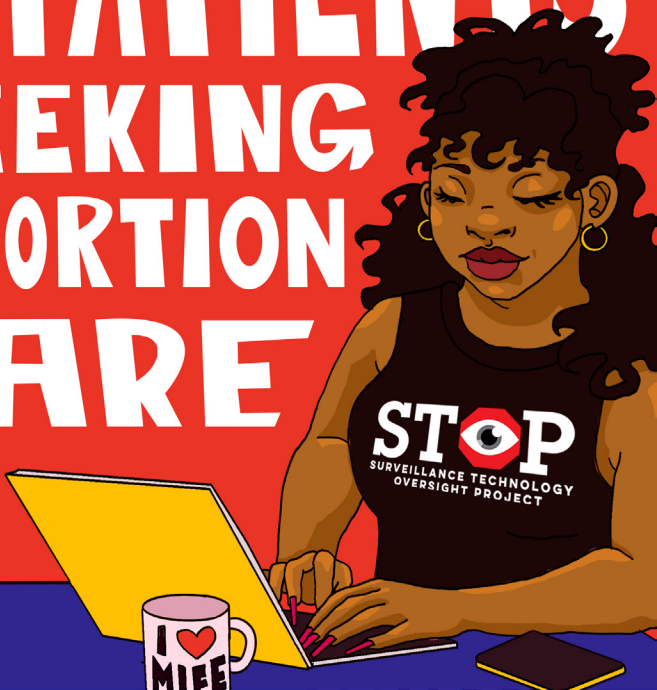


TOP DATA PRIVACY TIPS FOR PATIENTS SEEKING ABORTION CARE

NIRH
National Institute for
Reproductive Health



My heart raced, almost matching the beat of some remix pounding through the speakers of the club bathroom. I sat on the toilet and watched a second blue line appear on the pregnancy test I held.

SHIT!

Suddenly, I fixed my gaze on a sticker I hadn't noticed before.



SWANS is a practical support program for those seeking information, resources, and an end to a pregnancy. Our program provides financial aid and trauma informed peer support for current and former sex workers seeking an abortion. **Aid looks like, but is not limited to: flights, hotels, meals, and assistance booking and scheduling appointments and travel, and accompaniment.**

For services call or text: 657-549-4556 or email us swoplaswans@proton.me

As it turned out, finding out I was pregnant would be the hardest part of this process thanks to the peer support I received from SWANS.

After my shift, I decided to do some sleuthing into what SWANS was. I opened my laptop and plugged SWANS into the search bar of my browser... 

SAFER BROWSING:

PROBLEM!

COOKIES, BROWSER TRACKING & AD TECH

- The Internet Protocol (IP) address is a unique numerical label assigned to every device connected to a computer network. If someone accesses your IP address, **they can use it to identify your location and track online activity.**
- Trackers can see all kinds of details about your browser, and these details often form a unique or near-unique pattern **(like a fingerprint).**
- Companies with trackers across multiple websites can then recognize the pattern as you, **and track your browsing habits.**
- There are numerous methods advertisers can employ to collect data and user insights, including **tracking URLs, tracking pixels, and cookies.**
- Google collects advertising data on **9 out of 13 leading repro advocacy websites**, including two care scheduling sites.
- Many smartphone application developers are all too eager to sell you data to the highest bidder—and **that often includes the government.**

TOOLS!

VPNs, TOR & TOOLS FROM EFF

- Virtual Private Networks do not prevent websites you visit from “seeing” it’s you, **but they can prevent your internet provider from seeing which websites you visit;** they should also encrypt your traffic.
- The Onion Router (TOR) is **a free and open-source software for enabling anonymous communication.** It directs Internet traffic via a free, worldwide, volunteer overlay network that consists of more than seven thousand relays.
- Tools from the Electronic Frontier Foundation like Privacy Badger and Cover Your Tracks can help **minimize exposure to trackers and ad-tech.**



I opened up my phone and sent a text to the number listed:

Is this SWANS? I think I need some help?

Hi! This is the SWANS team from SWOPLA - thank you for reaching out! SWANS offers emotional support, appointment & travel navigation, and other support services! We ask folks to first complete our intake form & please download signal.org/download/ so we can communicate safely!

After a brief vetting process to confirm my eligibility, a peer navigator directed me to **download an app called "Signal"** so we could chat more securely.

SAFER COMMUNICATION:

PROBLEM!

UNENCRYPTED MESSAGING PLATFORMS

- Unencrypted messaging platforms such as Facebook Messenger have been used to **identify and build cases against abortion seekers.**
- The biggest surveillance threat to reproductive care seekers comes from **individuals with personal relationships to those seeking care.**

TOOLS!

ENCRYPTED MESSAGING

- Encrypted messaging services such as **Signal** can help protect conversations.
- **Limiting what you share in writing and with whom** is the best course of action.
- Enable **auto-deleting messages** for an extra layer of protection.
- **Signal vs. Whatsapp:** Where possible, move communications to Signal or a comparable program. Avoid reliance on WhatsApp since WhatsApp's platform doesn't encrypt metadata, meaning that details such as timestamps and location data can still be accessed.



After I set up Signal, we hopped on a quick phone call so I could tell them more about what support I needed.

With abortion banned in my state, we developed a plan for my trip to California for care. I'd never been before, but they made the process so easy by providing a trip map complete with rest stops and booking my lodging. I hardly had to do anything but confirm everything looked good to me.



I was nervous about having to take the time away from the club and figuring out pet care for my cat Mife, but my peer navigator let me know that they were able to assist with missed wages and even helped me book a pet sitter.

Before getting on the road, they shared some tips for keeping my trip discreet. →

SAFER DEVICE:

PROBLEM!

LOCATION TRACKING & BIOMETRICS

- Location data can be revealing because **you can use location patterns to identify a person**. If you know some places a person traveled, you can figure out where else they went by seeing who visited the known locations.
- **The government buys location data with very few restrictions**. Law enforcement is especially interested in location data, which they supplement with other tracking sources, like ankle monitors.
- Biometrics can't be changed like other forms of security, **so if they're compromised, that can follow you forever**.
- **Police can compel you to open your phone with biometrics** under different legal statutes than with a password.

TOOLS!

DATA MINIMIZATION & APP AUDITING

- Conducting **regular audits of settings and services** on your phone can help minimize data collection.
- Enabling data collection **only for services you need when you need them** is the best practice!
- **Leaving phones at home when seeking care** can limit exposure to location tracking. SWANS also let me know the risks associated with travel.





UNAVOIDABLE TRACKING:

PROBLEM!

AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE READERS (ALPRs), TRANSIT SURVEILLANCE & AIR TRAVEL

- ALPRs have been used by police **to identify and track abortion seekers** getting care across state lines.
- **Transit cards are often tied to credit card details** or other personal information used to obtain credit.
- An immense amount of personal data **is required for air travel.**

MINIMIZING THE PROBLEM

- Unfortunately, not all tracking is avoidable, **particularly when it comes to travel.**
- Where possible, **using public transit or taxis and paying in cash** can minimize exposure to travel surveillance.
- Traveling safely and securely is nearly impossible in the current environment meaning what we need is **comprehensive policy change to ban technology like ALPRs.**

The trip took two days and my peer navigator checked in on me throughout the journey.

My anxiety was at an all time high when I arrived in Los Angeles, but as I checked into my accommodations my peer navigator called me to make sure that I was settled. They answered all of my questions about what to expect during my appointment, and offered delivery of aftercare items including my favorite snacks, heating pad, etc.

Two days after my appointment, I felt strong enough to return home. My peer navigator reminded me of the digital safety tips I learned and ensured that they would check in on me to make sure I was adjusting okay.

I didn't have to worry about being judged by strangers or navigate a new health experience all by myself; the SWANS team made sure I had the support and tailored resources needed to feel in control of my body and the confidence to make the choices that were best for me.



All people have the right to determine their own life choices, and what they do with their bodies.

All sex workers, regardless of age, size, race, gender, sexuality, disability status, HIV status, drug use practices, immigration status, parenthood status, or frequency of involvement in the sex trade, deserve to feel valued and respected.

