

# Privacy & Safety Planning With Survivors

## Tips When Relocating

### Ask Questions

When the health club, video rental store or other business asks for your Social Security Number, don't be afraid to ask why they need it. If you are signing up for an email address or web service, don't give your home address or phone number – they are almost never required. When signing up for traditional land-line telephone service, ask to be unlisted in the telephone directory, and be careful about to whom you share that phone number with. For example, when a cashier asks for your phone number, consider saying, "No, I'd rather not give it," or giving an alternate phone number like your old work number.

### Research Address Confidentiality Programs in Your State

These programs allow you to use an alternate address to receive your mail and register to vote. Since 1991 approximately 20 states have established address confidentiality programs for survivors of sexual violence, domestic violence and stalking. Also, ask about receiving mail, shipments, and non-first class mail (magazine subscriptions) since many programs will process only first-class mail.

### Change Passwords & PIN Numbers

When you relocate, be sure that you create new passwords for ALL of your accounts, including email, instant message accounts, online accounts, bank accounts, ATM, voicemail, etc. If you suspect that someone has the password to any of your accounts, change your password on a computer that this person doesn't have access to or call the agency and change your passwords or PIN over the phone. The most secure passwords are at least 8 characters long and use a combination of letters and numbers.

### Learn Which Records Are Public

Many court systems and government agencies publish records to the Internet. Your driver's license, voter registration, and other records may be public and may be published to the Internet. In addition, if you've made charitable contributions or volunteered for a political party, your information may also have been published online. Ask agencies how they protect or publish your records and request that court, government, post office, and others seal or restrict access to your files to protect your safety.

### 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 in quotation marks: "Full Name". Check online phone directories; unlisted phone numbers may actually be listed especially if you've given the number to a business. Sometimes it's okay to leave certain information online, especially if it's harmless. If you want something removed, the website may have instructions for you to fill out a form or on how to email them. Oftentimes they may ask for personal information to prove your identity. Try not to share more information than they already have because data brokers make money by selling accurate information.



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### Have All Important Records With You Before Relocating

Gather all important records, especially those of your children and pets. Have copies of school and immunization records to share with professionals in your new community. If you relocate without these records, you may have to share your new address with former schools and physicians in order for the records to be mailed to you. Consider asking that the records be mailed to a friend or family member instead. The more places that have your new address, the greater the risk of the abuser finding it.

### Consider Alternatives To Filling Out a Change of Address Form

Consider not providing a forwarding address to the U.S. Postal Service and individually contact people who mail you, or forwarding your mail to a P.O. Box or private mailbox. The large National Change of Address Database (NCOA) provides your new address to many marketing companies, magazine publishers, student loan companies, and others. The more companies that have your address, the more likely it may end up in a Web-based directory.

### Utilities in Your Name

Even if you have a PO Box, you'll need utilities (like electricity and water) at your new home. Consider renting an apartment with utilities included or putting the utilities under a roommate's name. Ask local utility providers about their privacy policies and find out if they publish or sell your information.

### Research Voter Registration Policies

Many voter registration offices not only sell your address and other information, but they also publish it to the Internet. Some states will keep your voter registration confidential at your request. Before you register to vote in a new community, research your privacy options, and talk to an election supervisor if needed. It is important that survivors of abuse be able to vote, and it is equally important that their safety not be jeopardized.

### Consider a Private Mailbox or PO Box & Don't Give Out Your Real Address

When asked by businesses, doctors, and others for your address, give them a private mailbox address or a safer address. Try to keep your true residential address out of national databases. The U.S. Postal Service will not sign for packages but many of the private companies (Parcel Plus, UPS store, etc.) will sign for a package for you.



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