

# Assistive Technology and Abuse in Later Life

Along with the many benefits of assistive technology come the great number of risks to older adults when those technologies are deliberately misused by an abuser. This handout provides a general overview of the ways abusers might misuse assistive technologies to cause harm to their victims. For more information on technology within the context of abuse in later life, please see [Technology and Abuse in Later Life](#).

## Monitoring or Intercepting Communications

- An abuser can access entire, verbatim conversations by printing or retrieving the history from the [device's](#) memory.
- An abuser can monitor all computer/tablet/device activity through spyware or other monitoring software.

## Misusing Communication Devices to Impersonate the Victim

- An abuser may misuse communication technologies to impersonate the victim and mislead those close to the victim. [For example](#): contacting an agency through a TTY or a relay system, pretending to be the victim, and requesting a protection order or other charges be dropped.

## Misusing Communication Devices to Harass the Victim

- An abuser may misuse communication devices to threaten or taunt the victim. [For example](#): calling or texting repeatedly or sending unwanted messages.

## Breaking or Tampering with Assistive Technology Devices

- An abuser may disable or break the assistive technology to control the victim.  
*For example:* altering an electronic device's settings so that it doesn't function properly or destroying a wheelchair to limit the victim's mobility.

## Denying Access to Assistive Technology Devices

- An abuser may isolate the victim by limiting, withholding or removing assistive devices so that they are not accessible.

## Injuring the Victim to Prevent Use of the Assistive Technology Device

- An abuser may physically harm the victim so that he or she can't use the technology.  
*For example:* purposely breaking the victim's fingers so that he or she cannot use a touchscreen.

Source: Safety Net: The National Safe & Strategic Technology Project, National Network to End Domestic Violence ([www.nnedv.org](http://www.nnedv.org))



National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life,  
a project of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin  
[www.ncall.us](http://www.ncall.us)