussion on safety with a farmworker under the broad categories of housing, workplace, community, transportation, communication and emergencies. Every question may not be relevant or necessary, nor are the questions exhaustive of all the possibilities. Additional questions may be required to address your client's situation; however, these questions serve as examples and a starting point for your work.

SAFE HOUSING

1. What kind of housing do you live in (labor camp, apartment, house, trailer, motel, outdoors)?
2. With whom do you share your housing? Do you know the people with whom you share your housing? How do you know the people with whom you share housing?
3. How close are you to the nearest town/city?
4. What state is your housing located in? What city is your housing located in? What street is your housing on? At what number? What directions would you give to someone to find your home? Are there any landmarks to help someone find your housing?
5. Is the perpetrator your landlord? The property manager? A roommate? A work supervisor who lives with you or has access to your housing? A co-worker who lives with or near you?
6. Are you safe inside your housing? Do you have windows and doors? Do your windows and doors lock? Do you have lights at your home? Are the lights outside and inside your home? How could you make your housing safer? Can you move something in front





of the doors and windows to keep the perpetrator out of your housing in an emergency? Can you speak to the landlord, farmer, or housing owner about helping you to make the housing safer by installing locks and lights?

7. Who are your neighbors? Do you feel comfortable talking with your neighbors? Which of your neighbors would you feel comfortable asking for help?
8. How could you get out if the perpetrator shows up at your house? Is there a back door? Are there windows you could escape through?
9. What transportation is available if you need to leave your housing immediately?
10. Who could you stay with if you need to leave home? Do you have friends or family nearby? Who else in the community do you know and trust? How would you contact them?
11. Where is the nearest shelter for women and children in your area? How would you contact the shelter? Can they come to your house to pick you up in an emergency?
12. If you had to leave your home quickly, what would be important to take with you? What would be hard to replace if you left it there, e.g. birth certificate, driver's license, consular identification (matrícula o cedula), voter registration card, passport, money, children's records, work records?
13. What would your children do in case of an emergency if they need help? Do they know how to use the telephone and call for help?
14. Do you feel that you could contact the police? How would you contact the police? What could they do to help?
15. Would it be safer to move to new housing? Is this possible? Do you need help finding a new place to stay?

Can you avoid being alone at work? How? Do you work with any family members? Who could you work alongside? Is there anyone who can accompany you to the car or bus, bathroom, lunch break, tool sheds, supply closet? Who can you tell if you are being assigned to work in a remote area so that they can know to look for you if you do not return within a reasonable amount of time? Who can you check in with at a certain time each day?



SAFE WORKPLACE

1. Where do you work? In what state? In what city? What's the name of the company? What is the name of your crewleader, contractor or supervisor? Do you have a pay statement or check stub with you that includes the company name and address? Do you have any other papers that the company or your boss has given you that includes the company or contractor's name and address on them?
2. Does the perpetrator work with you?
3. Do you still work there? Does the perpetrator still work there? Do you want to continue working there? What options for alternative work do you have?
4. Does the perpetrator have authority over you (owner or supervisor)?
5. Who else at work knows that you are being sexually harassed/assaulted? How do they know?
6. Did you tell your employer (boss, supervisor, someone in the office)? If not, how would making a report to the employer make you safer or less safe? If yes, what did they say? Did anything change? Do you feel safer or less safe?

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7. How often do you see the perpetrator at work? Where do you see the perpetrator?
 8. Can you avoid being alone at work? How? Do you work with any family members? Who could you work alongside? Is there anyone who can accompany you to the car or bus, bathroom, lunch break, tool sheds, supply closet? Who can you tell if you are being assigned to work in a remote area so that they can know to look for you if you do not return within a reasonable amount of time? Who can you check in with at a certain time each day?

SAFE COMMUNITY

1. Do you see the perpetrator when you are in the community? Where (at the grocery store, church or school)?
2. Can you avoid seeing the perpetrator in the community? How? How could you change your routine so that you avoid seeing the perpetrator? Could you use different laundromats or grocery stores?
3. Who can go with you when you are out in the community?
4. How else can you keep yourself safe when you are out in the community?
5. How can you ask for help if you are in the community? What language would you use? What words would you use to call out for help?
6. Where could you go to be safe?

SAFE TRANSPORTATION

1. How do you get from one place to another? How do you get home? How do you get to work? How do you get from one job site to another? How do you get to the store, religious services and laundromat in the community?
2. Is the perpetrator involved in any way in your transportation to work, from work, or at work?
3. Can you drive? Do you have a driver's license? Do you have a vehicle? Do you always have access to your vehicle?
4. Who can drive you in case of an emergency?
5. Who is a safe person who could drive you to work? to the store? to the laundromat?
6. Is there any public transportation where you live, like a bus or a train? Where is the nearest bus/train? Do you know bus/train routes and how to ride the bus/train? Do you know how much it will cost to take the bus or the fare? Do you have a bus/train pass? Do you know how to get a bus/train pass? Do you know the bus/train schedule? Do you know how to call for help at the bus/train stop?
7. What is the number for a taxi or car service in case of emergency?
8. Do you have money set aside to pay for a taxi/ bus/ driver in an emergency?
9. Have you considered going to your work, housing and the community by taking different routes?

Is the perpetrator involved in any way in your transportation to work, from work, or at work?





SAFE COMMUNICATION

1. Do you have a cell phone? Can you get one by donation? Do you know how to use it? Do you know how to retrieve messages from your phone? Can you be sure to keep your battery charged? Could you carry a phone to use for emergency purposes only?
2. Who has a cell phone that you can use near home? At work? In the community?
3. Do you have credits/minutes for your cell phone? Do you have a pre-paid phone card?
4. Do you know what a public telephone looks like? Where is the nearest public telephone to your home, work, or job site? Do you know how to use it?
5. Can you keep a cell phone with you and on at all times, even at work?
6. Do you have cell phone reception at home? At work? In the community?
7. Do you have a list of all the important phone numbers you need (police, shelter, attorney, advocate, taxi, friend)?
8. Are you aware that 911 will call the police? How do you think the police could help you? Would you feel comfortable calling the police?

EMERGENCIES

1. Who would you call?
2. Where would you go?
3. How would you get there?
4. If you need medical attention where would you go? How would you get there?

MODIFY THE PLAN FREQUENTLY.

Conduct safety planning with farmworkers on a regular basis—even every time you meet—to evaluate any changes in circumstances that may endanger the victim. Modify the existing safety plan to accommodate changes in work, home, transportation, family and other circumstances as they arise. Victims' safety concerns may change, for example, if they take steps to distance themselves from the perpetrator, pursue civil or criminal legal remedies or disclose to employers, landlords, friends or family.

When safety planning, discuss with victims whether or not it is safe for them to have a copy of the safety plan in their possession.





ASSIST WITH IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN.

Farmworker victims may need assistance in implementing their safety plans. Take time to ensure that your client understands the plan and that the information is captured in a way that makes the most sense to the victim. Victims who do not read or write may need an alternative to a written safety plan, such as an oral recording of the information.

The following are ways in which you might further support victims' safety:

1. Offer transportation assistance;
2. Accompany them on public transportation to learn the process and routes;
3. Provide a list of resources, e.g. sexual violence shelters, taxi/car services, legal services organizations, farmworker organizations, healthcare providers, law enforcement, public benefits, etc.;
4. Find an advocate/service provider who can help secure related services: food, crisis intervention, and victim witness assistance;
5. Help them to obtain a cell phone or pre-paid phone cards for emergency purposes;
6. Help them learn how to use the cell phone and retrieve messages;
7. Give them a folder in which to store important documents (e.g. birth certificate, driver's license, passport, matrícula, cedula, money, children's records and work records) in a place that is safe from the perpetrator;
8. Explain the purpose and process for obtaining a protection order and help determine if one is available or advisable under the individual's circumstances (or refer to an appropriate attorney);

9. Refer them to an attorney who can help them protect their employment, housing, education, immigration, public benefits and privacy rights;
10. Advocate with landlords for increased safety measures in housing;
11. Advocate with employers for increased safety measures at work; and
12. Educate social service, legal service and healthcare providers on overcoming barriers to providing services to farmworkers.

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EXERCISE

1. How might safety planning be different with farmworker victims of sexual violence than with non-farmworker victims?
2. What training is available or steps are necessary to ensure that everyone within your organization is able to safety plan with farmworker victims?
3. What referrals do you need to have in place to help farmworkers implement their safety plans?

*From **Sexual Violence Against Farmworkers: A Guide for Social Service Providers***

For a complete guide, visit:

<http://www.splcenter.org/sexual-violence-against-farmworkers-a-guidebook-for-social-service-providers>



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Southern Poverty Law Center
400 Washington Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama 36104

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WCSAP
Washington Coalition of
Sexual Assault Programs

Washington Coalition
of Sexual Assault Programs
4317 6th Ave. SE, Suite 102
Olympia, WA 98503

360. 754. 7583 (phone)
360. 709. 0305 (TTY)

www.wcsap.org