

New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
2004 Domestic Violence Handbook

Computer and E-mail Safety

It is important to remember that computer technology can put your privacy and safety at risk. Computer hard drives are capable of recording every action taken on the computer and Internet, and it is virtually impossible to completely erase these "foot prints". Even if your abuser is not an expert at computers, he may be able to trace what you have done on the computer or can easily find someone who can. If you think you may be monitored on your home computer, it may be safer for you to stop using that computer.

Computers that are located in a public library, community technology center, Internet cafe or at a trusted friend's house may be safer options if you wish to use e-mail or browse the Internet.

Other precautions you can take include the following:

- Never share your e-mail password(s). However, if you believe your abuser knows your password, before changing it, consider whether that may cause more danger by arousing suspicion.
- Passwords should be difficult to figure out. Never use birth dates, street addresses, names etc.
- Consider having more than one e-mail account so that you have an alternative if your abuser forces you to close an account.
- Ask friends and family to not share your new e-mail addresses.
- Never register your personal information such as your real address or phone number when you sign up for web e-mail accounts such as Yahoo or Hotmail.

Computers can also be a useful tool in accessing information about what you are going through and what you can do to seek help. However, keep in mind that some domestic violence websites are not legitimate and may give you misleading information. Your local domestic violence advocate can help sort out any information that may be confusing. Finally, e-mails from your abuser can provide excellent

evidence in a court case. You might want to consider saving his e-mails even if you don't have a case pending, so they are available if you ever need them.