



Seeking Help Online: National Resources & Considerations for Safety and Privacy During a Public Health Crisis

During the COVID-19 crisis, shelter-at-home orders and social distancing recommendations can be terrifying for survivors. Unfortunately, home isn't safe for everyone. It's important to know there are many options for accessing resources and support. Many service providers are still offering shelter and housing services, and also extending or establishing services via chat, video, text, phone, email, or other digital platforms. While these options can make it easier to access support, there are also some considerations for ensuring your privacy and safety while using them.

Safety Considerations Before Using Technology to Get Help

Is this a safe way to communicate?

With many people home for long periods of time, it can be hard for survivors to get the privacy they need. The following will hopefully help you think through what platforms and devices will be the safest means for you to communicate.

- What if it's not safe to talk out loud on the phone?
Many helplines and services offer multiple ways to connect, including text message or online chat for more discreet conversations. You can also use technology strategically to get help or connect with people you trust. For instance, you may be able to use an unassuming app (one the abusive person may not monitor or look through), like a game that has a chat feature, to reach out to trusted friends. Likewise, personal safety apps allow you to quickly contact a trusted contact or 911 by pressing a button on the phone or in the app. Consider what may be a safe option for you. Do you want to be able to call for help quickly? Or do you want a safe way to get a supportive ear when you need someone to talk to?
- Could someone see my conversations if I use a text line?
Depending on the way the text line is set-up, the thread of the conversation may be saved to your device. Consider deleting the text threads once you are done to minimize risks of someone else seeing it.

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- What if I use a chat line? Are there safety considerations?
Chat messages are typically not saved to your device and the content of the messages usually delete after closing the browser window. However, a record of what website you visited could be listed in your browser history. If safe to do so, go to your web browser settings and delete the browsing history you don't want someone else to see. Deleting the entire history may look suspicious if the person regularly monitors the browser activity so only delete the specific ones.
- What if someone is monitoring my device activity? How do I look for services?
There are various ways someone could monitor a device and each have different implications. If your partner has physical access to your device and they likely know your password or account information, they may be able to gain access to information you share. This could include the thread of a text line or call logs. If someone has installed stalkerware/spyware on your device, they will have access to anything that happens on the device, including websites visited, call logs, texts, and any information being backed up to your cloud-based storage. If this is the case, it may be helpful to think of an alternative way to communicate. Consider connecting with friends or family via a code word or phrase to indicate that you need help. Remember to let your friends or family know what this means and what to do if you should you use that strategy. You may also consider getting a cheap pay-as-you-go phone or a donated phone to have another device to make emergency calls from.

For more information on technology, privacy, and safety, please review the resources in our [Survivor Technology Safety & Privacy Toolkit](#).

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Know Your Options

There are national resources with established helplines in various formats that can provide confidential help during these times. Please note, there may also be state and local hotlines to connect with programs near you.



[National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) (24/7, 200+ Languages)

Phone: 1-800-799-7233

Video Call for Deaf Callers: 1-855-812-1001

[Online chat](#) (Spanish chat available)



[WomensLaw.org](#) Email Hotline (English + Spanish)

[Email Hotline](#)

[National Sexual Assault Hotline](#) (24/7, English + Spanish)



Phone: 1-800-656-4673

[English Online Chat](#) - [Spanish Online Chat](#)

[Online Chat for Male Survivors](#) (Service of 1in6.org)



[National Deaf Domestic Violence Hotline](#) (24/7)

Videophone: 1-855-812-1001

Email: nationaldeafhotline@adwas.org

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[The Network/La Red](#) (24/7)

Phone: 1-800-832-1901



[StrongHearts Native Helpline](#)

Phone: 1-844-762-8583 (7 am to 10 pm CST)



[National Human Trafficking Hotline](#) (24/7, English & Spanish)

Phone: 1-888-373-7888

Text Line: Send the text "BEFREE" to 233733

[Online chat](#)



[Cyber Civil Rights Initiative](#) (24/7, Interpretation Available)

Phone: 1-844 -878-2274



[National Teen Dating Violence Hotline](#) (24/7)

Phone: 1-866-331-9474

Text Line: Send the text "LOVEIS" to 22522

[Online chat](#)

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