



SAFETY AND CELL PHONES

It is hard to imagine how we managed before cell phones. They can also help an abuser trace or harass you. The suggestions can help keep you safer.

- ❖ The safest cell phone is one that cannot be tracked back to you. Pay As You Go Phone. Abusers are often very good at creating convincing stories for companies about why they need your contact and location information and “helpful” staff may provide it. If the company does not have your information, they cannot expose it.
- ❖ Pay As You Go Phones do not require a contract. You do not have to show ID, give your name and address of any identifying information. If possible pay with cash to avoid the phone being connected with your personal information.
- ❖ Protect your phone number. Abusers will try to contact and locate you through other people if they cannot contact or locate you directly. Insist that the people you trust do not give your phone number to anyone. You may want to consider using more than one SIM card so you can use different phone numbers for the type of people you contact.

If purchasing a new phone is an issue, there are programs through Verizon, Virgin Mobile and Safe Link Wireless to get free phones.

Cell phones can be monitored in a variety of ways. Your abuser would have had to physically access your phone. This could have happened before you left. They could have installed monitoring software on the phone allowing them to view your activity from another phone or computer. They could have downloaded apps or changed the account and security features to make your phone more vulnerable. These apps are not always visible to you. It can be downloaded through your calculator or through a photo app. If you share a phone account with the abuser, he can gain access to all of the features on your phone and locate you anywhere you may be. If your phone has a location app, your abuser can turn that on to find you.

Do you notice unusual activity on your phone?

Excessive battery drain on your phone or a spike in data usage can be an indicator that additional software or spyware is running on your phone.

Trust your instincts. If you suspect that someone is monitoring you, they probably are. If you decide to get a new phone change carriers so that your abuser has no access to your account.

General cell phone safety strategies:

- ❖ Lock your cell phone with a pass code and don't share the passcode with anyone.
- ❖ Turn off the GPS on your phone. Be aware that some apps will not work with the GPS turned off.
- ❖ Some apps will allow you to opt out of it gathering location information; if an app will not give you that option, consider not downloading the app.
- ❖ If you have apps connected to online accounts on your cell phone, do not stay logged in. Log off after each use.
- ❖ Turn off the Bluetooth when it is not being used.
- ❖ Check your cell phone account every now and then through your wireless carrier's website to ensure that you know all the features that are running on your phone.
- ❖ Run anti-virus and security software on your phone. Some software will even list all the programs that are running on your phone.
- ❖ If you cannot get rid of your phone, but don't want the abuser to know where you are going, you can turn off the phone and take out the battery. You can also, wrap your phone in aluminum foil to ensure that no signal is being received or sent. Keep in mind, however, that once you turn the phone back on, all data waiting to be sent and to be received will occur, when you turn the phone back on, the person monitoring will know where you are.