Digital Safety for Sexual Assault Survivors

Prepared for the OCRCC
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May 27, 2021

Agenda

Trigger warning!

What digital abuse is

- Frequency
- Tactics
- Impact

What to do about it

- Safety planning
- What to do when abuse happens
- Strategies for advocates and organizations
- Resources

Keep in mind

Everything that's done digitally creates a record

Survivors of gender-based violence have the right to use technology

Before responding to digital abuse, safety plan

Poll

In the last year, how often have you seen/heard/experienced gender-based digital violence -- in your personal life, work/school life, and beyond?

Women

- Abusive relationships: 81% of abusers said they used tech to harass partner (2017)
- Activism/politics/job: 73% women journalists, especially if racialized or LGBTQ2S (2020)
- All women report increased intensity of online violence from 2017 (2021)

LGBTQ2S

- 7/10 adults harassed online (2021)
- 1/2 youth bullied online (2019)

Poll

What are digital safety concerns for sexual assault support seekers?

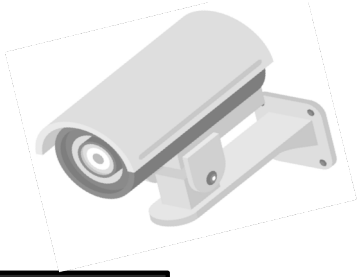
Non-consensual distribution of images

Rape images	• Sharing images of sexual violence
Sextortion	• Threatening to share image with others if not paid/provided with more
“Revenge porn”	• Sharing image with others to get back at person - person may have originally consented
Deep/shallow fakes & nudes	• Videos & photos of sexualized content into which a woman’s image is inserted
Creepshots	• Taking exploitive photos of women in public
Unsolicited images	• Dating apps: 1/2 women receive explicit images

Cyberbullying

Trolling	• Deliberately baits a person with intent to provoke a reaction/cause harm
Doxing	• Seeking & distributing info about a person with intent to cause harm
Cybermob	• A group targets an individual
Zoom bombing	• Crashes video-conference to make/post offensive comments/images

Cyberstalking

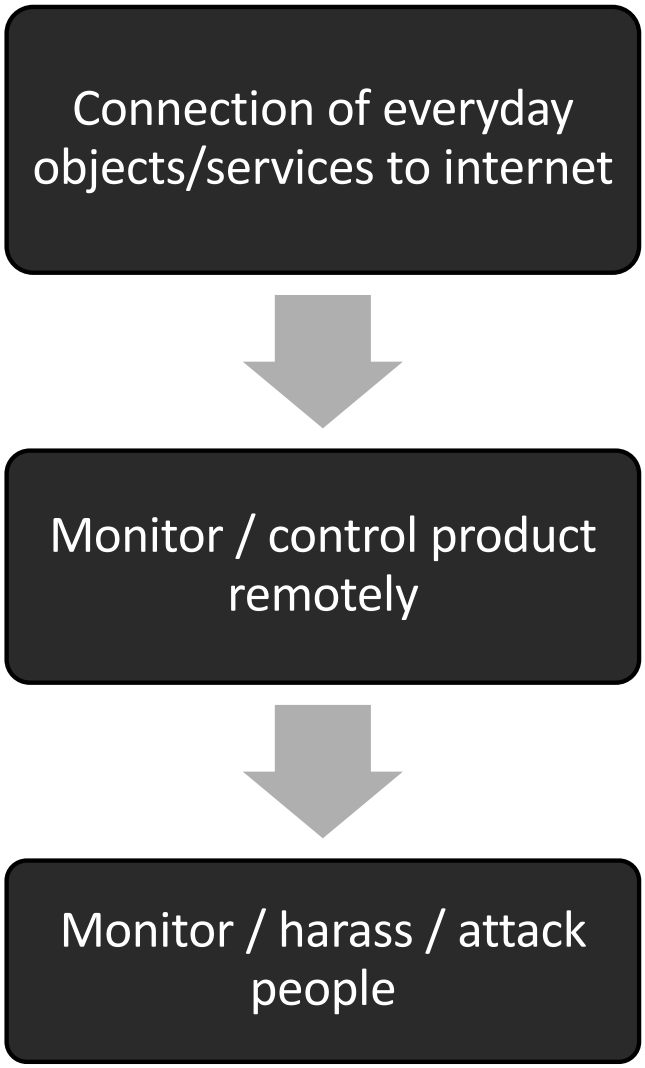


Repeated messages	Device/account history	Hacking
Spyware	GPS	Geotagged images
Social media	Service accounts	Transit cards

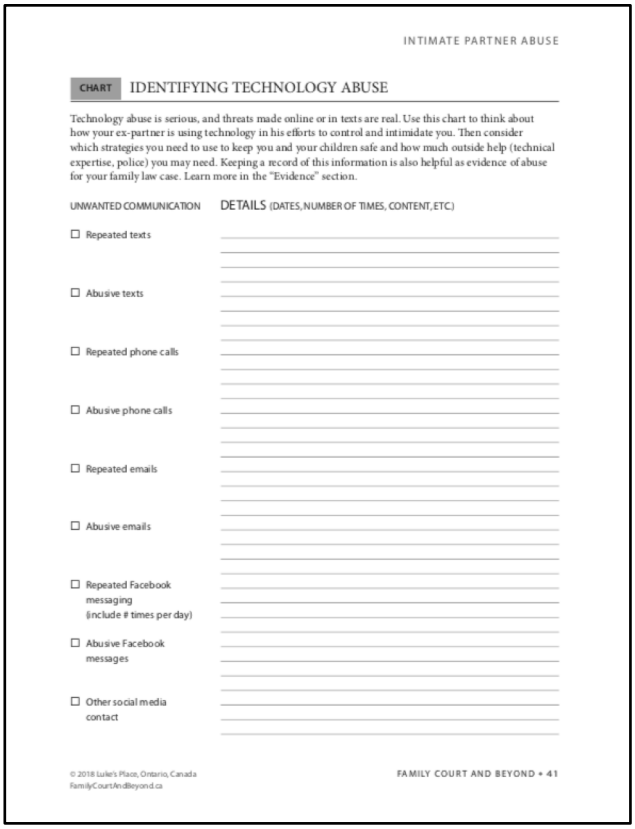
Design by Freepik

Internet of things

- Toys
- Security systems
- Vehicle
- House hold appliances
- Home assistants (Siri, Echo, Alexa)
- Home utilities (internet, heat, air, lighting)
- Wearable devices



What's happening? Chart it



INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE

CHART IDENTIFYING TECHNOLOGY ABUSE

Technology abuse is serious, and threats made online or in texts are real. Use this chart to think about how your ex-partner is using technology in his efforts to control and intimidate you. Then consider which strategies you need to use to keep you and your children safe and how much outside help (technical expertise, police) you may need. Keeping a record of this information is also helpful as evidence of abuse for your family law case. Learn more in the "Evidence" section.

UNWANTED COMMUNICATION	DETAILS (DATES, NUMBER OF TIMES, CONTENT, ETC.)
☐ Repeated texts	
☐ Abusive texts	
☐ Repeated phone calls	
☐ Abusive phone calls	
☐ Repeated emails	
☐ Abusive emails	
☐ Repeated Facebook messaging (include # times per day)	
☐ Abusive Facebook messages	
☐ Other social media contact	

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FamilyCourtAndBeyond.ca

FamilyCourtAndBeyond.ca/
keep-safe/web-phone-safety/
identifying-technology-abuse/

Design by Freepik

How digital abuse feels
Despair
Anger
Fear
Shame
Alone
Confused

Questions?

What can you do about digital abuse?

Poll

What are the 3 important things to keep in mind about digital safety?

Remember

Everything that's done digitally creates a record

Survivors of gender-based violence have the right to use technology

Before responding to digital abuse, safety plan

Personalized tech safety plan

Survivor leads	If there's kids, include them
• Knows what's happening • Digital priorities	• Kids' tech use can make her vulnerable • Ex-partner will involve them

SecurityPlanner.ConsumerReports.org

Safety apps

Pros

- Can be very empowering
- Handy
- Integrating safety into tech

Cons

- Who's behind it?
- Where is the data kept? What laws govern it? Who has access?
- What happens if abuser accesses it?
- Is it up-to-date?

MyPlanApp.ca

Top 5 safety to-do's (for everyone)

- Use a safer device if possible
- Lock your device (avoid bio locks)
- Manage passwords (e.g. LastPass)
- Use, update & monitor privacy settings
- Log out of accounts

The importance of community

Raine Liliefeldt & Abigail Curlew, Webinar from Learning Network on digital platforms
vawlearningnetwork.ca/webinars/recorded-webinars/2020/webinar-2020-4.html

Design by Stories on Freepik

Removing images

NeedHelpNow.ca

- For youth but info is applicable to anyone
- Quarterly updates

CyberCivilRights.org/online-removal

- For adults
- More platforms

Before removal: Document it (screen shot)

Online attacks

Platforms vary in how they respond

- Some have help centres
- Response will likely be slow

Resources

- TechSafety.org
- You are not alone: Ashley Judd's Ted Talk

Before removal: Document it (screen shot)

The law

All digital activity leaves a record, which may be used as evidence

Some digital abuse is against the law

- Criminal: stalking, threats, minor
- Civil: sue for damages
- Family: restraining & parenting orders

- BCSTH.ca/TechSafetytoolkit
- LukesPlace.org/tech-abuse
- Cynthia Khoo, Learning Network, Digital Platforms webinar

Poll

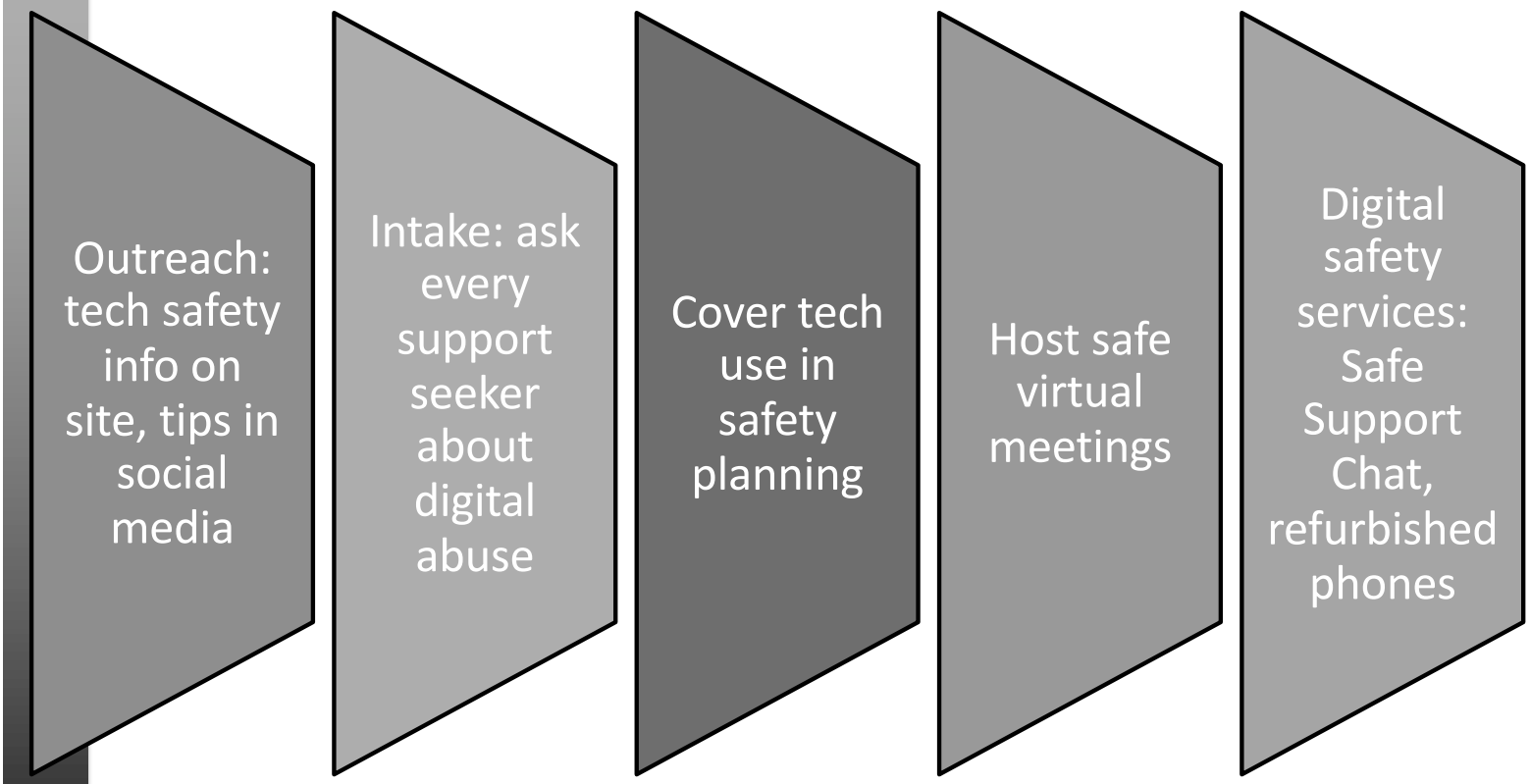
What is your biggest concern about managing digital safety?

Staying on top of tech

- Volunteer local tech experts, e.g. phone companies, schools
- Savvy staff/volunteers or assign specific tech topics
- Support seeker's personal network
- Where she bought her phone, computer
- Share knowledge & resources

When looking at resources

Digital safety at every service stage



Safe Support Chat

Chat has end to end encryption

- No IP address captured by app
- If organization choses to keep a transcript the other party cannot be identified
- Most orgs aren’t keeping transcripts
- No record left on person’s browser

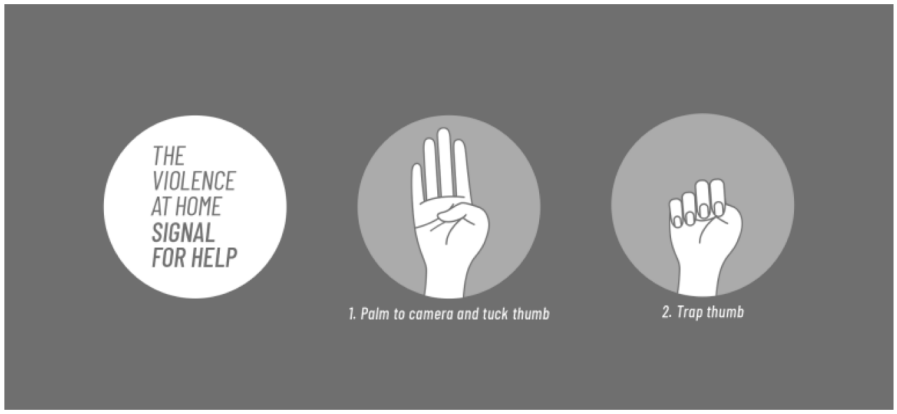
Text not as secure: user gets notification

Safe video conferencing

Invitation only, if possible	Set the meeting to have a passcode	Use the waiting room, admit only people who identify themselves
Think about what's in your background	"Faces not boxes"	Emergency signal

Dandelion Initiative – Survivor Centred Digital Best Practices

Image from Canadian Women's Foundation



Organizational infrastructure

Record keeping

- Privacy & digital safety

Policies for support seekers

- Managing tracking devices

Policies for staff/volunteers

- Photos/names on site, social media
- Use of own devices
- Social media guidelines

Network safety

- Computer access - connection with org's server
- Protect org wifi

Thank you!

Questions?