

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGAL NETWORK OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY (D.V.L.N.)**  
**THE EDUCATION & AWARENESS COMMITTEE**  
**THE EDUCATION/ AWARENESS/COMMUNICATION/HEALTH (T.E.A.C.H) NEWSLETTER**  
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**OUR HISTORY:** *The Domestic Violence Legal Network of Montgomery County (DVLN) was formed in 1986 by professionals from law enforcement, the court system, and agencies working with victims of domestic violence (DV), for the purpose of sharing resources and expertise to serve victims more effectively.*

**OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** *DVLN strives to eliminate Domestic Violence (DV) in the community by whatever means available including, enhanced communications between victim of (DV) and county services in an effort to secure safety and relief; to work with DV victims to remove stumbling blocks in their path to a more secure future; to keep the community informed by providing a clear profile of available services; to take action on behalf of DV victims through policy reform.*

**SERIES OF ARTICLES:** *So that we may reach more victims of DV, DVLN 's Education and Awareness Committee (TEACH) have created a series of articles to offer a better understanding of DV; which impacts the lives of 1 in 4 woman and 1 in 7 men.*

*For previous articles go to: [www.montcopa.org/dvln](http://www.montcopa.org/dvln)*

## **INTRO (OVERVIEW): The Role of Technology in Domestic Violence**

*Jan Biresch, Domestic Violence Literacy Consultant/Trainer/Advocate*

Technology is a "double edged sword", within the mind field known as domestic violence.

The pluses and minuses of technology are ever present in today's world.

The many formats of technology help us to connect with others and to learn; including victims of DV who are looking for a better understanding of the issue; to connect to resources; help in an emergency; and most importantly, a documentation of abuse via received emails, texts and photos.

The problem is that abusers have the same access to information, therefore they learn exactly how far to push while staying within legal guidelines. They can humiliate, stalk, and tell lies regarding their victim, in public venues. Children are at risk as they don't understand the dangers of sharing private information or sending explicit photos.

We all need to stay informed regarding the advantages as well as the pitfalls of technology.

The following articles will give you a taste of how technology is used within an abusive relationship and how we can protect ourselves and our children.

## **MAKE THE CALL TO STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**



## A VICTIM'S PERSPECTIVE: USED AS A WEAPON

*Submitted by Pauline McGibbon, Lethality Assessment Program Coordinator/Advocate, WCMC*

### **“Technology is my Tormentor”: *Story of “Maureen”, Domestic Violence Survivor.***

I first met “John” when I was fifteen and at high school. There was an instant attraction and we began dating at sixteen, beginning a relationship that would be on and off for the next eleven years. The relationship was abusive within a short time, but I stayed because I was not a popular girl at school, I was not beautiful, but he loved me. The abuse was physical, mental, and emotional – he literally cut me to see me bleed.

At one point I moved out of state to get away from him, met someone, and married. Unfortunately the marriage did not last and I returned. John and I got back in contact and soon he accepted my son as his own and we tried to build a family, having our own daughter in 2010. But old patterns came back and soon after the birth the abuse started again, mostly emotional. He believed in traditional roles and told me I was stupid and useless. I believed him. He would abuse drugs and disappear for long periods. The physical abuse began and one morning my son woke up and found a pool of my blood outside his door, from me being punched. John had threatened to cut my hands off. After many calls to the police I got a PFA and he moved out.

I wasn't available to him anymore so he had to find new ways to hurt me. PFAs usually allow for some contact for the exchange of children and these exchanges I came to dread. At one point he disappeared from our lives for eighteen months, and the PFA expired. A few months later I was applying for another.

John is a talented and intelligent man, and he is a natural with computers and technology. When he worked in IT he made really good money, although I always had to use the courts to fight for support. The PFA protected me from physical aggression, but he unleashed his aggression through social media. He contacted me through all the normal social media sites, and I was never able to enjoy them as they were meant to be, a forum for catching up with friends and family, exchanging photos, learning about people and places. For me it became a hostile environment. He stalked me on Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter. He set up fake accounts. He began a blog, first of all talking about his experiences in court, and particularly PFA court. He talked about the “professional victims” and their “fake tears”. In his blog he described the process as one where all the “victims” were women and all the defendants male. I was terrified to be in PFA court, while he wrote in his blog the he “found a good seat in the back row and made myself comfortable”. He described the people who came to drop their petitions or seek an agreement as “the low hanging fruit”. He criticized the court advocates and the judge, and belittled the whole process.

He continued his blog which was widely circulated on social media, especially those for men going through divorce, adding his bitterness to theirs. He claimed our four year old daughter had been sexually assaulted in my care, and he set up a fund page for an attorney. He attached pictures of our daughter, and only removed them when ordered to do so by a judge. My life, as he saw it, was laid bare on the internet. He accused me of being a drug addict, suicidal, a prostitute and a bad mother. My name and number were put on a site stating that that I would sell myself for sex. He called CYS on me many times.

I stopped looking on line but I could not stop looking on line – I wanted to know what was out there about me, but I dreaded finding it. I felt uneasy and persecuted and was always Googling my own name. I stopped sending emails and texts, they were a way to constantly harass and demean me. His texts and emails would start at 6 in the morning and continue to late at night. I was compelled to have contact with him because of our child. If I did not I would be in contempt of the custody agreement.

I complained to the police 8-10 times about his constant emails and texts, but because they always began as a question about our daughter and then deteriorated, the police did not take me seriously, and said there would have to be a direct threat before they could help, and even then they had to prove it came from him! One of them said “he just wants to see his child”. I was very frustrated, my PFA was really useless. I was mentally and physically exhausted. The stress put my physical health into decline. I developed panic attacks and would have one when I opened my phone and computer. I always knew there would be something from him. He was in my home 24/7 even though I had a PFA. I began to record him at custody exchanges because I knew the police would not accept my word about how he treated me and the things he said. He recorded me, and in the middle of all of this, was our little girl.

Then he sent me an email saying simply “I am going to kill you”. I believed him but I did not want to go to the police as they did not believe me. My advocate said she would come with me and talked to the Captain of the local department. Finally they took notice, and I will always be grateful to the Captain for his assistance and strong words of support.

I wish I could say that is the end of the story, but the internet campaign against me continues. My pick up and drop off point is now at the police department, and sometimes the police are sympathetic when I make reports of continuing harassment and PFA violations, and sometimes they are dismissive. The police ask me why I respond when he attacks me on social media. *Because I have to* – I have to defend myself and my children – would you allow yourself to be called

such vile names and not respond? Would you allow yourself to be vilified to an audience of millions and say nothing? I know it feeds the fire and I know he does it to harass and hurt me, but how do I make it stop? This morning I awoke to seven new emails. My stomach churns at the very thought of opening them. It's a terrible way to start the day.

## **Sexting 101: What You Need to Know**

***Ava Baran, MS Intake Coordinator & Child Abuse Specialist***

A frequent topic across all media platforms is the exchange of sexually explicit content via electronic messaging such as email or texting, more commonly known as "sexting." This act has risen in popularity in recent years due to the growing amount of minors carrying their own cell phones; particularly smart phones such as iPhones or Androids. Having been born and raised in the digital age, these kids are already very comfortable and familiar with using technology and are not always aware of the dangers to their own privacy and security. They may also not be aware of the potential legal ramifications of sexting.

The most important thing to know about sexting is that it can result in felony charges and hefty prison sentences. If an individual has nude pictures of a minor on his/her cell phone and decides to send them to others, his/her actions are defined as possessing and distributing child pornography. This is a felony crime and carries a mandatory registration as a sex offender for those convicted of the charges.

The internet is forever. It may sound grandiose, but it is true and has been proven time and again. Once a nude photo or sexually explicit video is let loose on the internet, it is fair game for other technology users to use and post as they please. Quite simply, there is no way to delete its existence completely. Young victims of sexting are unfortunately unaware of this fact until it is too late, despite being otherwise competent in the use of technology and social media.

It is paramount for parents and guardians to warn their children of the dangers of sexting both to protect their privacy as well as to avoid criminal charges. Communication is key. Devising and speaking about family and/or household rules for cell phone use may be helpful. Setting parental controls may also be useful in order to monitor your child's cell phone use. This may be especially useful for first-time cell phone users or younger adolescents. Complete prevention of sexting may not happen, but spreading knowledge and awareness is always possible.

For more information about sexting, please visit [www.dosomething.org](http://www.dosomething.org) to learn more about statistics and dangers of sexting. For a list of commonly-used acronyms and sexting terms your child may be using, please see [www.guardchild.com](http://www.guardchild.com), is a website exclusively devoted to assisting parents who are raising children in the digital age.

## **Keeping My Child Safe Online**

***Michele M. Kristofco, Children & Youth, Policy & Personnel Administrator/Community Relations Specialist***

One of the best things we can do to keep our children safe is to talk openly and often about Internet safety. Today's computers, lap tops, tablets and smart phones all seem so private, personal and safe, but logging onto the Internet is anything but those things. We must help our children to understand that everything they do on the Internet and social media can be captured and maintained. Even our Snap Chats and Instant Messages can be retrieved and viewed from "the Cloud".

Not only should our children be educated about privacy related to the Internet, but also about the bigger issue of safety. Today's predators are every bit as computer savvy as our children. They are experts online. They take pleasure in engaging and luring young people. They are skilled at creating false, younger personas, and pretending to be someone they are not. They thrive at the chase and will say or do anything to entice or trick someone into meeting them for a "date" or "rendezvous". These villains are never who they say they are. Their one goal is to gain a child's trust in order to get them alone and victimize them. This is why we must talk to our children about what they are doing online. We must help and guide them so that they can be online safely and not fall prey to someone looking to hurt them.

Here are some simple online rules for our children:

1. Do not give out personal information online such as name, address, phone number, parents' information or school information without parental permission.
2. Do not send photos of yourself to anyone you do not know and never send photos of yourself without clothing or while acting inappropriately.
3. Tell a parent or another adult if someone is asking you to provide information or photos to them, or if you come across anyone or anything that makes you uncomfortable.
4. Never agree to meet someone you meet online without parental permission. Even with permission, only meet in a public place and never go alone.
5. Tell a parent or another adult if someone is being mean or bullying you or others online. You or they are not alone and help is available.
6. Never say or do anything online that you would not stand up in front of your classroom or school principal and say or do.

Parents need to be aware, alert and involved in the activities of their children. “Friend” your child on social media sites, ask questions frequently, let your child know that you are there to help, support and protect them. Let them know that there is no problem too big or too small to discuss. Be a good listener. Remain calm and keep your emotions in check. Notify authorities immediately if your child is in danger from a bully, stalker, or child predator. The Internet and social media are a way of life today. Using them safely and wisely is the key.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSPECTIVES:**

### ***Technology and domestic violence: a police perspective.***

**Stacy Sweinhart, Domestic Abuse Response Team, Laurel House**

“Today’s technology, specifically social media, has created greater avenues than ever for abusers to harass their victims”, states Lieutenant Dougherty. Lt. Dougherty has worked for over 25 years with Montgomery Township Police Department and has seen the devastating effects of this trend on victims of domestic abuse. While there has been no formal study done to determine just how many people have been victims of cyberstalking, the numbers are, without a doubt, increasing.

Facebook, especially, has become a frequent tool in an abuser’s effort to stalk and harass their victim. Often times after a separation occurs, the abuser may try to access the victim’s social media and then could change settings or possibly post inappropriate status updates or photos or send inappropriate messages to the victim’s friends. Lt. Dougherty stresses that it is important to change any and all of your passwords immediately after you leave your abusive relationship; not just for social media but for any bank, phone, or utility accounts. Even posting an innocuous photo on Facebook can be dangerous. “You may think that you’re taking an anonymous photos at a park, but your photo could be geotagged and with a few clicks an abuser may be able to find your location”, states Lt. Dougherty.

Police are trying hard to keep up with the evolution of technology and its role in domestic abuse and stalking. Law enforcement encourages victims to be aware of their surroundings, trust their instincts, and DOCUMENT. “If someone believes that they are being harassed or stalked, don’t let it go the first time. If you allow it to continue and don’t report it then the abuser may continue their actions. It’s important to report it the first time and let the officer evaluate your specific case. The police may contact the abuser and tell them to refrain from their conduct and have no further contact or your case may justify filing of criminal charges. Any contact after the police make a notification of no contact could result in the police filing criminal charges. The victim should document any harassing or criminal actions of the abuser. This documentation often times can aid in showing a course of criminal conduct to law enforcement that would help to substantiate the violations that are occurring. Therefore, document any incidents that occur”, recommends Lt. Dougherty. By saving any harassing messages, inappropriate pictures, documenting dates/times of specific events, and taking screen shots of any harassing postings, a victim will be better able to show proof of the abuse and harassment and the police will be better equipped to prosecute. Depending on the severity of the case, police may search the IP addresses used for certain incidents.

Lt. Dougherty recommends these safety tips to better protect yourself if you believe you are being stalked or harassed with technology:

- Immediately change all of your passwords.
- Document any incidents (save harassing messages, pictures, dates/times)
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Develop a safety plan.
- Check phone settings (if your phone geotags photos and records your location, you need to adjust that setting in your phone)
- Consider scanning your phone or computer (often times abusers can add spyware to smartphones and computers that can be used to track locations, access messages, and listen in on phone conversations)

When in doubt contact a domestic violence advocate or your local police for assistance.

## **District Attorney, Alec O'Neill, ESQ**

Basic technology is an excellent way to communicate but it can also be another way to control and abuse somebody. We may think physical abuse is only way to abuse and control someone, but technology can be used, even when the victim separates. It can be a means to re-victimize and re-traumatize the victim using communication via social media – (Facebook, Twitter...), cell phone, email, and letters. Technology expands ways to traumatize the victim. This is the pros and cons of having technology available so readily.

Crimes that can be charged against perpetrators are the same crimes that are already on the books, i.e. stalking, harassment, terroristic threats, intimidation, and violations of the Protection From Abuse (related by blood, marriage or intimate relations via boyfriend/girlfriend) and Protections from Sexual Violence and Intimidation orders (for those whose relationships are not familial, or marriage blood-related or boyfriend/girlfriend related). These crimes can be enforced via law enforcement and judicial systems holding perpetrator accountable.

In order to deal with the trauma, the victims' first reaction may be to delete the things that caused the trauma- pictures, emails, communication, but it is better to contact law enforcement and those in the position to do something about it FIRST, before it is deleted. Use cellphones with cameras to document abuse, it really helps in the long-run.

Strategies – as technology use increases, system collaborations increase, to improve the way we deal with it. Victims, victims' advocates, law enforcement, judicial systems, community leaders, etc. all play a part in having the ability to help victims find other strategies to be and stay safe. The internet can be used to help victims research and find answers i.e. "How to Stop Someone From Harassing Me" or "What To Do If I Am Being Stalked." Abusers will always find ways to use technologies and patterns of abuse to control and hurt the victim. By collaborating, the victims as well as all systems can use technology for the good and for positive outcomes.

## **JUDICIAL PERSPECTIVES: Submitted by Denise Flynn**

### **An Interview with HON. KELLY C. WALL, ESQ & MAGISTRATE DISTRICT JUSTICE WILLIAM I. MARUSZCZAK (38-1-09)**

**In interviewing both Hon. Judge Kelly C. Wall and Magistrate District Judge William I. Maruszczak, they shared similar judicial perspectives on what they see from the bench. It is captured in the perspectives below:**

**Magistrate District Justice:** MDJ Maruszczak is a very knowledgeable man and sees victims and perpetrators in the preliminary stages of the crime to determine if there is enough to send it to the Common Pleas level or enough to issue an Emergency Protection Order and sometimes, if it meets the level that criminal actions have been committed and it is sent on to trial and incarceration. He stated he knows technology can be very beneficial on so many levels; it can also be used to inflict further harm on victims and their families. From posting pictures and other forms of exploitation, to stalking, harassments, threats, abuse and even death. He believes preventative measures, education and awareness to children, parents and basically, in general, as well as collaboration within systems can help reduce technology abuses. He stated it is something that must be carefully monitored to catch those who abuse technology and the system [citing recent news coverage of a person who used his unsuspecting neighbor's internet to traffic child porn].

**Hon. Judge Wall wrote:** From my perspective as a Family Judge, we see the victims after they have met with the Legal Advocates from the Women's Center's Legal Advocacy Project and have filed a Protection from Abuse petition ("PFA"). We review the allegations and make a determination as to whether a temporary order is required to protect the petitioner until a final order may be entered.

Many of the domestic violence cases are family related issues, i.e, the breakdown of a relationship where the parties are scared or angry and do not know their rights. Many of those cases can be resolved at the final PFA hearing with the assistance of Courtroom resources such as Legal Advocates and the Friend of the Court volunteer after the parties are educated about their rights. Often times, temporary custody and family orders are entered and the PFA is withdrawn.

The cases where the issues are not family related require a different analysis. Many parties report an ongoing history of verbal and physical abuse which becomes a challenge for the presiding judge. All we can do is hear the case and determine whether a protection order is necessary based on an allegation of recent physical violence. We cannot order the petitioner who allege years of abuse to seek counseling, rather we can only recommend them reach out to agencies like the Women's Center, Victim Services, or the Laurel House for advice and services.

Over the years, the nature of abuse has changed due to the increasing use of technology such as cellphones and computers. Abusers will send text or emails threatening to abuse, kill or harm the victim. Defendants may post photographs and/or negative or threatening messages on social media outlets such as Facebook. The messages may rise to the level of stalking or harassment. I recently presided over two PFA cases where the Defendants posted intimate/sexual photos of the Plaintiffs on the various social media outlets and/or made crude or sexual comments.

These images become viral and can be viewed by parents/teachers/siblings/employers. The adverse effect on a victim is immeasurable, and there is no recourse to have the threats or images removed. The photos are out in the universe and forever accessible. One of the victims was attending nursing school and was frightened that her professor/fellow students or future employers would be able to google her name and see these images. Victims who have children may be petrified that their children will be harmed or may see the messages or photographic images. Unfortunately, it is my experience that the Defendants often do not understand the magnitude their actions have on the victims and often feel they "had it coming to them." In some cases the law has not caught up with the abusive behaviors and the Court is unable to punish or assist the Plaintiffs in rectifying the harm inflicted on them.

Both Honorable Wall and Maruszczak agreed, it is not uncommon to see victims of domestic violence and sexual assault threatened, stalked, harassed or abused after the initial violent event.

The court may see these cases where a PFA is violated and the Defendant is charged with an indirect criminal contempt ("ICC") which is punishable by incarceration up to 6 months and/or a fine from \$300.00 - \$1,000.00. The PFA may be violated when the Defendant send threatening e-mails or texts after the order is entered, posts negative comments on social media or has a friend or family member contact the victim with threats. Some of the ICCs result in the violation of a Defendant's probation or parole when sending threatening messages via/posts, texts, e-mails, etc. In many cases the communication is made through a third party's e-mail, text or social media account. The ICC becomes a new charge and the Defendant may be given more time on their sentence.

There are various crimes the perpetrator of a domestic and/or sexual violence act can be charged which will depend on several factors including, but not limited to, the age of the victim, the relationship of the parties, the nature of the photographic images and the intent of the perpetrator. For instance, the defendant can be charged with stalking (18 C.S.A. § 2709.1), harassment (18 C.S.A. § 2709) or terroristic threats (18 C.S.A. § 2709). Each requires proof that the behavior of the Defendant fits the crime. In cases where a defendant has disseminated intimate photos, he or she may be charged with Unlawful Dissemination of Intimate Image under 18 C.S.A. §3131. A person would be guilty of committing the offense of unlawful dissemination of intimate image if, with intent to annoy, harass or alarm a current or former sexual or intimate partner, the person disseminates a visual depiction of the current or former sexual or intimate partner in a state of nudity or engaged in sexual conduct. If the conduct involves physical abuse, the Defendant may be charged with crimes of assault and battery. As noted above, civil remedies include a PFA or a protection order under the Protection Against Sexual Violence and Intimidation Act ("PSVI"). Violation of a protection order may result in incarceration or a fine, and if the defendant is still on parole or probation, the violation of the protection order is deemed a violation of the conditions of parole/probation and may result in jail time.

Some of the obvious tools that hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes include protection orders, incarceration, fines and loss of weapons. Many individuals will be court ordered to attend programs like the Safe Project or Menergy for batterers as a condition of their parole or probation or ultimate release from prison. **The SAFE Project** is a therapeutic group intervention for men who have been identified as domestic violence offenders. This intervention is designed to stop intimate relationship abuse and ensure the safety of women and children while breaking the devastating cycle of domestic violence. **Menergy, is one** of the oldest counseling programs in the country for men or women who have been abusive to an intimate partner. One of the most important preventive strategies is educating adults and children about domestic violence and sexual abuse. Adults may be educated through the batterers' group and counseling. In those cases you are trying to change a pattern whether it is situational, learned or arising from drug, alcohol or mental health issues.

**PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES:** One of the best preventative strategies is to educate young people before they become batterers. Children and teens may engage in abusive behavior such as cyber bullying. There is also an increasing use of technology and social media to disseminate improper "selfies" among high school students. This behavior is now considered a crime for anyone who sends the nude or suggestive images from one phone/computer/electronic device to another. Either one of these behaviors may ultimately result in an appearance in juvenile court or may harm a student's chances of attending the college of his/her choice.

Children should be taught the consequences that may arise from the negative use of social media including, but not limited to, the damage to the victim's reputation, the effect on the victim and the possibility of criminal charges. There are several high profile cases where victims commit suicide, leave their schools or move out of town. In order to address this growing behavior, we, as a community, must educate our children starting with the parents and the assistance of church programs, community involvement and schools.

One local program, the Liberty & Law Civics Program, which is sponsored by the Montgomery Bar Association, is using the combined efforts of the legal community and schools to teach children about government and the law. This program has been successfully running in the Norristown Middle Schools for the last several years. Two lawyers and a judge are assigned to a sixth-grade classroom and each month they present a different civics topic. The students get to

know the lawyers and judges and hear about some of the real-life cases that they handle. The lessons are distributed to the teachers ahead of time so they can prepare the students and the discussions are usually spirited and mutually informative. A sample of the topics the class covers include, but are not limited to: enacting rules and laws, differentiating the branches of government which enacts, uphold and enforces the law; constitutional rights and the amendments, and dealing with disputes through mediation.

Judge Wall, Administrative Family Judge of Montgomery County, who is an active participant in the program, noted that the forum has provided the teams an opportunity to reach students at a crucial age to educate them in subjects that may have a tremendous impact on their futures. In a recent session, the teams addressed the issue of cyberbullying through the use of social media and technology, and most of the students were unaware of the far-reaching negative and irreparable harm cyberbullying has on the participant or the recipient. Judge Wall used the opportunity to discuss the consequences that any negative use of technology can result in including, but not limited to, legal and civil ramifications, damage to reputation, and hurt and embarrassment for the victim. The students were engrossed in the subject matter and were able to see a perspective they may otherwise would have never understood.

Similar programs incorporated into the community, houses of worship or local police based programs for children will start the education of children and may be a major deterrent to abusive behavior as adults.

### **Safety Tips For Using Computers & Cell Phones Submitted by Denise Flynn, MHS, PPSLC**

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"...we know that technology plays a strong factor in victims being re-victimized and further victimized via cell phones (texts/ phone stalking), iphones, computers/PC, tablets, laptops, security and spy devices, internet/cyberspace, social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Kik, oovoo, musicly)..." Denise Flynn

**Computers and cell phones are useful** to gather information and stay in touch with family and friends. But cell phones and computers can also be used to harass you, follow you, and abuse you. Reading the following safety tips will help you use your computer and/or cell phone more safely.

Nothing can make your computer and cell phone totally safe. In some cases, it may be best to stop using any social media, like Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, Flickr, Shutterfly, Picasa, Instagram, and to limit the use of your cell phone. It is especially important to think about these things if you are involved in a civil or criminal case.

#### **Use a Safer Phone or Computer**

If someone who harmed you had access to your computer or cell phone, it may not be safe to use. There are programs available called Spyware, which can be downloaded onto your computer or cell phone in just a few minutes. Spyware allows the person to track everything you are doing on your cell phone or computer.

- **TIP: If you think your phone or computer has spyware, keep using it for simple things that other people already know about you. But for searches or emails that involve your safety or situation, use a safer phone or computer. Ask a domestic violence or sexual assault advocate about where to find a safer phone or computer.**

#### **Change Passwords and Security Questions**

It is easy to use names or dates that are easy for you to remember for passwords and security questions. But the person who harmed you may also know those names or dates. If so, this person could get into your bank, credit card and social media accounts.

- **TIP: Make your password and security questions harder to guess: replace characters for letters (@ for a / \$ for s). Use a mix of numbers and letters.**

#### **Set and Check Privacy Settings**

Are you friends on Facebook or another social media site with someone who harmed you? What about your children, friends, and family? If so, that person may have access to your information.

- **TIP: Set, check, and recheck the privacy settings on your social networking pages to be sure your settings are up to date. Ask an advocate to show you how to do this.**

#### **Talk to Family and Friends About Your Tech Safety Needs**

Talk to your friends and family about the importance of respecting your privacy.

- **TIP: Ask your friends and family not to post pictures, comments, or other information that may uncover your or your child's information.**

#### **Turn Off GPS on All Electronic Devices**

GPS provides information on exactly where you are. GPS is on cell phones, digital cameras, laptop computers and other

electronic devices. The person who harmed you can use GPS to track or find you. For instance, when you post a picture on your social media page, GPS allows the site to show where the picture was taken.

- **TIP: Follow the steps in your user manual to turn off GPS on all your cameras, phones, and other electronic devices. Consider turning off GPS on your child's devices, too.**

**Keep Your Personal Information Private** Every time you sign up for special deals or services, you are asked to give out your personal information, including your name, address, and phone number. If you give your information, it may be sold to a database that the public can access for free.

- **TIP: Limit the information you give out about yourself or give information that the person who harmed you already knows.**

**Keep Careful Records of Electronic Abuse** If you think someone is harassing or following you online, it is important to write it down and keep a close record. But keeping a record can be risky if the person who harmed you finds out.

- **TIP: Print a copy and/or take a photo of the message or computer screen. Keep the paper copy in a safe place where nobody can find it, like a trusted friend's house or at work.**

### **Speak With an Advocate About Safer Technology Use**

- **TIP:** Find a local program near you. Call The National Domestic Violence Hotline, 800-799-7233 or The National Sexual Assault Hotline, 800-656-4673. You can also visit us online at [www.pcadv.org](http://www.pcadv.org) or [www.pcar.org](http://www.pcar.org)
  - **Local contacts are:**  
**The Women's Center of Montgomery County 1-800-773-2424**  
**Laurel House – 1-800-642-3150**  
**Victim Services Center – 1-888-521-0983**
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### **TECH SAVVY TEENS: CHOOSING WHO GETS TO SEE YOUR INFO**

National Network to End DV – [nnev.org](http://nnev.org)

### **BLOG & SOCIAL NETWORKING:**

**HAVE YOU PUT YOUR PROFILE ON A SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE LIKE MYSPACE OR FACEBOOK, AN ONLINE DATING OR ALUMNI SITE?** Have you set your profile to be private? If not, anyone who visits that site, including college admissions offices, teachers, family, potential employers or even stalkers can see your personal information.

### **DO YOU USE FREE E-MAIL, A BLOG, INSTANT MESSAGING, OR SHARE MUSIC OR PHOTOS ONLINE?**

When you signed up for that service, did you give your name, age, gender, the town you live in or your hobbies? If so, the company that got your information might post it online for everyone to see. Many times, you can choose not to have your information included in public directories. You can also provide very little information if you want (only your first name or a fake name, for example).

**HAVE YOU EVER PLAYED IN THE SCHOOL BAND, HAD YOUR WORK INCLUDED IN AN ART SHOW, OR BEEN ON A SPORTS TEAM?** If so, your name, personal details, and contact information might be posted online. Some Web sites will remove information at your request, but if the site is archived, your information may not really be gone. If you don't want information posted online, you should act quickly to have it removed.

### **ARCHIVES:**

Web sites can be "archived" or "cached" so people can still access the old content even if the Web site disappears or changes. This means that any information posted to the Web could be online for a long time - maybe even forever. Internet Archive ([www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)) has 55 billion Web pages!

### **OTHER WAYS YOUR INFORMATION GETS ON THE WEB:**

A store asks for your phone number or zip code when you buy something and that information is put into a database. The store might later sell your information to a data broker who posts it in an online directory.

- A friend or classmate posts information or photos that include you. Or, a relative posts a family photo album with you in it.
- If you have a drivers license, have gotten a traffic ticket or gone to Court, your name, address, and other personal information may be available online on a court or county Web site.

## REMOVING INFORMATION

Sometimes it's ok to leave certain information online, especially if it's harmless. When trying to remove your information from any Web site, consider not sharing your correct or full information because data brokers may make money by selling accurate information. If you want something removed, the Website may have instructions, or provide a form or E-mail address to contact them. If the information is in a government record, you may need to fill out an official petition, motion, request or letter.

## HOW DO I KNOW WHAT IS ON THE WEB ALREADY? If you can find it, someone else can too.

- Search the Web for your personal information and photos. Some places to start: Google, Yahoo, Classmates.com, YouTube and Flickr.
- Look on Web sites for groups and places where you might have a connection: your school, clubs, jobs, faith community, sports teams, community and volunteer groups, etc.

## PHONES: ARE YOU RECEIVING HUNDREDS OF TEXT MESSAGES OR VOICEMAILS FROM SOMEONE YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK TO? If you're being stalked via phone or text message, you have options:

- For support, you can call the free U.S. National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline at 1-866-331-9474 (for TTY 1-866-331-8453).
- You can talk to your phone service provider about call blocking and other call features, or about changing your number.
- You can talk to the police to find out if there is evidence for a stalking or harassment charge. Harassing phone calls and text messages are often illegal.

## SPYING ON YOU: Does Someone Seem To Know About Every E-mail You've Written or Everything You Wrote In An Instant Message?

Someone may be using the logging feature on your instant messaging program settings to secretly send them copies. It's also possible that someone may have installed spyware on your computer. Stalkers can install spyware even if they don't have physical access to your computer or handheld device. Some stalkers might hack into your computer from another location via the internet. Some might send spyware as an attached file that automatically installs itself when you open the E-mail or Initially view it in a preview window. Others may E-mail or instant message a greeting card, computer game or other decoy to lure you into opening an attachment or clicking a link.

**Once spyware is on your computer**, it can run in stealth mode and is difficult to detect or completely uninstall. If the person who installed spyware has physical access to your computer, a special key combination can be used to make a secret log-in screen appear. After entering the password, the spyware program lets that person view a record of all computer activities since the last login, including emails you sent, documents printed, Websites visited, searches you did and more. Even without physical access to your computer, stalkers can set up the spyware to take pictures of your computer screen (screen shots) every few seconds and have these pictures sent to them over the internet without your knowledge.

**PROTECTING YOUR PRIVACY:** If you think there may be spyware on your computer try to use a safer computer when you look for help. It may be safest to use a computer at a library, friend's house, community center, or internet café.

- If you suspect that an abuser can access your E-mail or Instant Messages (IM), consider creating additional email/IM accounts on a safer computer. Do not create or check new E-mail.IM accounts from a computer that might be monitored. Look for free Web-based E-mail accounts, consider using non-identifying name and account information (example: bluecat@email.com and not Your [RealName@email.com](#)). Also, carefully read the registration screens so you can choose not to be listed in any online directories.
- Remember that many phones are just mini-computers. Stalkers can put spyware programs on cellphones and other hand held devices to track every text message sent and phone number dialed. Also, if someone knows how or can guess your password, that person can log on to your phone account, bank account or other accounts online. So keep your passwords secret and change them often!

PROTECTING YOUR PRIVACY (copyright) 2007 NNEDV Safety Net Project [revised 2008]

Web: [nnedv.org/safetynet](http://nnedv.org/safetynet)

Email: [safetynet@nnedv.org](mailto:safetynet@nnedv.org)

Phone: 202-543-5566

## TECHNOLOGY SAFETY

[www.endabusewi.org/ourwork/techsafety](http://www.endabusewi.org/ourwork/techsafety)

The internet is an invaluable resource to aid survivors of domestic violence and their children, in finding safety and coping with issues of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence, stalking and abuse. However, in the hands of abusers and perpetrators, this technology can be dangerous and potentially lethal.

Aided by the **SafetyNet Project** of the National Network to End Domestic Violence, we provide advocates and allies with tools to recognize and protect themselves and their clients from abuses of technology, and helps address how ongoing and emerging technology issues impact the safety, privacy and accessibility rights of victims of domestic violence, sexual violence and stalking.

We provide materials to help law enforcement, social services, coordinated community response teams and others to learn to identify and hold perpetrators accountable for misusing technology to impersonate, harass, stalk, and threaten.

## RESOURCES

**Technology and Abuse in Later Life** NCALL created a toolkit for older adults with two goals in mind: to provide information about common technologies, including assistive technology, and to identify ways older adults can safeguard themselves from those who misuse technology to control, harass, stalk, and/or threaten them.

[www.ncall.us/content/technology](http://www.ncall.us/content/technology)

### **NNEDV Safety Net's Technology & Confidentiality Resources Toolkit**

This unique and innovative micro website was developed by NNEDV's Safety Net Team to assist domestic violence, dating abuse, sexual violence, and stalking, non-profit victim service organizations and partnerships including victim service agencies with specific and useful resources on confidentiality and privacy.

[www.nnedv.org/tools](http://www.nnedv.org/tools)

### **NNEDV Technology Safety Resources**

Documents from NNEDV's Safety Net: National Safe and Strategic Technology Project. Topics include survivor safety planning, confidentiality, spyware, teens, identity change, data security, social networking, online safety and assistive technology. [www.nnedv.org/resources/safetynetdocs.html](http://www.nnedv.org/resources/safetynetdocs.html)

**Technology Safety website** – blog with talking points on various topics with links to resources/handouts.

[www.techsafety.org](http://www.techsafety.org)

**Privacy & Safety on Facebook: A Guide for Survivors of Abuse.** This guide addresses privacy on Facebook, as well as safety tips and options for when someone is misusing the site to harass, monitor, threaten, or stalk. It refers back to Facebook's Help center in several places for more detailed information on settings and features – a site that all Facebook users should check out. NNEDV's SafetyNet staff has collaborated on this in hopes that it helps survivors of abuse know how to stay connected through social media while continuing to maintain their safety. <http://nnedv.org/facebookprivacy>

**Safety Tips for Using Computers and Cell Phones.** Computers and cell phones are useful to gather information and stay in touch with family and friends. But cell phones and computers can also be used to harass you, follow you, and abuse you. Reading the attached safety tips will help you use your computer and/or cell phone more safely.

TechTips for Survivors – PCADV.pdf

Technology Safety Planning with Survivors. Tips to discuss if someone you know is in danger. This handout provides 12 simple but critical tips about phone, computer, email, instant messaging and other technology use to discuss if someone you know is in danger.

This document is available from NNEDV in several languages.

<http://nnedv.org/resources/safetynetdocs/technology-safety-plan.html>

**Stay Safe Online – National Cyber Security Alliance** – NCSA’s mission is to educate and therefore empower a digital society to use the internet safely and securely at home, work, and school. Includes information and teaching materials, plus tipsheets for adults, children, students, businesses and employees.

[www.staysafeonline.org](http://www.staysafeonline.org)

**A Platform For Good.** Google has launched **A Platform For Good (PFG)** to focus on the positive power of the internet, using fun and engaging interactive elements to support online safety learning. The goal is to provide an interactive space to help parents, teachers, and teens connect, share, and do good online. Look for privacy information on the Resource pages.

**Just Delete Me.** This website will guide you in removing accounts from many online services:

<http://justdelete.me/>

**Online Privacy and Safety Tips.** Browsing the web safely and privately is concern for many people. A good general rule is that nothing online is private. Another general rule is that you can’t be completely anonymous online. However, you can take steps to prevent sensitive and personal information from making its round on the Web.

NNEDV\_OnlinePrivacyandSafetyTips\_March2010. pdf

**Tech-Savvy Teens**

Choose who gets to see your information. ESCOGE QUIEN PUEDA VER TU INFORMACION

TechSavvyTeens\_NNEDV\_English08.pdf

TechSavvyTeens\_NNEDV\_Spanish08.pdf

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Source URL – <http://www.endabusewi.org/ourwork/techsafety>

# MAKE THE CALL TO STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



For confidential domestic violence, sexual assault, or child abuse help or resources:

*Do Not Hesitate to CALL 911 In Case of an Emergency or Dangerous Situation!*

*Laurel House Hotline: 800-642-3150*

*Women's Center Hotline: 800-773-2424*

*Victim Services Center: 888-521-0983*

*Office of Children and Youth: 610-278-5800*

*PA Child Abuse Hotline: 800-932-0313*

*Montgomery County Domestic Relations: 610-278-3646  
(Child support issues)*

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## Contributors are all members of the Montgomery County Domestic Violence Legal Network/T.E.A.C.H.

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*New articles and resources will be published three times a year by The Domestic Violence Legal Network and can be accessed at: [www.montcopa.org/DVLN](http://www.montcopa.org/DVLN)*

*See newsletter at bottom of DVLN home page for previous articles*