

# Technology Requirements for Using Video Conferencing with Victims



Videoconferencing can offer survivors an alternative way to meet with a provider or counselor. For survivors who lack transportation or live too far from a program or counselor, videoconferencing may be the only way they can obtain medical, legal, or trauma-informed therapy. There are several free or low cost (if upgraded) web-based conference services, each with different advantages and technical requirements. (For more information on safety and privacy considerations when using video conferencing, read “Tips for Using Video Conferencing for Victim Services.”)

## Types of Web-Based Services and Technical Requirements

There are many factors to consider when choosing a web-based video conferencing system, including cost, operating systems, whether calls can be recorded, and how many people can be on a call at the same time. All web-conferencing systems require a connection to the Internet and can be used with either Windows or Mac. The systems reviewed here include Skype, Google Hangouts, Oovoo, Gruevo, and Zoom. Note that the systems reviewed here are available for free or for minimal costs. Some paid-for services may offer more features, security, and privacy.

An important consideration in choosing a web-based conferencing system is the degree to which data is encrypted. This means whether data is encrypted indicating no one but the users can access the data or whether the data can be viewed and accessed by the service provider. This may be critical should the service provider receive a subpoena for your data.

All of the systems below offer instant messaging, in-call chat, an unlimited number of meetings, and a telephone call-in option while video conferencing. For the most part, call times are unlimited. With the exception of Gruevo, all require a user name and password. The following discusses the requirements and options among the main web-based conferencing systems available.

Another consideration is ease of use and comfort level with the technology. There is always a learning curve anytime new technology is used. Gaining mastery with the video conferencing system prior to using it with clients is critical.

## Skype™

Skype offers basic services for free and premium services for \$4.99 per month. Basic services include one-to-one video and voice calls, voicemail, instant messaging, and file and screen sharing. However, advertisements will be visible in side or end bars. Premium services include group video calls and screen sharing, unlimited calls to a country/region of choice and no advertisements. Basic services permit two users at a time while premium services allow up to ten users. The end-to-end users’ data is encrypted but Microsoft may be able to view data. Calls are not recordable, and users can share documents.

## Google Hangouts

Google Hangouts offer live video calls with up to ten people at a time. The calls are live-streamed and not recorded. Users can share both files and photos. Stream sharing during the call is limited to screen sharing. The end-to-end users’ data is not encrypted and Microsoft is able to view the data. Another concern is that Google Hangouts automatically archives a record of the call itself. This record can be manually deleted but the user must do that for each call. (Google also offers “Google Hangouts on the Air” which operates similarly but the calls are live-streamed on YouTube and recorded. The recording can later be converted into a private file. Google Hangouts on the Air is not a secure platform and should not be used.)

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## Oovoo

Oovoo offers both free and premium services. With free services, up to 12 people may video chat at a time. It offers users voice call, video recording, video messages up to 5 minutes, and file and screen sharing. Advertisements are visible. Premium services are \$2.99 per month or \$29.99 per year and offer priority technical support, 1,000 minutes of video storage, and no advertisements. Data is not encrypted and thus may pose some privacy concerns.

## Gruveo

Gruveo is somewhat different from the other web-based video conferencing services in that it only allows two users at a time and does not require a user name and password. Each party goes to Gruveo's website and enter a previously agreed upon code. The parties are then connected. Calls are not recorded and thus would be only a record that the two devices used the same code at the same time. All communication is over the web and there is no voice call in option. Gruveo does not support file sharing or video messages.

## Zoom

Zoom offers free, Pro, and Business services. With free services, Zoom offers free one-to-one calls and group video chat with up to 25 people for 40 minutes. Pro services are \$9.99 per month, per host and, in addition to the same services offered for free, include group video chat with up to 25 people for an unlimited time. Business services are \$14.99 per month, per host as well as additional advanced services. Data can be encrypted but that is not the default mode. Zoom allows screen sharing among three separate computers and meetings can be scheduled and integrated with Google and Outlook.

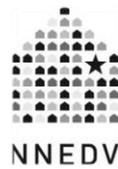
## FaceTime

FaceTime is available only on Apple products such as an iPhone (4 or later), iPad, iPod Touch, or Mac computer. It allows only one-to-one conversations between two users with compatible Apple products. On the iPhone, FaceTime is bundled into the iPhone app. On the iPod touch, iPad, and Mac, FaceTime is a separate app, available for a nominal fee (\$.99). FaceTime calls are protected by end-to-end encryption so that only the sender and receiver can access them, and Apple cannot decrypt this data. Calls are not recorded. The device log will show a record of the contact but can be deleted.

## Conclusion

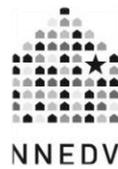
Video conferencing offers a way to help domestic violence and sexual assault survivors communicate with professional service providers when they cannot meet face to face. For those who live in rural or isolated areas or are unable to receive advocacy and counseling in a more traditional manner, video conferencing may be the best, or even only, manner for them to receive help. There are many web based systems available for free or low cost. In choosing a web based video conferencing platform, always consider privacy, security, and safety. Establish a best practice policy for using the chosen system. Programs and advocates should practice with the technology before using it with clients and take steps to ensure the client is also comfortable with the technology.

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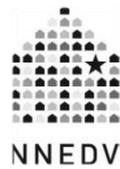
Questions to Consider	Skype	Google Hangouts	Oovoo	Gruveo	Zoom
<b>Computer &amp; Operating System Versions Supported</b>	Mac (The latest version of QuickTime) Windows	Mac Windows	Mac Windows	Mac Windows	Mac Windows
<b>Broadband Connection to the Internet Required?</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

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Cost	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skype-to-Skype video and voice calls</li> <li>• Groups calls</li> <li>• Instant messaging</li> <li>• Video messaging</li> </ul> <p>Premium (\$4.99/month):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group video calls</li> <li>• Group screen sharing</li> <li>• Unlimited calls to a country/ region of choice</li> <li>• No ads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live video call with up to 10 people</li> <li>• Phone calls to the US and Canada</li> <li>• Live-streaming on the air (will be recorded)</li> <li>• Sharing photos and files</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group video chat with up to 12 people at once</li> <li>• Voice calls to other users</li> <li>• Instant messaging</li> <li>• Video call recording</li> <li>• Video messages (up to 5 minutes)</li> <li>• File sharing</li> <li>• Screen sharing</li> </ul> <p>Premium (\$2.99/month, \$29.99/year):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No ads</li> <li>• Priority support</li> <li>• 1000 minutes of video storage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer-to-peer video calling (cannot add a third party)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 to 1 video calls</li> <li>• Group video chat with up to 25 people at once for 40 minute intervals</li> </ul> <p>Pro \$9.99 per month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 to 1 video calls</li> <li>• Group video chat with up to 25 people at once for an unlimited time</li> </ul> <p>Business \$14.99 per host</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 to 1 video calls</li> <li>• Group video chat with up to 25 people at once for an unlimited time; additional advanced features available</li> </ul>

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<b>Encryption</b>	<p>All Skype-to-Skype voice, video, file transfers and instant messages are encrypted, although phone calls from Skype to mobile and landline phones and voice messages, once downloaded, are not encrypted.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>Microsoft, which owns Skype, retains and stores some information, including instant messages, voice and video messages, and other media content.<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>Hangout conversations and video calls on web browser, on the Hangouts Android and iOS apps, and through Chrome box or Meetings are encrypted.<sup>3</sup></p> <p>Since Hangout is owned by Google, Google may retain and share certain information about your use.<sup>4</sup></p>	<p>Oovoo audio and video are not encrypted.</p>	<p>Yes, Gruveo is encrypted.</p> <p>Gruveo cannot see any communication content and only keeps logs that are required for performance tuning and server security monitoring.<sup>5</sup></p>	<p>Encryption is available, but user must turn it on.</p>
<b>Amount of users for video calling</b>	<p>Free: 2 Premium: 10</p>	<p>Free: 10</p>	<p>Free: 12</p>	<p>Free: 2</p>	<p>Free: 25</p>

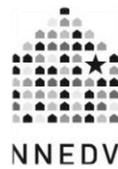
<sup>1</sup> <https://support.skype.com/en/faq/FA31/does-skype-use-encryption>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.skype.com/en/legal/privacy/#retentionOfPersonalData>

<sup>3</sup> <https://support.google.com/hangouts/answer/6046115?hl=en>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.google.com/intl/en/policies/privacy/#infocollect>

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<b>Unlimited Call Time</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1 to 1: Yes Group: 40 minutes
<b>Service Requires User Name &amp; Password</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Free User-to-User Voice Call</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Video Message</b>	Yes (Unencrypted)	Yes	Yes	No	No
<b>Instant Message/In call Chat</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>File Sharing</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Mobile Support</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Video Calls Recordable</b>	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Video Calls Able to Stream</b>	Limited – Screen sharing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Unlimited Number of Meetings</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Telephone Call-in Option in addition to Video Conference</b>	All telephone call in	Yes	Yes (Limit 6 phone)	No	Yes