



Domestic violence victims may not have privacy in their homes or on their computers and phones to safely use tele-health services.

While technology may be helpful in some aspects, it can also make it easier for an abuser to monitor, control, stalk, or abuse victims. As mental health professionals quickly move to a broad range tele-health services during the public health crisis, it is essential to be careful to not put domestic violence victims at more risk.

**SAFETY CONCERNS WITH
TELE-HEALTH SERVICES:**

- There may be nowhere private in the home for a survivor to speak confidentially.
- Abusers may be in the room, but out of sight of the video.
- Abusers may have access to survivors phones & computers via various forms of spyware & iCloud storage
- While non-HIPPA compliant platforms are allowed for use during COVID-19, some platforms may be storing personal data and/or content, leaving a digital footprint.

**SAFETY PLANNING &
SUGGESTIONS:**

- Ensure clients have ability to communicate in privacy. Plan code word/phrase to signal if someone else has come in the room or is listening.
- Chat apps may enable someone to communicate in a safer way. The National DV Hotline has a chat feature -<https://www.thehotline.org/>
- Encourage clients to go through their mobile device, apps, and online accounts to check privacy settings and ensure they are not connected to other devices.
- Encourage clients to check iCloud settings - go to Settings/iCloud and select what data (photos, mail, contacts, etc.) is backed up to iCloud.
- Avoid using email for sensitive or personal information.

**BEST PRACTICES -
WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

- Screen for domestic violence. It is not enough to just ask, "Are you a victim of domestic violence?" Put questions in context: "Many people I work with experience abuse, so I ask everyone these questions." Ask behavioral questions: "Does your partner...(ask about a range of controlling behaviors)."
- Offer flexible appointment times. Forgive cancellations.
- Victims know their safety risks best - include them in safety planning and decision making
- Review additional technology safety planning tips with clients:
 - <https://www.techsafety.org/resources-survivors/technology-safety-plan>
 - <https://www.techsafety.org/technology-safety-quick-tips>
- Learn about safety considerations with various communication platforms: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51dc541ce4b03ebab8c5c88c/t/5e7e62a25ed80a4219adad77/1585341091261/NNEDV_Communication+Tools_Handout.pdf

IF YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO NEEDS HELP:

New Castle County:
302-762-6110

Kent & Sussex Counties:
302-422-8058

Abriendo Puertas-Bilingual Hotline (Sussex County):
302-745-9874

The best tool to use is the one that works best for the survivor you are working with. One survivor may prefer to talk on the telephone while they are taking a walk outside. Another may prefer text or chat because it is a quiet way to communicate if the abuser is nearby. Someone else may prefer video because they like the sense of personal connection. To help a survivor decide what tool is best for them, discuss the safety of their devices and surroundings.

~NNEDV Safety Net