

Why Privacy and Confidentiality Matters for Victims of Domestic & Sexual Violence

Privacy and even secrecy are considered a crucial component of a victim's safety. This is why many emergency domestic violence shelter locations are still confidential.

If sensitive information is exposed, this can leave survivors either in danger from their abuser, unwilling to disclose their abuse and get help, or unable to do something as simple as buying a house. Once information is posted online, it is nearly impossible to remove it.

The result is that survivors are making decisions that no one should have to make. Some survivors are so fearful of someone finding them that they choose to be homeless to "stay off the radar" or even refusing to have any official government ID because they worry that if their name gets into any government database, their abusers will find them. This results in them being unable to participate in activities that require an official ID, including flying and even accessing some social services. For other survivors, the lack of privacy when seeking services creates a chilling effect, causing them to choose not to call the police or ask for help.