According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), when connecting remotely the key risks to survivors include personal safety, loss of privacy and confidentiality. Our top priority as service providers should be to mitigate as much risk as possible, to help keep survivors safe.

Any technological tools used to communicate with survivors should:

- Be low-barrier for access and not require downloading or creating an account to use it
- Prioritize privacy
- Eliminate or minimize personal data collection

Here are some outreach methods you may consider:

- **Text messaging:** Text messaging is easily accessible for survivors with mobile phones, but can be difficult for organizations that manage a hotline and need additional flexibility beyond multiple applications on a single device. Computer-based platforms allow for flexibility and shared capacity among staff. Also, consider privacy and safety risks if text messages aren’t manually deleted, and make sure that both survivors and your organization delete text history on a regular basis.
- **Online chat:** Chat platforms are an easy way for survivors to connect to programs, and often provide more security than text messaging because conversations are seldom stored on any device, even though privacy can never be completely guaranteed.
- **Video calls:** Video calls offer a personalized experience, along with visual and audio cues that reduce miscommunication. Many video platforms also permit third-party live interpreters, which increases accessibility for survivors who are Deaf, hard of hearing or do not speak English as a first language.
- **Email:** Caution should be used with email, as abusers can easily access the account if they have the password or access to other devices that the survivor uses to check email. Make sure that survivors are aware of these concerns and that email use (and all communications) are part of their safety planning.

NNEDV’s Technology Safety department has created a Digital Services Toolkit that includes best practices for interacting with safely interacting with survivors using technology. You can find it here: [https://www.techsafety.org/digital-services-toolkit](https://www.techsafety.org/digital-services-toolkit)

Additionally, Tech Safety has also included a list of resources that may be useful in communicating with survivors. These applications have been determined by NNEDV to meet current best practice standards for privacy and confidentiality, but NNEDV and Violence Free Colorado do not endorse any of these applications.

**Tele-advocacy and tele-therapy**

Public health concerns around COVID-19 have forced local programs to consider alternative methods to reach survivors in need of tele-advocacy services, while also considering privacy policies that do not collect, store and/or share personally identifying information (PII).

For organizations that also provide in-house mental health services, e-therapy options must protect confidentiality and protect Personally Identifying Information, regardless of which HIPAA compliant tech platform is being used. Colorado’s Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA) also requires anyone using e-therapy to provide an appropriate disclosure form that specifically addresses e-therapy.

More information:

[Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies](https://www.techsafety.org/blog/2020/3/12/using-technology-during-a-public-health-crisis)