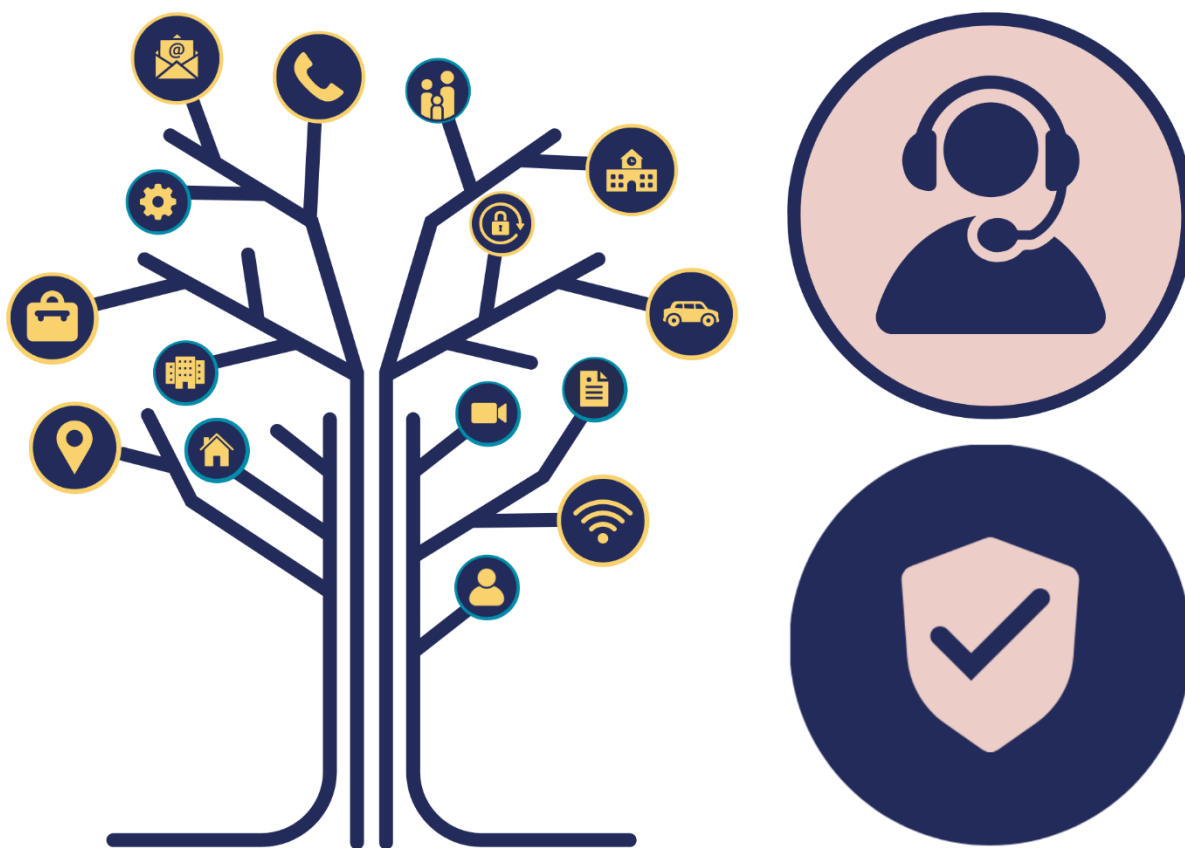# Assessing for Technology Abuse:
Tips for Anti-Violence Workers

Best Practices for Programs

A survivor's safety and privacy are often compromised by abusers who misuse technology and survivors' personal information. As frontline workers, it is important that we take the time to educate ourselves and our service users about the various ways stalking, tracking, and monitoring occur through technology.

The following information will help you and the survivors you support think through how to identify and respond to different forms of technology misuse so you can properly safety plan.

Including technology in a safety plan means strategically planning around the continued use of tech.

- When abusers misuse technology, it's often a natural reaction to want to throw away devices or close online accounts to make it stop.
- However, some abusive individuals may escalate their controlling and dangerous behaviour if they feel they've lost control over their current or former parter.

The questions below are only meant to quickly assess what might be an issue; they are not meant to be an exhaustive list of all technology-related safety concerns a survivor might face.

Anti-violence workers should follow up with a more thorough conversation about each survivor's specific concerns and discuss strategies to increase safety, document incidents, and get additional help.

You may find the other resources in our Technology Safety and Privacy Toolkit helpful in this process. Keep in mind that survivors often attend support groups with little direct and ongoing interaction with anti-violence workers, so consider incorporating this information as a support group topic as well.

Steps to Assessing Technology Misuse and Safety

- **Prioritize safety planning:** What are your current safety concerns?

- **Narrow down the possible technology that could be used:**
  What types of things have happened to make you feel unsafe or cause concern?
- **Gauge survivor's knowledge and understanding:**
  How do you think this is happening?

These questions open a conversation that will:

- explore and prioritize safety,
- discuss what types of technology devices or applications could be misused, and
- identify how to best address their needs and further their knowledge.

Below are sample questions and examples of possible technology misuses to get you started, once you've narrowed down what may be happening:

1. Are you concerned about the abuser knowing where you are all the time?

Let's explore some common ways tracking can occur through:

- Your smartphone
- Apps on your phone that use your location
- Social media
- Friends and family
- Your car or some kind of tracking device on the car
- A location device (e.g., Tile or AirTag)

2. Are you worried that the abuser might be able to access your communication with other people?

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Here are some common communications that can be compromised:

- Email communication
- Smartphone communication (e.g., texts or calls)
- Phone communication
- Private instant or direct messages (PMs and DMs)

3. **Are you concerned about information that's posted about you online?**

Let's look at possible ways information about you could be shared online:

- Through your social media accounts
- Through the abuser's social media accounts
- Through your children/family/friends' social media accounts
- What specifically is your concern about those accounts?
    - The abuser is posting terrible things.
    - The abuser is monitoring social media accounts to find information about you.
    - The abuser is accessing online accounts without your permission.
- Is there other information online about you that you are concerned about?
    - Work or school websites
    - Community forums and groups
    - Apps

4. **Are you concerned about your children/family/friends' use of technology and the possibility it could compromise your safety?**

- Are they using specific apps on their smartphones, iPads, tablets, etc. that you're concerned about?
- Are there games they are playing that you're worried about?
- Does the abuser have access to the technology of children and/or other family members?

5. **Are you concerned about your ability to continue using technology while maintaining your safety and privacy?**

- Are there specific devices, such as your smartphone or laptop, that you want to go through to ensure that it is safe and secure?
- Do you need to go through your social network accounts to figure out privacy and security settings?

6. **What are other concerns that you have about your privacy and safety?**

- Do you need to think about other technology to figure out privacy and security settings? If so, what are they?

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) is part of a continuum of violence that can be both online and in-person. If you or someone you know is experiencing TFGBV, you are not alone. You can use sheltersafe.ca to find a shelter/transition house near you to discuss options and create a safety plan. You need to stay in a shelter to access free, confidential services and support.

Adapted for Canada with permission from NNEDV's Safety Net project, based on their resource Assessing for Technology Abuse.