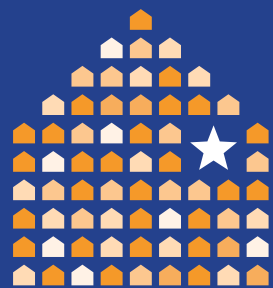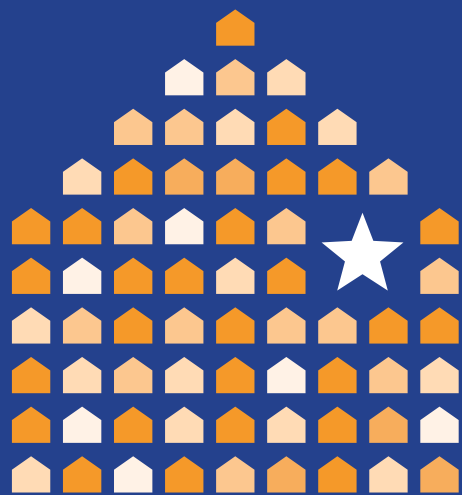# SAFETY & PRIVACY ON TWITTER

A guide for survivors of harassment and abuse

NNEDV

NNEDV

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INTRODUCTION

The Internet and social media are changing the way people connect and share with one another. This is creating more experiences and opportunities throughout society — from seeing live events unfold to sharing a special moment with family and friends around the world. The same social media platforms however carry unique challenges for staying safe and free from harm, especially for survivors of domestic violence.

The National Network to End Domestic Violence's Safety Net Team (NNEDV) and Twitter have teamed up to provide tips on how to stay safe and secure while using Twitter. This guide will explore privacy options and help you find the best ways to respond and communicate with Twitter if abuse or harassment is happening.

NNEDV, a member of Twitter's Trust and Safety Council, began the Safety Net Project in 2000 to address the various ways that technology impacts survivors of abuse. Safety Net continues to work in the U.S. and internationally to train practitioners, advise technology companies, develop best practices, and analyze public policy; all with the purpose of making all spaces, including those online, safer.
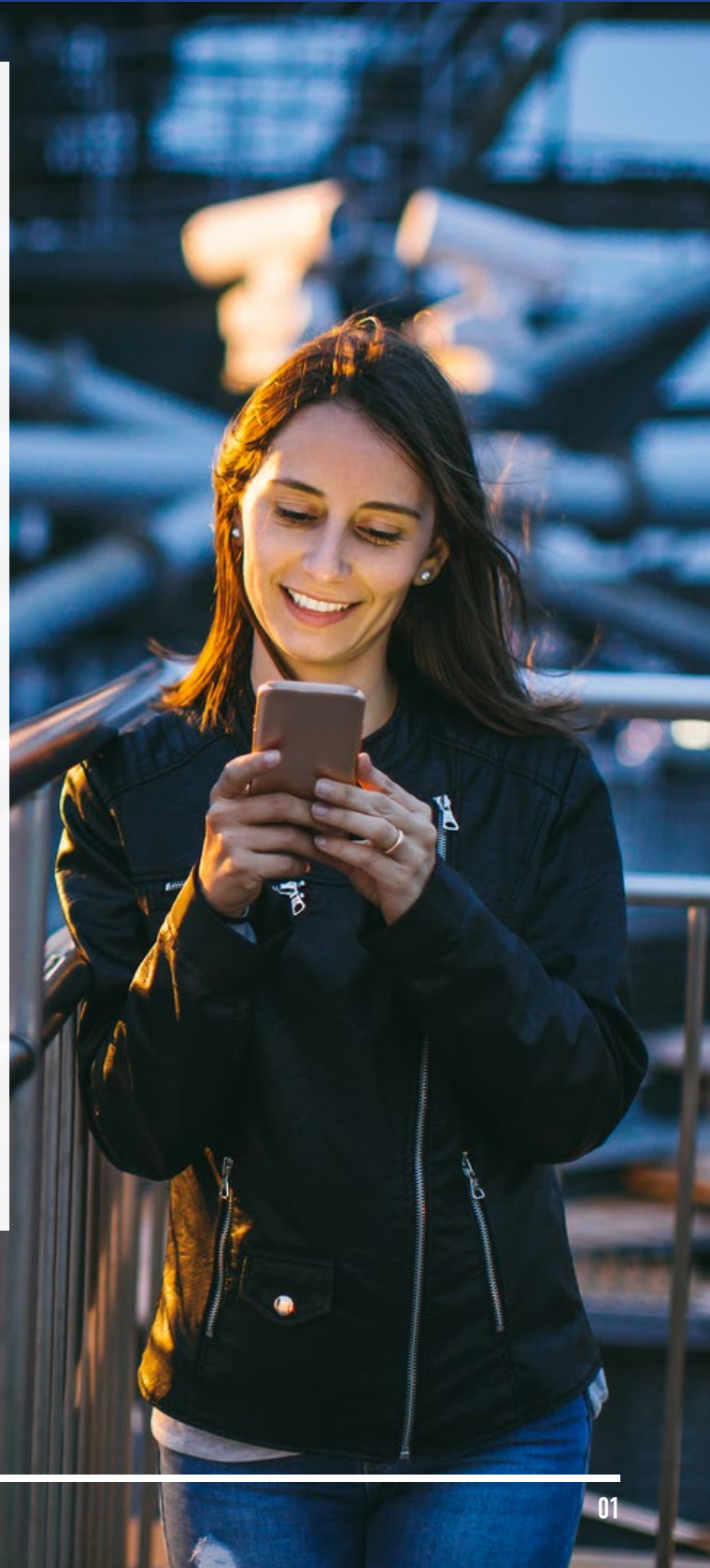
HOW TO BE PRIVATE WHILE BEING SOCIAL

When you first join Twitter, your Tweets are public by default, which means anyone can potentially see what you Tweet. Options are available to modify your audience and maintain your privacy from the beginning. Here are some steps you can take.

CHOOSING YOUR USERNAME

When signing up for a Twitter account, you can choose a username that is not directly associated with your real name, which allows you to remain more private on the platform. You may change your username at anytime by visiting your "Account" settings.

Keep in mind, some online platforms require or use more identifying information publicly. If you have additional social media accounts, you may want to use different usernames and contact information in order to limit the possibility of someone linking your Twitter account information with your other accounts to get more information about you.

USING YOUR PHOTOS ON TWITTER

When customizing your Twitter account, you can choose a profile and cover photo, which remains public regardless of whether your profile is protected. Choose non-identifying photos and change them at anytime in "Edit Profile" settings to limit the ability of others to identify you. It's important to consider whether that photo is being used in other social media accounts as image searches are possible on third party sites that may contain personal information you didn't include on Twitter.

PRO TIP:

Use different photos for different sites to avoid them being linked.

The photo-tagging feature allows people to tag you in any Tweet that contains a photo. If those Tweets are public, then the images, and people tagged in them may show up in search results on Twitter. This means that it's possible that your physical location and other personal information may be included as well.

You can manage your photo-tagging preferences from the start by updating your "Privacy" settings to one of the following:

- Allow anyone to tag me in photos
- Only allow people I follow to tag me in photos
- Do not allow anyone to tag me in photos

MAINTAINING YOUR LOCATION PRIVACY

For survivors of domestic violence, location privacy can be critical to maintaining safety. By default, Twitter has the location sharing feature turned off. If you turn it on, you have the option to switch the location off before publishing each Tweet. It's important to note that once you turn on this function, it will remain on until you choose to turn it off in privacy settings.

Twitter also allows you to remove location information from all previous Tweets at once. This tool can only be accessed by logging into your account online, navigating to the "Privacy" settings, choosing Tweet location, and clicking on "Delete location information." If you'd like to remove location sharing from one Tweet, you simply delete that Tweet.

Remember: Whether you turn location sharing on or off, your location can potentially be shared by what you Tweet and the pictures you choose to share. For example, if you take a picture in front of the White House then it will be clear to your followers that you are or were recently in Washington, D.C., regardless of what privacy setting you've selected.

WHO CAN SEE MY TWEETS?

Tweets are publicly accessible by default and your followers will see your Tweets in their Timelines. They may decide to Retweet, which means that their followers will also see your Tweet in their Timelines. If your profile is protected then your Tweets will only be visible to your followers, and no one will be able to Retweet them.

You can protect your Tweets by updating your "Privacy" settings. If you choose to protect your Tweets, you'll receive a request when new people want to follow you, which you have the ability to approve or deny. In addition, your Tweets will not be publicly searchable. Accounts that began following you before you protected your profile will still be able to view and interact with your Tweets unless you block those users.

It is important to note that if you authorize third-party applications to access your Twitter account then that company may be able to see protected Tweets.

HOW CAN I HAVE A PRIVATE CONVERSATION ON TWITTER?

Even though Twitter is a public platform, there are spaces on Twitter where you can communicate privately with other people. The Direct Message function allows you to have private conversations with a single user or group. You can receive Messages from anyone if you turn on, "Receive Direct Messages from anyone" in your "Privacy" settings. When turned off, you will only be able to Direct Message individuals you follow and who follow you back.

For added privacy, users who are added to a group Direct Message will not be able to see the history of the conversation prior to when they joined the group Direct Message.

KEEPING YOUR ACCOUNT SECURE

The following options are available to help keep your account secure.

LOGIN VERIFICATION

Login verifications are a form of "two-factor authentication" that require an extra step before allowing anyone to log in to your account. In order to activate login verification, you have to provide a phone number to receive the request. In addition to entering a password, by setting up login verifications, you will receive a push notification. Open the push notification to approve the login request. Once you approve, you will be immediately logged in to your account on twitter.com.

EMAIL NOTIFICATIONS SETTINGS

It's important to check your "Email Notifications" settings and choose whether you want to receive emails about activity related to you and your Tweets on Twitter. Keep in mind that notification emails may also include "Account" setting changes like password updates and new login locations. For example, if you use Twitter.com from a home device and login from another location then Twitter will notify you.

RESET YOUR PASSWORD

Twitter offers a password reset option through "Password" settings. Choose a password that works best for you, and consider an option that limits the ability of someone else to reset your password to gain access to your account. For example, create a password that includes a mix of alphabetical, numerical, as well as lower and uppercase letters.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO SEND, DELETE, AND RECEIVE DIRECT MESSAGES, VISIT:
https://support.twitter.com/articles/14606

HOW DOES TWITTER DEFINE HARASSMENT?

Abuse and harassment are serious issues and can have a significant effect on people's ability to feel safe, both online and offline. Twitter has rules in place to make clear that certain behavior — especially behavior intended to harass, intimidate, or silence another person — is not allowed.

The Twitter Help Center provides information about what to do if someone is harassing or abusing you on the platform. You can report the account and Tweet as well as mute or block a user. You're also able to report multiple Tweets at once.

Some behavior may not violate Twitter's terms or rules but may still be a crime when put into context by law enforcement. This could include contact by a user despite an order of protection or a no-contact order. It may also include stalking, which is a pattern of behavior that may cause another person fear.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE TYPES OF CONTENT AND BEHAVIOR THAT VIOLATE TWITTER'S POLICIES, CHECK OUT https://support.twitter.com/articles/18311

HOW TO DOCUMENT AND REPORT ABUSIVE CONTENT

If someone is threatening, harassing, or causing you fear, one of the first things you can do is document it. Documentation will be especially helpful if you decide to involve law enforcement. When you report a violent threat to Twitter, you can generate a report for law enforcement. This report will be emailed to the email address you have associated with your Twitter account. (Note that if you believe the abusive person could have access to your email, you can change the address associated with your account). Even if you're not sure you want to pursue legal action, it can be helpful to have documentation of what's happening in case the behavior escalates or you decide to contact law enforcement in the future. In many cases, victims of targeted harassment and threats do not want to pursue legal options immediately.

This means that you may want to document the harassing content before reporting it since some content may not be accessible later on. For more information on documentation, visit NNEDV's Documentation Tips for Survivors.

WHO CAN REPORT VIOLATIONS?

Anyone — whether directly experiencing abuse or witnessing it as a bystander — is able to report a violation of Twitter's Terms of Service or Rules. If you're a bystander, think through ways you can help others experiencing online abuse.

## HOW DO I REPORT A TWEET OR PROFILE?

You can report directly from an individual Tweet or profile for certain violations, including abusive or harmful content. Once a report is submitted, Twitter will provide recommendations for additional actions you can take.
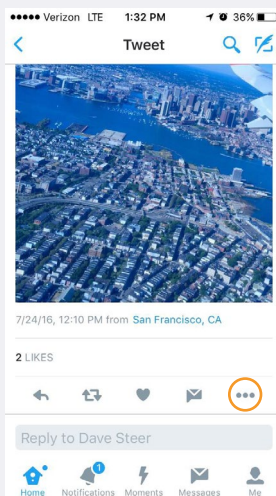
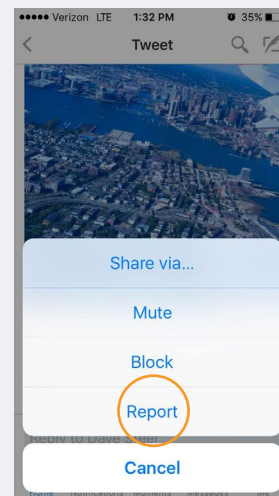**IT'S IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT ONCE CONTENT IS REPORTED OR MARKED AS ABUSIVE, IT MAY BE DELETED EITHER BY THE USER WHO POSTED IT OR TWITTER.**

REPORTING ABUSIVE CONTENT

STEP **1**
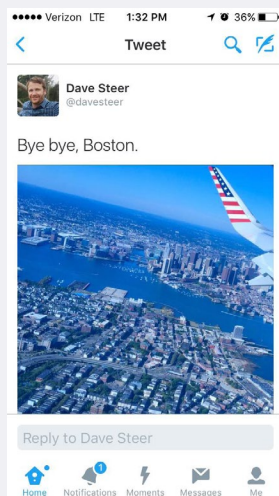
Navigate to the Tweet you'd like to report.
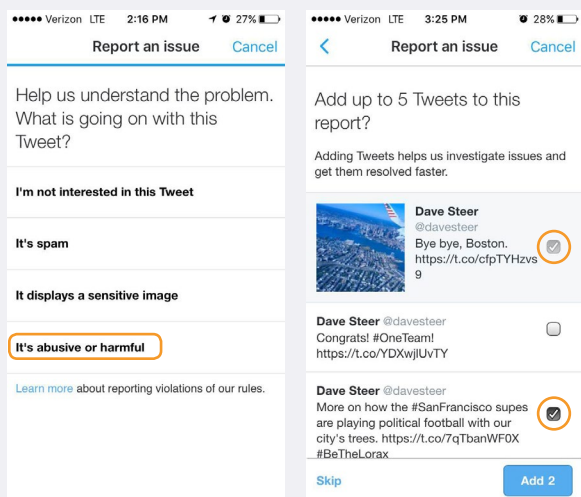
STEP **2**

Tap the More icon

● ● ● iOS ⋮ Android

STEP **3**

Select Report.

STEP **4**

If you select They're being abusive or harmful, we'll ask you to provide additional information about the issue you're reporting. We may also ask you to select additional Tweets from the account you're reporting so we have better context to evaluate your report.

STEP **5**

Once you've submitted your report, we'll provide recommendations for additional actions you can take to improve your Twitter experience.

MUTING AND BLOCKING A USER

MUTE
This feature hides another person's Tweets without that user being notified.

BLOCK
This feature helps users in restricting specific accounts from contacting them, seeing their Tweets, and following them.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU REPORT?

Twitter has a global team that reviews content that is reported on its platform. If Twitter determines that the account or Tweets are in violation of their policies, they can take action ranging from warning the user, temporarily locking or permanently suspending an account.

Twitter will respond to reports with a confirmation that a report was received, a case number, and further steps. If you report witnessing abuse, but are not the directly affected party, Twitter will send a response to the person who was being harassed but will not share with the person who made the report.

WHAT IF I'M RECEIVING HARASSING OR THREATENING DIRECT MESSAGES?

You can flag an individual message or a full conversation as abusive. If you flag an entire conversation, the other user will not be able to message you again unless you initiate contact. Flagging a Direct Message does not trigger the same type of investigation that is done when someone chooses to report a Tweet or a profile. Still, once a message or conversation is flagged, it will be removed from your messages tab and cannot be recovered. If you'd like to keep a record of the harassment, document the messages before you flag them.

BLOCKING USERS

For some people experiencing online abuse, blocking is a preferred method of managing the abuse; however, some victims may decide that blocking isn't a safe option for them.

When a blocked user is logged in, the other person will not be able to follow you, see your posts, view your following or followers lists, add your profile to a list, or tag you in a photo. The other person will not be notified that they are blocked; however, they could figure out that they were blocked if they attempt to view your account and cannot. Please note that they may still be able to see your content from any other account(s) they may own that you haven't blocked or view your account from a "logged out" state. When you block a user, you will also no longer be able to follow that person's account, but you may view their Tweets.

Consider how the harassing person might respond to being blocked. In some cases of intimate partner abuse and stalking, the person who is being blocked may escalate their behavior, both online and offline, which can decrease your safety. Blocking a person is an option only if you feel that it is a safe response for your personal situation.

BLOCK LISTS

Twitter gives you advanced options for blocking, including the ability to import
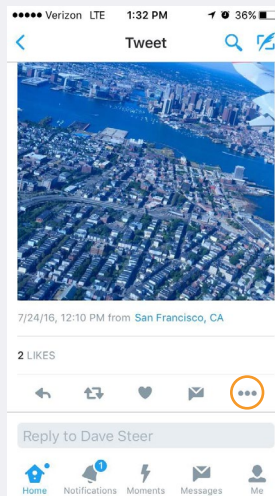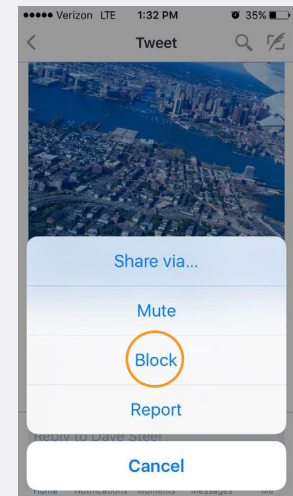
BLOCKING A USER

STEP **1**
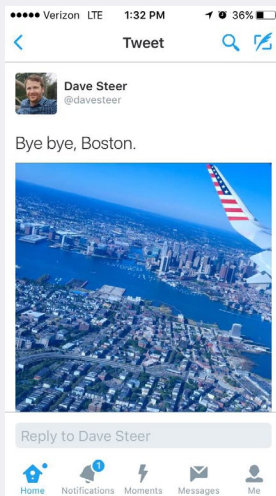
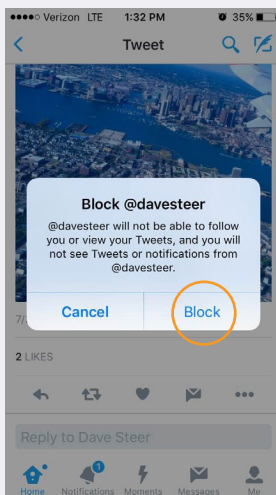Tap a Tweet from the account you'd like to block.

STEP **2**

Tap the More icon

●●● iOS   ⋮ Android

STEP **3**

Tap Block.

STEP **4**

Then Block to confirm.

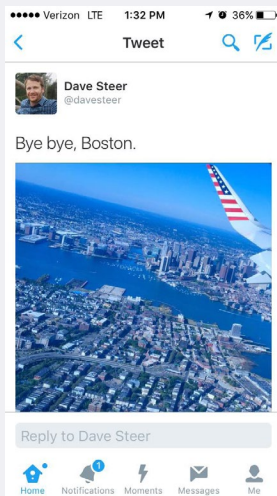You will see a confirmation message when you successfully Block.

STEP **5**

The Tweets of an account you have blocked are hidden when you visit their profile. However, you can see the Tweets from that account by clicking the View Tweets button.
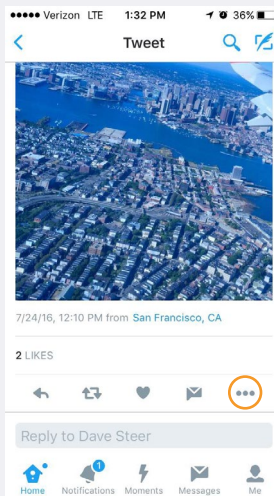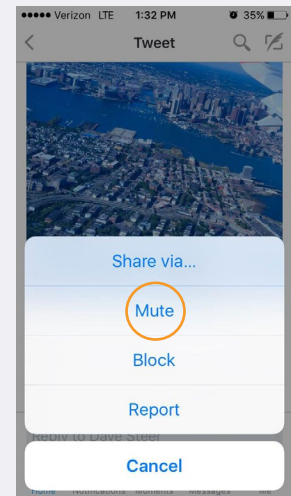
MUTING A USER

STEP **1**

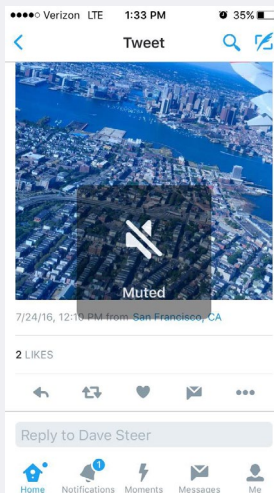
Tap a Tweet from the account you'd like to mute.

STEP **2**

Tap the More icon

●●● iOS ⋮ Android

STEP **3**

Tap Mute.

STEP **4**

You will see a confirmation message when you successfully Mute.

another user's blocked list of accounts, export your own list of blocked accounts to share with someone else, and manage the blocked list separately. This can be particularly helpful if you are receiving harassing messages from a group of people. Be cautious about who you share your blocked list with to maintain your privacy.

UNFOLLOWING A PERSON

Unfollowing a person means that you will no longer see that person's Tweets in your timeline. You will still be able to view their profile unless the profile is protected. It's important to note that the user may see when you follow or unfollow them depending on their "Account" settings.

MUTE

Mute is a feature that allows you to remove a user's Tweets from your timeline without unfollowing or blocking that account. Muted accounts will not know that you've muted them and you can unmute them at any time.

This is helpful if you do not want to see someone's Tweets, but you want to be able to access their profile or Tweets to document their behavior.

To access a list of accounts you have muted or blocked, visit your "Account" settings.

OUTSIDE OF TWITTER

GET SUPPORT

Online harassment is serious and scary. It's not uncommon for people to feel fear and have concerns that the harassing person(s) could become violent offline. If you are being harassed, find someone to talk to so you can learn about your options. Below are some online resources and phone numbers. Both national and local service providers should offer free and confidential assistance to provide you with information.

LEGAL OPTIONS

Reporting abusive, harassing, and threatening behavior to law enforcement is another option you can consider. A local victim advocate, civil attorney or law enforcement can outline what your options may be. They should be able to help you decide how to preserve and document evidence, explain what legal recourses are available, and discuss other safety-planning strategies. For information on your state specific laws and assistance, visit womenslaw.org, a project of NNEDV.
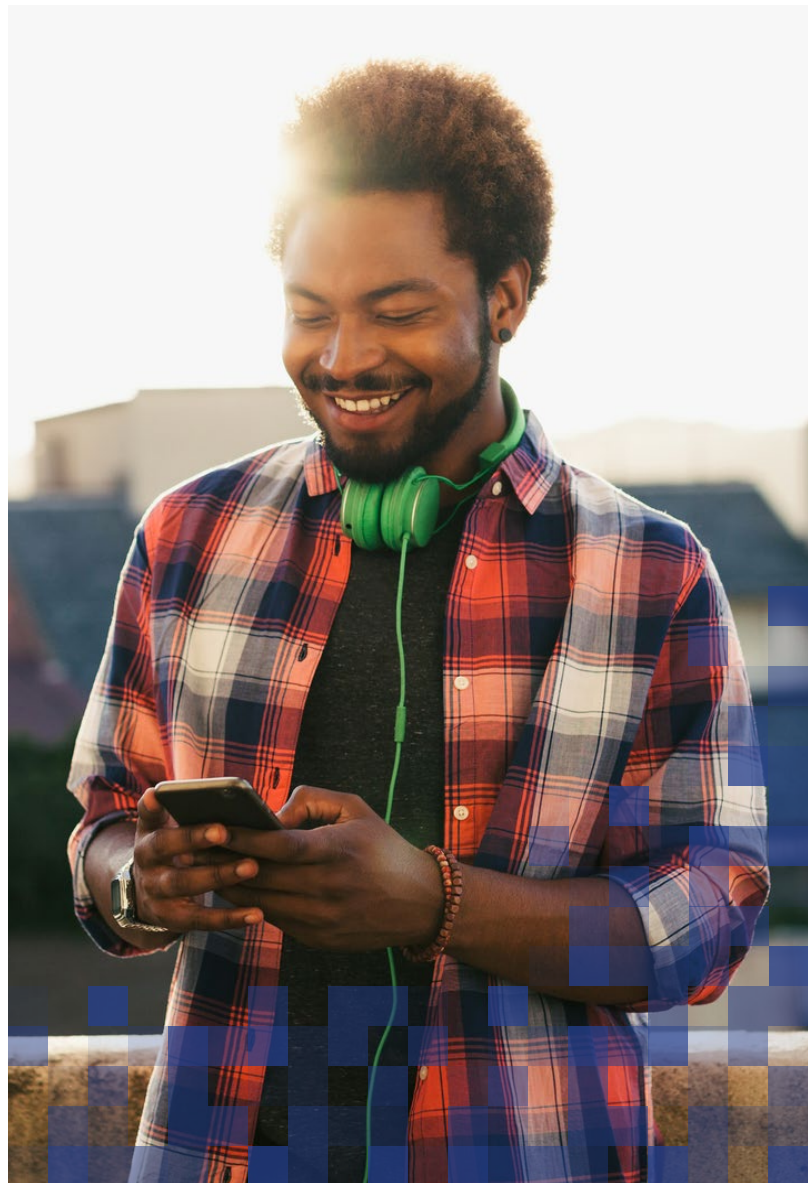
FOR MORE INFORMATION

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE 1-800-799-7233

CCRI HOTLINE FOR VICTIMS OF NONCONSENSUAL PORNOGRAPHY 1-844-878-CCRI (2274)

NATIONAL DATING ABUSE HELPLINE, LOVE IS RESPECT 1-866-331-9474

MORE RESOURCES

ONLINE RESOURCES TO HELP YOU

TWITTER HELP CENTER

https://support.twitter.com/

TWITTER SAFETY CENTER

https://about.twitter.com/safety

GENERATING REPORTS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

https://blog.twitter.com/2015/making-it-easier-to-report-threats-to-law-enforcement

DOCUMENTATION TIPS FOR SURVIVORS

http://techsafety.org/documentationtips

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE

http://www.thehotline.org/

CCRI HOTLINE FOR VICTIMS OF NONCONSENSUAL PORNOGRAPHY

http://www.cybercivilrights.org/ccri-crisis-helpline/

NATIONAL DATING ABUSE HELPLINE, LOVE IS RESPECT

http://www.loveisrespect.org/