

USING TECHNOLOGY TO SCREEN AND SAFETY PLAN FOR:

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

A User Guide for Healthcare and Service Providers

-FEBRUARY 2023-



ABOUT THIS USER GUIDE

This user guide was developed to help healthcare and service providers:

1. Better understand our 3 tech-based intimate partner violence (IPV) screening and safety planning apps and;
2. Consider integrating these tools within their organization to better support women experiencing violence.



Our apps are backed by rigorous research:

The core elements are based on existing apps rigorously tested through Randomized Controlled Trials in USA ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)) and Canada ([5](#), [6](#)).

Each section was developed in collaboration with researchers, service providers, and survivors of IPV and has been reviewed and updated for continued use during a public health emergency.

- Learn more about our iterative, community-engaged process to design the suite of apps [here](#)
- Watch a video highlighting the integration of our web-apps in the Fracture Clinic at St. Michael's Hospital [here](#)
- Read our research brief of best practices for safety planning in Toronto during the COVID-19 pandemic [here](#)

The WITHWomen Advantage (Suite of Apps):

1. Women have access to IPV screening and safety decision support anywhere and anytime
2. Available for use during a public health emergency (e.g. COVID-19)
3. Safety planning tools and resources are tailored to what the individual identifies as a priority
4. Connects women to local in-person or telehealth services in the GTA and Hamilton
5. Built-in safety features to disguise app content about IPV
6. Offered as a free, anonymous, and secure platform (no download required)

For questions about this guide or more information about our apps, please connect with the PVIS team at withwomen@smh.ca

© Partner Violence Implementation Science (PVIS). We are a collective of researchers, service providers, and survivors of IPV; our work is focused on co-creating interventions supporting individuals' safety and self-determination.

This user guide was prepared by Jessica Rodrigues, MSc on behalf of the PVIS Research Program including:

Patricia O'Campo, PhD

Nicholas Metheny, PhD, MPH, RN

Alisa Velonis, PhD, MPH

Pearl Buhariwala, MA, MPH

Janisha Kamalanathan, MSW

Maha Hassan, MBBS

Melissa Perri, MPH

Janice Du Mont, PhD

Robin Mason, PhD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 IPV 101 & TECHNOLOGY
Importance of screening and safety planning for IPV

6 INTRODUCING OUR APPS
Overview of our 3 web-apps for IPV

7 WITHWOMEN WEB-APP
Screening for IPV

8 PATHWAYS WEB-APP
Safety planning for those in an unsafe relationship

9 PROMISE WEB-APP
Staying safe during a public health emergency

10 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES
Guidance on integrating the web-apps within your organization

11 RESOURCES
Pandemic-related services in the GTA

13 DATA & PRIVACY
How and what data are stored in our web-apps

IPV 101 & TECHNOLOGY

IPV is a public health crisis and must be prevented.

1 in 4
women



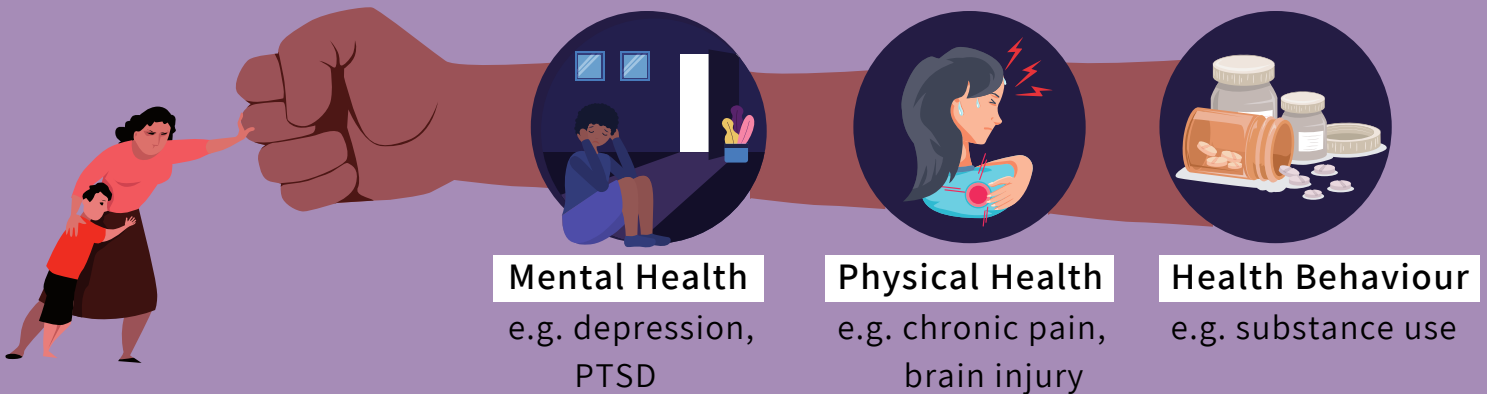
will experience physical, sexual and/or psychological violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime [\(7\)](#).

Higher rates among:

[\(8\)](#)

- Gender and Sexual minorities
- Indigenous Peoples
- People with Disabilities

IMPACT OF IPV ON HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: [\(8\)](#)



SCREENING + SAFETY PLANNING
are both important for secondary prevention of IPV.

- » Universal screening reduces IPV stigma, increases IPV awareness, and helps people recognize red flags in relationship, etc [\(9\)](#).
- » Research shows that patients, with and without a history of IPV, favour providers inquiring about IPV at wellness visits [\(10, 11\)](#).

BUT we know barriers to screening are COMMON [\(12, 13\)](#):



No time



Competing priorities



No privacy



Insufficient training
and education



Uncomfortable
discussing IPV

IPV 101 & TECHNOLOGY (CONTINUED)

Why Consider Technology?

- » Can be integrated into service settings with minimal disruptions to organizational processes ([14](#))



- » Allows those seeking information or support for IPV to do so in a user-controlled, discreet, and accessible way ([15](#), [16](#), [17](#))



- » Survivors can return to the app as many times as needed to explore their concerns and their options as their situations change



Technology offers providers an **ALTERNATIVE** to organization-based screening and response

It may reduce the burden some providers feel about screening and responding to IPV while still positioning themselves as concerned and informed resources.

Women become better informed, more certain of their choices, clear in their priorities, and feel supported by others in taking action to increase their safety

OUR WEB-APPS:

Provide awareness about unsafe relationships, availability of local services, and personalized safety plans

”
Women have control over when, whether, and how screening and response happens.



INTRODUCING OUR APPS

Putting screening and safety planning back into women's hands.

We know discussing IPV is not an easy conversation to have with your patients or clients. Recommending our apps may help support women, even during public health emergencies. They can use the apps on their own outside their service setting or with support from a trusted provider.



Don't know where to start? We offer 3 web-apps in English, French and Spanish for use on any secure device at anytime

For all women in relationships:

Does my relationship feel unsafe?

ASSESS MY SAFETY IN UNDER 1 MINUTE



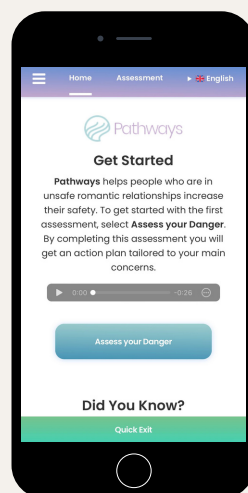
WITHWomen

CONCERNED?

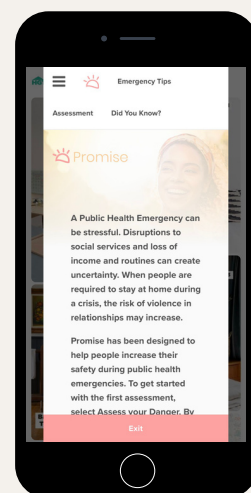


How can I improve my safety?

ASSESS MY DANGER, SAFETY PLAN, GET RESOURCES



Pathways



PROMiSE*

*For use during a Public Health Emergency

Safety and Privacy Features Built into our Web-Apps

Quick 'Exit' bar

directs women out of the app to a Google home page in case someone looks over to their screen



'Staying safe online'

page provides information on internet safety and privacy



Disguise feature (Promise)

quickly hides the app within an HGTV Pinterest board to avoid suspicion by an abuser if women have to use the app in close proximity to them



WITHWOMEN WEB-APP

INTENDED AUDIENCE:

Women in relationships with men

PURPOSE:

To help women assess the safety level in their intimate relationship at anytime on their own or in their service setting

HOW IT WORKS:

1 Answer 9 quick, validated screening questions

Over the last 12 months

How often did you feel uncomfortable doing or saying things around your current partner or someone you're currently dating?

NEVER

RARELY

SOMETIMES

FREQUENTLY

2 Receive a result assessing the safety of the relationship

Healthy

There are few to no concerns regarding safety in your relationship.

Caution

There are some things about your relationship that are of concern.

Confirmed abuse

Your relationship has many safety concerns.

3 View community resources and get support



Help Lines



Counselling



Shelter



Legal

4 Gain insights into safe and unsafe relationships

5 Connect to safety planning tools to increase safety

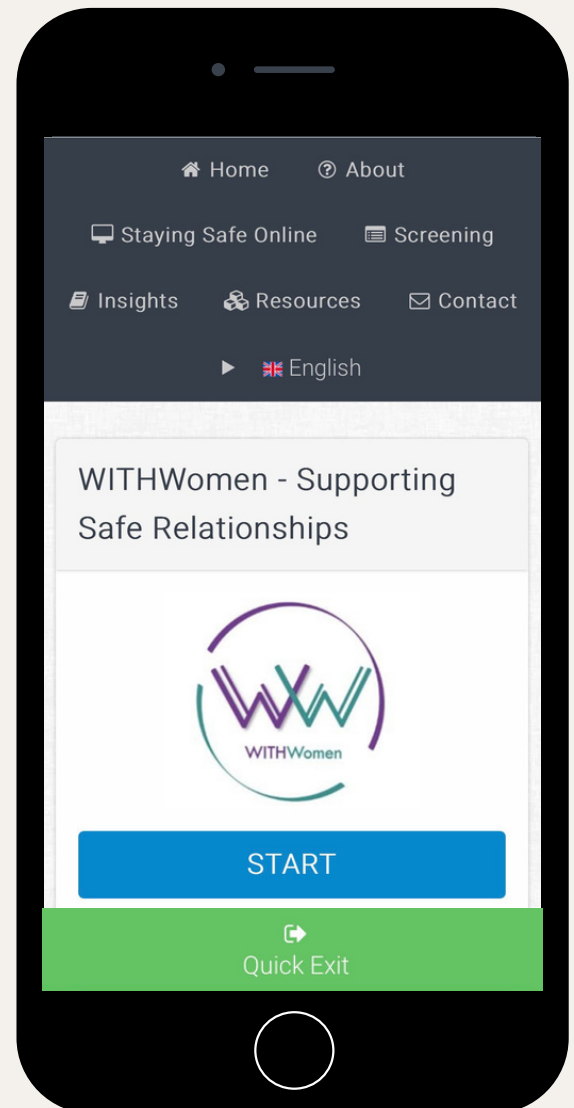


Pathways



Promise

6 (In service setting): share **positive** screen with provider



TRY OUR WEB-APP

Visit withwomen.ca

- ✓ It's free, anonymous, and secure (no download required)
- ✓ Increased accessibility with audio voiceover
- ✓ Includes 'Quick Exit' bar to hide screen & tips on online safety

PATHWAYS WEB-APP

INTENDED AUDIENCE:

Women who may have moderate-to-high safety concerns in their relationship

PURPOSE:

To provide safety planning and connections to local resources and services

For safety planning during public health emergencies, please refer to the PROMiSE app on page 9.

HOW IT WORKS:

1 ASSESS: Complete a Danger Assessment

Variable to Severe Danger

We recommend you **continue with Pathways** to familiarize yourself with the action and safety plans provided.

Extreme Danger

You should **seek help** to increase your level of safety **NOW**. Once you have reduced the level of danger in your relationship, you can come back to Pathways and plan your next steps.

2 PRIORITIZE: Identify & prioritize current safety concerns



FINANCES



SOCIAL SUPPORT



HEALTH



LEGAL



HOUSING

3 PLAN FOR SAFETY: Learn about actions and resources



CHILDREN'S
SAFETY



PET
SAFETY



SAFETY AT
HOME

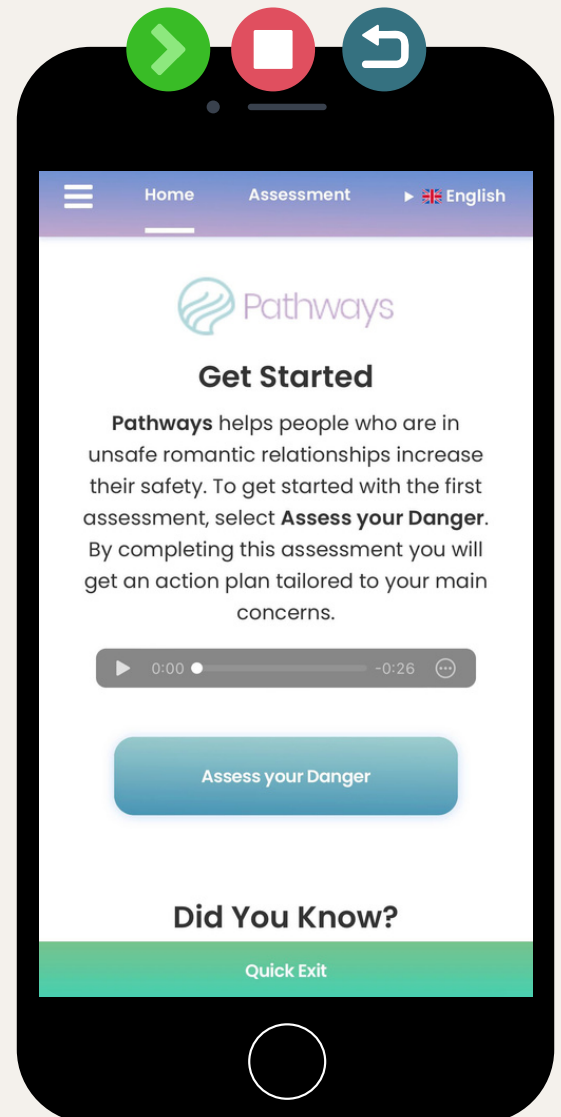


SAFETY AT
WORK



STALKING AND
SAFETY ONLINE

START. STOP. RETURN ANYTIME.



Pathways offers providers a virtual tool to respond to women living with violence who are considering next steps. It provides women the flexibility and privacy to use the app anywhere, at any time and place that they feel safe.

TRY OUR WEB-APP

Visit withwomenpathways.ca

- ✓ It's free, anonymous, and secure (no download required)
- ✓ Increased accessibility with audio voiceover
- ✓ Includes 'Quick Exit' bar to hide screen & tips on online safety

PROMiSE WEB-APP

INTENDED AUDIENCE:

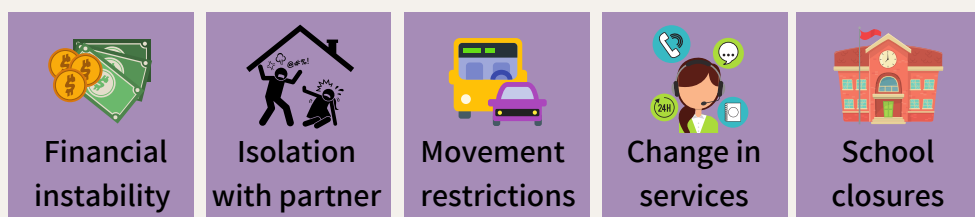
Women who may have moderate-to-high safety concerns in their relationship during public health emergencies

PURPOSE:

To help women assess and increase their safety when stay-at-home restrictions are in place via a modified tool with enhanced disguise features

It is well-documented that women experience higher rates of violence during public health emergencies (18, 19).

Well-known stressors include (20):



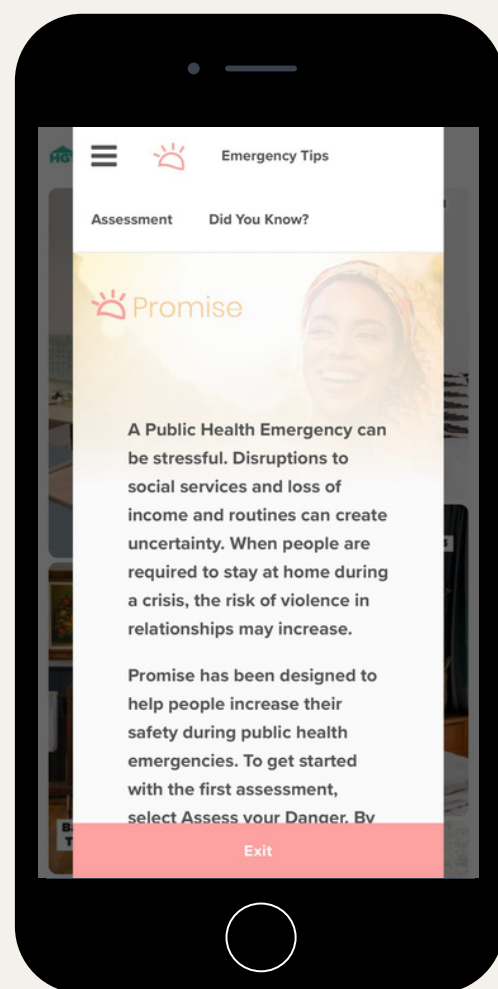
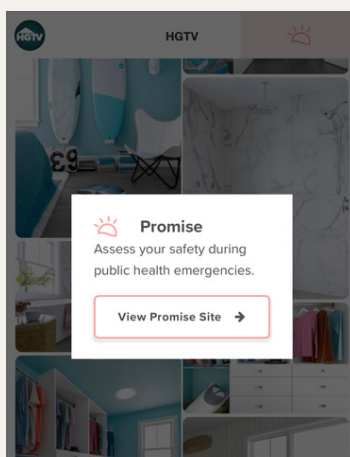
An increase in virtual visits offers providers an opportunity to incorporate technology-based safety planning during or in-between visits.

PROMiSE (Promoting Safety During Emergencies) addresses the realities of living with IPV during public health emergencies.

WHAT HAS CHANGED FROM PATHWAYS:

Includes:

- Best practices for safety planning during public health emergencies
 - Based on a rapid systematic review and consultations with IPV survivors and providers shared [here](#)
- Enhanced safety feature allows women to **hide the app from an abuser** within a Home and Garden Television (HGTV) Pinterest board



PROMiSE offers providers a virtual tool to share with women living with violence who are learning about actions and supports to improve their own safety during public health emergencies.

TRY OUR WEB-APP

Visit withwomenpromise.com

- ✓ It's free, anonymous, and secure (no download required)
- ✓ Increased accessibility with audio voiceover
- ✓ Includes 'Exit' bar to quickly hide screen & tips on online safety
- ✓ New disguise feature can hide app within an HGTV Pinterest page

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Once you are familiar with our suite of apps, explore the following strategies to help incorporate them within your service setting:

- 1 **Tell your clients about WITHWomen to start a discussion about IPV and relationship safety. Ask clients to take a look and talk about findings at the next visit.**
- 2 **If a client expresses any relationship safety concerns, have them do the 45 second WITHWomen screen and discuss the results**
- 3 **If you know your client is experiencing IPV, tell them about Pathways or PROMiSE which can be used any time of day or night. Encourage them to monitor Danger levels and also explore safety strategies. Encourage use of the app any time their situation changes.**
- 4 **Work with your client on safety planning using the Pathways or PROMiSE app to guide your discussions.**
- 5 **Develop a protocol or pathway that routinely incorporates the apps into visits with your clients.**
- 6 **Normalize conversations about IPV screening and safety-planning by sharing our WITHWomen posters* in your service setting (e.g. in waiting rooms, exam rooms, X-ray rooms, washrooms).**

*refer to Appendix

Ask the PVIS team for assistance with any of these options.

RELATED RESOURCES

The availability of existing supports for those living with IPV may change during a public health emergency. We recommend contacting the services remotely and following government safety protocols when visiting in person.

Learn about financial aid available

You can contact the following resources to inquire more about financial aid during this time:

Government of Canada: 1-800-O-Canada (1-800-622-6232)

Canada Revenue Agency: 1-800-959-8281

[Income Security Advocacy Centre](#) further provides insights on income support programs that are made available during this time.

Legal support

For updates on legal services during COVID-19, call the [Assaulted Women's helpline](#) at any time or visit [Legal aid Ontario](#) should you have any questions

Learn about changes to your housing rights

There are shelters across Canada that help women and their children seek safety from violence. Shelters offer safe places to stay, hot meals, and support to find permanent housing.

- Explore [Shelter Safe](#) to learn more about shelters in Canada

Stay connected

Being in an unsafe relationship can make us feel like we are on our own. As the COVID-19 situation continues to develop, it may become possible to re-engage in social activities while still maintaining appropriate physical distancing guidelines. Check to see if any pre-existing programs have opened up again. Consider activities like going for walks, visiting the library, and visiting community centres like the [working women's community centre](#).

You can also participate in virtual communities/online groups to help you stay connected.

Check out the [COVID-19 Community Response Networks](#), which offers city-wide networks on Facebook that help to provide support within the community.

Other virtual activities that you can engage in include:

[Arts and Culture Google](#), where you can tour museums and artwork or you can explore the [Art Gallery of Ontario \(AGO\)](#).

PANDEMIC-RELATED RESOURCES

Support your emotional health

Dealing with an (ex-)partner's unsafe behaviours is stressful, and this stress can affect your emotional health. Here are a few things you can do to promote your emotional health.

- Take some time each day to remind yourself of your strengths.
- If you're feeling overwhelmed, take a moment to notice your stress and take deep breaths to reduce feelings of panic.
- Do small things that give you peace (e.g., listening to music, reading, writing, walking). You deserve self-care.
- It's okay to feel down at times. Share your feelings with someone you trust.

There are many virtual sites and apps that can help support your emotional health:

- [Betterhelp](#)
- [Headspace](#)
- [Covid Coach](#)
- [Bounce Back](#)

You can also contact the Assaulted Women's Helpline: 1-866-863-0511 (Toll Free), and for general tips from managing your mental health during COVID-19 check out the tips offered by the Canadian Mental Health Association [here](#).

Connect with a Community Health Center

Community Health Centres provide access to healthcare workers, and offer diverse programs to address your health and well-being. Most centres also provide services in different languages and don't require a health card

- Use this [online tool](#) to find some health centres near you.
- Check the websites of some centres and note programs or services that interest you. Check the websites of some centres and note programs or services that interest you. Please note that some health settings are implementing virtual care as an important tool during COVID-19. Call the Community Health Centres prior to visiting them to find out about their model of care and hours of operation during COVID-19.

Talk to your family doctor

In Ontario's efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19, healthcare providers are encouraged to offer care virtually by telephone or video whenever possible. In-person visits are also available but may only be necessary to perform a physical examination, diagnostic testing, and face-to-face interaction.

- If you want to book an appointment for a virtual visit, call and check with your family doctor's office.
- You can connect with [Appletree Medical Group](#) to set up a virtual doctor's appointment

In case of emergency, please visit the nearest hospital's emergency department.

DATA AND PRIVACY

We have designed our apps to collect all data anonymously. **No personal information that reveals a woman's identity is collected or stored.**

The research team does collect data for quality improvement purposes but we examine all data anonymously.

The data are stored on servers in North America and the research team owns the data.



