Technology Abuse Clinics for Intimate Partner Violence Survivors

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1 in 4 women and **1 in 10** men experience severe violence from an intimate partner in their life times.

-Center for Disease Control
National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey

58% of **Indigenous women** †

51% of **Black women** †

61% of **bisexual women** †

54% of **trans and nonbinary people***

experience severe intimate partner violence.

†*2020 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*
*2015 U.S. Transgender Survey

What is intimate partner violence?

Depends on who you ask!

Version 1 - 2018

"**a pattern of abusive behavior** used by one partner to maintain power and control over another [that] can be **physical, sexual, emotional, economic,** or **psychological**"

-Office of Violence Against Women, circa 2018

Version 2 - 2019

"felony or misdemeanor crimes of violence committed by a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the victim."

-Office of Violence Against Women, circa 2019

Version 3 - Current

"**a pattern of abusive behavior** used by one partner to maintain power and control over another [that] can be **physical, sexual, emotional, economic,** or **psychological** or **technological.**"

-Office of Violence Against Women, 2022

Moral of the story: definitions are malleable, political, and consequential.

Good definitions are based in and evolve with survivor narratives.

Technology abuse clinics create places where **survivors** can share their **narratives of technology abuse** directly with **technologists** while **receiving immediate help.**

What kind of help?

Often, not very sophisticated!

- ○ reviewing sensitive privacy settings
- ○ resetting passwords
- ○ explaining 2-Factor authentication
- ○ checking log-in histories

"Is helping people reset their passwords really the best use of your time?"

"I wrote down things that were happening, altercations, and **I had evidence**. He told me that he needed to update the device. He took the phone, **forced the password out of me** . . . and **he deleted [my journal]**."

Viewing technology abuse as series of incident reports or help tickets doesn't tell the whole story.

- **location tracking,** through apps (FindMy, Life360), or personal trackers (AirTags, Tile)

- abuse of **shared phone contracts**

- **deleting evidence** (texts, photos)

- denial of Internet, air conditioning, through **Bluetooth Smart Home** devices.

- hijacking accounts for **public housing, health care, personal businesses**

"It feels like its coming from everywhere."

"I can't even trust what my own eyes are seeing anymore."

TECC Clinic
TECH-ENABLED COERCIVE CONTROL CLINIC

Madison
Tech Clinic

CETA
CLINIC TO END TECH ABUSE

What we need is **a network of technology abuse clinics**, responding locally but connected with each other across the country and world.

The Technology
Abuse Clinic Toolkit

by Dana Cuomo, Nicola Dell, Alana Ramjit, Thomas Ristenpart

What's in the toolkit?

Practical questions, worksheets, and resources to work through questions about:
- establishing partnerships with local agencies
- recruiting and training staff
- running client sessions
- and more

What's not in the toolkit?

The **best** or **only** way to run a technology abuse clinic.

Explore other relational dynamics, service models, funding structures, etc!

How do clinics help us safely engage with survivors?

Trauma-informed and **community-based** technology services for survivors delivered in a **clinical setting**.

Trauma-Informed Care

- Training from and closely working with domain experts and advocates
- Tailored to individual client's situation
  - safety risk of violence/harassment from abuser
  - educate, not just "use Signal"
- let client drive sessions

Community-Based

- work with local agencies already in touch with communities and coordinate care
- understand local laws, language, cultures
  - What's "normal" technology where you are?

Clinical Settings

- Survivors gain access to experts to sort through misinformation and lies
- Medium-low commitment for experts
  - ~10-15 hours a month (not week)!

Clinics help us, as technology experts, understand **narratives** of technology abuse and then use those to **shape public policy** and **build better technology platforms**.

IPV Services:
 http://thehotline.org

The Technology Abuse Clinic Toolkit:
http:///ceta.tech.cornell.edu/resources

Responding to technology abuse means working within existing **public health, advocacy, and law enforcement systems** which often **lack awareness or understanding of technology**.

89% of advocates report seeing technology used against their clients, with **38%** reporting having seen 15+ cases that year.

Technology abuse can be defined as the numerous ways in which an abuser exploits digital technologies **to intimidate, threaten, monitor, impersonate, harass, or otherwise harm** their victims.

Intimate Partner Threat Models

1. Attacker and target can look like the same entity
    - Coerced access, shared accounts, same household, ownership

2. Close physical, social access
    - Guess passwords, birthdays, security questions, access to family and friends in social circles.