



Digital Services Communication Platforms: Comparison Chart for BC's Anti-Violence Programs

During a public health crisis such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, when [public health officials recommend “social distancing”](#) to slow the spread of infection, technology such as text or crisis line web chats or video calls may be useful tools to connect remotely with program participants.

The comparison chart below reviews existing platforms that we are aware of as of **July 7, 2020** with a focus on Canadian products although US products are included. BCSTH will update this chart with additional information and vendors as available.

The chart includes the following platforms:

- Canadian Text and Crisis Line Web Platforms
- Canadian Video Communication Platforms
- US Video Communication Platforms

The chart provides information about each vendor’s features, accessibility, cost, and privacy policies. **Please note BCSTH does not endorse any of these products.** BCSTH encourages programs to use this information along with information learned from the vendor to make a program decision.

No one vendor may meet all of your needs or the needs of the women, children and youth you are supporting. You may want to offer several tools so that you can better meet the needs of your staff and those who you support. Just as with in-person advocacy, the best tool to use is the one that meets the needs of the person you are supporting. One program participant may prefer to talk on the telephone; another may prefer text or chat. Someone else may prefer video because of the visual connection. To help a program participant decide what digital service is best for them, discuss the safety of their devices and surroundings and offer a variety of ways to communicate remotely to meet their needs. Consider what services can be done remotely with web chat or video calls. Consider tools to allow staff to communicate with each other remotely and tools for sharing information while maintaining confidentiality.

When programs consider any digital services platform two key factors must be considered and are discussed below in the chart:

- encryption options where the tech company itself cannot see the content of the encryption key – only the program does



- user access options that allows the Program to control user-by-user access to the content.

Privacy Laws

Programs adopting digital services platforms must ensure that the use of the technology complies with the existing privacy laws that apply to their program. [BC's Personal Information Protection Act \(PIPA\)](#) is an act about privacy in the private sector and covers private businesses, charities, non-profit associations and labour organizations. PIPA:

- Governs how private sector organizations handle the personal information of its employees and the public;
- Balances an individual's right to privacy and an organization's need to collect, use or disclose personal information for reasonable purposes;
- Applies to more than 350,000 private sector organizations in BC.
- Uses the "reasonable person standard" in deciding whether an organization has met its statutory duty, which means that a reasonable person would think the action is appropriate under the circumstances.
- Covers not for profit organizations such as BCSTH programs, along with unincorporated associations, trade unions and charities.

There are exceptions to this general rule where BC's other privacy law, the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act \(FIPPA\)](#) may apply to some BCSTH programs that are contracted to perform tasks for public bodies such as provincial government ministries, for example MCFD. FIPPA applies to public bodies and in relevant part applies to contracted service providers performing services for a public body. PIPA does not apply if FIPPA applies. Whether or not your program is covered by FIPPA, rather than PIPA, will depend on the wording of your contract with your funders. If the wording of the contract suggests that your records are under your program's "custody or control", then the PIPA rules apply if the records are under the government ministries' control then FIPPA applies. The federal law, [Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act \(PIPEDA\)](#) applies to private sector entities across Canada involved in commercial activities, federally regulated organizations and businesses, and governs the use and disclosure of personal information for these entities. For more information on privacy laws and program requirements, see the [BCSTH Legal Toolkit](#).

All these privacy laws are based on the same basic principles which would apply to the use of digital service platforms: accountability; identifying the purposes for the information sharing; informed consent; limiting collection and use, disclosure and retention; accuracy; privacy safeguards;



transparency and individual's access. A [12-minute webinar](#) on the Office of the Information & Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia (OIPC-BC) website is available to review these privacy principles.

All these privacy laws require that program participants provide informed consent to the organization's services that allows the program to collect necessary personal information to support them. Informed consent is a meaningful part of the intake process for program participants. Program participants must be fully informed for them to be able to provide consent to the voluntary services that anti-violence programs provide. As part of this informed consent process, if digital services are being used, programs must provide participants with information about:

1. The digital tools/services that are being used to support the program participant;
2. Any requirements they must have in order to access the digital service (e.g. phone, internet access, other specifications, have to download an app or platform etc.); and
3. Any potential risks with using the digital service¹.

As part of the informed consent process, it may also be helpful to share information with the program participants about how to use the various tools and the [BCSTH Digital Services Toolkit](#) includes information sheets that will assist with these conversations.

Text and Crisis Line Web Communication Platforms

Feature/Functionality	Resource Connect	Ivrnet
One-on-One Chat	Yes in 2 capacities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SMS text chat 2. Web Chat 3. Within Video Calls 	Yes, SMS chat
Group Chat	Yes	No

¹ BC Association of Clinical Counsellors. BCACC Paper: Remote Counselling and Privacy Law. March 2020. <https://bc-counsellors.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/BCACC-Paper-Remote-Counselling-and-Privacy-Law-March-16-2020.pdf>



	Internal group chat for agency staff is available.	
One on One Video & Voice	Yes	No
Group Video & Voice	No	No
Accessibility	Platform is available in French and Spanish	No accessibility features currently offered
Costs	<p>Internal Group Chat for agencies for staff remotely working is free during COVID-19 Outbreak</p> <p>Web Chat, Video and Audio calling via website is free until the end of 2020.</p> <p>Text Message Chat is \$25 /month + \$0.0125 per message each direction</p>	<p>SMS text enabled hotline phone number free</p> <p>During COVID-19 Outbreak, \$50/month for 6 months then \$100/month after + \$0.03 per text message each direction</p>
End to End Encryption	<p>Instant message online chat is end to end encrypted.</p> <p>Text messages cannot be encrypted, but are encrypted on the Resource Connect server and cannot be seen or accessed by Resource Connect personnel.</p>	The portal itself is end to end encrypted
Collect or Store Personal Data	<p>Agency's Account: Yes</p> <p>Program Participant: No</p>	<p>Agency's Account: Yes</p> <p>Program Participant: Yes. Collects mobile phone number and wireless carrier. Platform will collect and store additional information IF the agency requests it.</p>



Views or Stores User-Generated Data	Company cannot view data. Does not persistently store data.	Ivrnet staff can view data stored and view history of chat for problem solving. Stores personal data see above.
Trading, Giving or Selling of Personal Data to Third Parties	No	Agency and client data is shared internally. Data is not provided to third parties.
Additional Privacy Features	Participants do not need to create an account or download an app to message the program, therefore no data collected.	Can integrate the login into Ivrnet portal to enforce additional security and access controls.
Other Safety Concerns Potential for Misuse	Consider possibility of device monitoring by abuser. Participants should be reminded to delete SMS text message history after support is over.	Consider possibility of device monitoring by abuser. Participants should be reminded to delete SMS text message history after support is over.

Canadian Video Communication Platforms (*note all Canadian companies are considered telehealth companies*)

Feature/Functionality	LiveCare	OnCall	Medeo Health	Jane App	InPut Health Virtual
One-on-One Chat	Yes	Yes	Only within video meeting.	Only within video meeting.	Yes
Group Chat	Yes up to 5 people	No	No	No	Not known at this time.
One on One Video & Voice	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Group Video & Voice	Yes	Yes	No	No	Not known at this time.



Accessibility	No accessibility features currently offered.	No accessibility features currently offered.	No accessibility features currently offered.	No accessibility features currently offered.	Not known at this time.
Costs	Free for first 30 days then \$50/month for the first 5 users. Additional fee after.	Contact company for quote.	Free for first 6 month then \$49/month.	\$74 - \$369/month. Telehealth Beta version is free with paid plans during COVID-19 Outbreak. Bursary application available for programs that offers free services.	Contact company for quote.
End to End Encryption	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Collect or Store Personal Data	Agency: Yes Participant: No as participants do not need to create an account.	Agency: Yes Participant: Yes, participants must create account. Collects and stores email and name unless agency asks for more information.	Agency: Yes Participant: Yes, participants must create account; will collect and store account information.	Agency: Yes Participant: Yes, participants must create account; will collect and store account information and any other information agency stores in the platform.	Agency: Yes Participant: Yes, collects contact information, payment details, and health information.
Views or Stores User-Generated Data	No	Company stores data, but does not	Does not store any video or audio	Does not store any video or audio	Company stores data and



		shave access or view. It is only available to view by the agency in their account.	streams but does store and can access date and time of videos, messages and attachments.	streams. But does store account information and information agency requests. Views data and accesses your account at user's request.	views/share for administration and support.
Trading, Giving or Selling of Personal Data to Third Parties	No	No	No	No	No
Additional Privacy Features	Participants must acknowledge a Consent to Notice before commencing any telehealth interaction. No account needed to be set up to use program.		Two-factor authentication		
Other Safety Concerns Potential for Misuse	Optional: Participants can download an app from the app store but not necessary.	Participants have to download the platform and create an account in order to use the platform.	Participants have to create an account in order to use the platform.	Participants have to create an account in order to use the platform.	Participants have to create an account in order to use the platform.



	Consider possibility of device monitoring by abuser.	Consider possibility of device monitoring by abuser.	<p>Personal Information about the patient is required to facilitate identification of the individual and communication via email or SMS.</p> <p>Optional: Participants can download an app from the app store.</p> <p>Consider possibility of device monitoring by abuser.</p>	Consider possibility of device monitoring by abuser.	Consider possibility of device monitoring by abuser.
--	--	--	--	--	--

US Video Communication Platforms

Feature/Functionality	Zoom for Healthcare	Doxy.me	Cyph	Gruveo
One-on-One Chat	Only within video or voice meeting.	Yes	Yes	Only within video or voice meeting.
Group Chat	Only within video or voice meeting.	No	Yes	Only within video or voice meeting.
One on One Video & Voice	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes



Group Video & Voice	Yes	Yes, Premium feature for up to 10 people.	Available April 2020.	Yes
Accessibility	Offers built-in options for captioning and ASL interpretation.	Currently unknown.	Provides ARIA for links. Working towards WCAG AA compliance. Supports Apple voiceover and Slack voiceover.	No accessibility features currently offered.
Costs	Free and paid options. Discount available through Tech Soup.	Limited time free for new customers; paid options after.	Free and paid versions. Offering discounted monthly and annual rates for Telehealth version.	Offering free 45 day trial period during COVID-19 pandemic. 20% discount to non-profits.
End to End Encryption	Messaging: available but must be enabled. Video: Yes, but must be enabled. End to End Encryption is not available on all accounts until May 30, 2020.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Collect or Store Personal Data	Agency's Account: Yes Participant: Yes, if participant sets up account and/or	Agency's Account: Yes Participant: Yes, if participant sets up account.	Agency's Account: Yes Participant: No	Agency's Account: Yes Participant: No



	download the app and/or logs in via social media or Google account.			
Views or Stores User-Generated Data	Stores information see above. Views, depends on type of account. Paid accounts will be able to opt-in or opt-out information stored in data centers (excluding their home region) and, for enterprise clients, the ability to customize and manage geographic regions for specific meetings.	Yes, stores account information.	Does not persistently store data. Company cannot view data.	Does not persistently store data. Company cannot view data.
Trading, Giving or Selling of Personal Data to Third Parties	Yes, shares with business partners and advertisers. Opt-Outs available.	Does not <i>sell</i> data.	No	No
Additional Privacy Features	Most users are asked to download the app to use it.	Users do not need to create an account or download an app to communicate.	Users do not need to create an account or download an app to communicate.	Users do not need to create an account or download an app to communicate.



	<p>Non-download app option is complicated.</p> <p>Most privacy features need to be activated and are not set by default.</p>	<p>Can set a passcode to limit who can check in.</p>	<p>In addition to end-to-end encryption, they have quantum resistant cryptography and strong public key authentication.</p>	
<p>Other Safety Concerns Potential for Misuse</p>	<p>Consider possibility of device monitoring by abuser.</p> <p>Default settings can make some uses vulnerable to “Zoombombing” (intrusion by unwanted 3rd party into video call)</p> <p>Free versions may not let you choose what country your data is stored in.</p>	<p>Consider possibility of device monitoring by abuser.</p>	<p>Consider possibility of device monitoring by abuser.</p>	<p>Consider possibility of device monitoring by abuser.</p>

If your agency has any questions or needs guidance on how to implement digital services, please contact BCSTH’s Technology Safety Project at rhiannon@bcsth.ca.

© 2020 BC Society of Transition Houses, Technology Safety Project.

Adapted for Canada from and in cooperation with the Safety Net Technology Project at the National Network to End Domestic Violence, United States.