

Technology Safety Planning

Technology can be very helpful to victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking, however it is important to also consider how technology might be misused.

- Trust your instincts.** If you suspect an abusive person knows too much, it is possible that your phone, computer, email, driving or other activities are being monitored. Abusers and stalkers can act in incredible persistent and creative ways to maintain power and control.
- Plan for safety.** Navigating violence, abuse, and stalking is very difficult and dangerous. We suggest you contact local and provincial/territory domestic violence hotlines and organizations to discuss options and safety risks.
- Take precautions if you have a “techy” abuser.** If computers and technology are a profession or hobby for the abuser/stalker, trust your instincts. If you think someone may be monitoring or tracking you, talk to advocates or police.
- Use a safer computer.** If anyone abusive has access to your computer, he/she might be monitoring your computer activities. Try to use a safer computer when you look for help, a new place to live, etc. It may be safer to use a computer at a public library, community center, or Internet café.
- Create new email or IM accounts.** If you suspect that anyone abusive can access your email or instant messaging (IM), consider creating additional email/IM accounts on a safer computer. Do not create or check this new email/IM from a computer the abuser could access, in case it is monitored. Look for free web-based email accounts, and strongly consider using non-identifying name & account information. (example: bluecat@email.com and not YourRealName@email.com)
- Check your cell phone settings.** If you are using a cell phone provided by the abusive person, consider turning it off when not in use. Also, many phones let you “lock” keys so a phone won’t automatically answer or call if bumped. When on, check the phone settings; if your phone has an optional location service, you may want to switch the location feature off/on via phone settings or by turning your phone on and off.
- Change passwords & pin numbers.** Some abusers use victim’s email and other accounts to impersonate and cause harm. If anyone abusive knows or could guess your passwords, change them quickly and frequently. Think about any password protected accounts: online banking, voicemail, instant messaging, etc.
- Minimize use of cordless phones or baby monitors.** If you don’t want others to overhear your conversations, turn off baby monitors if not needed and use traditional corded phones for sensitive conversations.
- Use a donated or new cell phone.** When making or receiving private calls or arranging escape plans, try not to use a shared or family cell phone because cell phone billing records and phone logs might reveal your plans to an abuser. Contact your local or provincial/territory hotline/crisis organization to learn about donation programs that provide new free cell phones and/or prepaid phone cards to victims of abuse and stalking.
- Get a private mailbox and don’t give out your real address.** When asked by businesses, doctors, and others for your address, have a private mailbox address or a safer address to provide. Try to keep your true residential address out of databases.

Safety Planning – High – Tech Stalking – Client Information

- Search for your name on the Internet.** Major search engines such as “Google” or “Yahoo” may have links to your contact information. Search for your name.

- Search for further assistance from agencies.** Search for Medicine Hat Women’s Shelter Society www.mhwss.ca ; Search for Canadian shelters at www.Shelternet.ca; Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres www.casac.ca; National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence nacafv.ca and Email Safety Net Project at SafetyNet@nnedv.org

Protecting Yourself from GPS, Surveillance Cameras, and Recording Devices

Your abuser does not need to be computer savvy in order to use surveillance technology to monitor your movements and listen to your conversations. Be aware your abuser may be using hidden cameras such as a Nanny camera or a baby monitor to check on you. GPS devices are inexpensive and easy to use; they can be hidden in your car, purse, or other objects you carry. Your abuser can also use your car GPS to monitor where you have been.

Note: If you discover any tracking or recording devices, leave them until you are ready to leave. While it may be tempting to remove them or shut them off, this will alert your abuser that you are on to them.