

Video calling

I have to use video calls so my children can talk to their other parent (who is an abuser), what should I be concerned about?

Can the abuser tell where I am?

If the abuser is technically adept, they could determine the *approximate* location of a victim on a video conference by working out their IP address. If this is a possibility and a concern, victims can make video calls using the phone's mobile network (ie 3G/4G/5G), rather than using their Wi-Fi connection (as this will make it much harder to identify the IP address). However, victims should note that video conferencing is bandwidth intensive, so making calls this way may incur excessive data charges.

See App Protection and Settings for ways in which a mobile phone can be physically located.

Consider the surroundings

Victims should take a moment to think about what their camera shows when on a call, such as the view from the window, school or work uniform, addressed paperwork, etc.

Most popular video conferencing tools allow the background to be blurred or changed completely, so the location can't be easily determined.

- Zoom: [Using a blurred background](#)
- Microsoft Teams: [Change your background for a Team meeting](#)
- Google Meet: [Change background and use effects in Google Meet](#)

They may also want to consider making video calls away from home or a sensitive location (such as from a refuge). If the victim is particularly concerned about their abuser's ability to find them, they may wish to send a pre-recorded video rather than making a live call. They will still need to think about whether their surroundings could give away their location – in particular because the abuser will be able to pause and look closely at the video.

Can someone else join the call?

Victims can control who is able to join a video conferencing call that they are hosting. For specific instructions, refer to the support website of the service being used. However, the following general rules apply:

Do not make the calls public

Victims should connect directly to participants using their contacts/address book, or provide private links to the individual contacts. For some video conferencing services, you can set up the call so that a password is required in order to join. This adds another layer of protection. Victims should not post the link (or the password) publicly.

Know who is joining the call

If victims are organizing a call for multiple guests, they should use the 'lobby' feature to ensure they know who has arrived. This is especially useful if individuals are joining the call via an unrecognised phone number.

Can the call be recorded, or a screenshot taken?

Some video conferencing tools will notify users if the meeting is being recorded, or if a screenshot has been taken. However, it is impossible to prevent a screenshot or image being taken during a video call.

Can my webcam be used to spy on me?

If victims are using a laptop with a built-in webcam, one solution (when it's not in use) is to stick a piece of dark tape over the lens, so even if someone does have access to the webcam, they will not be able to see anything from it. They can also choose to turn off the webcam and the microphone in the device settings. If it's an external (ie USB) webcam, it can simply be unplugged when not in use.



All URLs

How to blur your background on video calls

Zoom: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360061468611-Using-blurred-background>

Microsoft Teams: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-gb/office/change-your-background-for-a-teams-meeting-f77a2381-443a-499d-825e-509a140f4780>

Google Meet: <https://support.google.com/meet/answer/10058482>