



# The 4 Core Principles of Tech Safety Planning



When supporting survivors of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), it's essential to keep their needs, choices, and safety at the heart of our work. To do this, anti-violence workers are encouraged to follow the core tech safety principles from the [National Network to End Domestic Violence's Safety Net Project](#), to ensure their approach is both survivor-centered and trauma-informed.

## The four principles are:



### 1. Technology isn't the problem. Abuse is.

While technology can be used to abuse someone it's important to understand that this represents a misuse of technology. The issue is not the technology itself, it's how people choose

to use it.. It is deliberate, abusive and unhealthy behaviors that are the real problem. Abuse happens when someone uses technology in harmful and controlling ways. These behaviours, like controlling, threatening, or harassing, have existed for a long time. Technology just gives abusers new ways to carry them out. The problem is the abusive behaviour, not the tool being used.



## **2. Survivors have a right to technology.**

Although technology can be misused by abusers, technology can also be used by survivors to enhance and maintain safety, decrease isolation, and empower themselves. Taking away technology is not the solution to end TFGBV. Restricting tech will not stop abuse, it will just shift it to another platform, place, or method. In fact, restricting technology can cut off crucial lifelines and harm reduction tools for survivors, such as access to emergency services or a way to stay connected to their communities. It can also make it harder for survivors to find housing, employment, or other resources. Technology is an important part of our lives today, so we must encourage safer uses of technologies that respect agency and dignity rather than cutting off access.



## **3. Abusive partners should be held accountable.**

TFGBV is caused by an abusive partner, and they should be held accountable for their actions. Misusing technology—such as sending threatening messages or making harassing phone calls—is illegal. Existing laws provide remedies to address this behaviour, and responses to TFGBV should focus on restricting the abuser's access to technology, not the survivors. Survivors have the right to use technology safely, and support workers can help them explore protective measures while ensuring accountability remains on the person causing harm.



## **4. Looking at TFGBV through an intersectional lens.**

Technology is deeply connected to our daily lives and society. The same power dynamics that exist in the world also show up in digital spaces, where technology can be used to reinforce violence and inequality. A survivor's experience with technology and TFGBV is shaped by their identity, including factors like

race, age, where they live, sexual orientation, class, citizenship status, and experiences with colonization. That's why TFGBV must be understood and addressed through an intersectional lens that recognizes these overlapping impacts<sup>1</sup>.

Incorporating these core tech safety principles into our work ensures that our responses to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) are survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and rooted in accountability. By recognizing that technology itself is not the problem, affirming survivors' right to technology, holding abusive partners accountable, and applying an intersectional lens, we can support survivors in ways that prioritize their safety, dignity, and autonomy. Anti-violence workers play a crucial role in advocating for safer digital spaces and empowering survivors to navigate technology in ways that enhance their well-being and security.

## Suggested Resources

- [What is Tech-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence?](#)
- [Is Tech Abuse Happening to You \(Poster\)](#)
- [Tech Safety Planning Conversation Starters](#)
- [Tech Safety Planning Conversation Starters for Anti-Violence Workers Supporting Indigenous Survivors](#)
- [Safety Planning Check List](#)
- [Preserving Digital Evidence Toolkit](#)

*Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) is part of a larger pattern of violence that can happen both online and in person. As a support worker, it's important to let survivors know they are not alone. For guidance on addressing TFGBV, you can refer to our comprehensive [techsafety.ca](https://techsafety.ca) website.*

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<sup>1</sup> This page is adapted from with permission, Cahill, R.; Wong, R. & Hoogendam, R. (2024). "[Insights Into Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: A Survey of Women's Shelters and Transition House Workers Across Canada](#)." Ottawa, ON: Women's Shelters Canada