Choosing a Digital Services Company
Checklist

This checklist is a supplement to the [Choosing a Company for Digital Services](#) handout and is not meant to be a stand-alone tool. Before using this tool, please read through the main document, which describes key concepts and dives deeper into each section included in this tool. Please also see the entire [Digital Services Toolkit](#) for additional information about [Assessing Readiness for Digital Services](#) and [Best Practices for Digital Services](#). [Safety Net is also available](#) to provide technical assistance, including assisting in evaluating the suitability of specific tools for your program's needs.

Company: _____

Contact Name: _____ Contact Email / Phone: _____

Costs

ITEM	COST	ONE-TIME OR ONGOING?	YEARLY ESTIMATE
Purchase & Setup	$	❑ one-time ❑ ongoing	$
Use Fees – including any extra charges for additional security	$	❑ one-time ❑ ongoing	$
Maintenance	$	❑ one-time ❑ ongoing	$
Other (including equipment or internet upgrades):			

Data Security & Privacy

Does the company keep data about each conversation? (e.g., date, time, IP address, phone number, geolocation, or combination of data about device, software, and/or cookies, etc.)	❑ **Best:** No identifying data is recorded. ❑ **OK:** Data is deleted automatically and quickly (within 1-3 days). ❑ **Caution:** Data can be deleted, but less often or only manually. ❑ **Unacceptable:** Data is kept indefinitely.
Does the company store the content of the conversation (recording and/or transcript)?	❑ **Best:** Content automatically disappears after a conversation ends. The company cannot access the content at any point. ❑ **Caution:** Content can be deleted, but is kept for a time or must be manually deleted. ❑ **Unacceptable:** Content is kept indefinitely.
Does the tool leave digital traces on a victim's device or in accounts that might pose a safety or privacy risk?	❑ **Best:** The tool doesn't leave any traces on a device or in an account that might let anyone else see that that victim communicated with your program. ❑ **Caution:** The tool does leave traces, but they can be easily removed by the victim with information from the advocate, or the victim doesn't have concerns about these risks.
Can you assign different access levels to users (advocates, managers, etc.) related to what identifying information they might see about victims?	❑ **Best:** You have full control over access levels, can add or delete users, and change their access levels at any point without company assistance. ❑ **OK:** You have to request that the company add and delete users and change their access levels. The company will immediately process the changes.

	☐ **Caution:** You have to request changes from the company, and the changes are not processed immediately.
	☐ **Unacceptable:** All users have the same access level, which includes access to personally identifying victim data.
Is the conversation encrypted?	☐ **Best:** End-to-end encryption (data is encrypted at every point between the users).
	☐ **Caution:** Data is encrypted only in transit between the users and the company's server.
	☐ **Unacceptable:** Data is not encrypted.
Can the company see personally identifying victim information?	☐ **Best:** It is not technologically possible for anyone in the company to see or access personally identifying victim information (Including phone numbers, IP addresses, content of conversations). The company doesn't hold a copy of the encryption key.
	☐ **Caution:** The program has a contract in place with the company specifying policies and penalties to prevent company employees from accessing conversations or data about conversations.
	☐ **Unacceptable:** Company employees can access conversations or data about conversations, and no policies or penalties are in place.
Do they use hardware or services of a third-party company separate from their own?	☐ **OK:** Third-party companies' access to data does not reveal personally identifying information of survivors who contacted the program.
	☐ **Caution:** Third-party companies have access to personally identifying data, but an agreement is in place specifying policies and penalties to protect against unauthorized employee access to conversations or data about conversations.

	❑ **Unacceptable:** Third-party companies' employees can access conversations or data about conversations, and no policies or penalties are in place.
Will they share or release personally identifying victim data? If yes, under what circumstances? How do they respond to requests from government, law enforcement, lawyers?	❑ **Best:** The company does not sell or share data, and will fight any legal request, using their own resources. They will also notify you <u>before</u> they comply, so you can also fight the request. Additionally, all data is encrypted and the company doesn't have access to unencrypted data, so they cannot release or share any unencrypted data anyhow. ❑ **OK:** The company does not sell or share data. They will notify you of a legal request before complying, so you can fight it. ❑ **Unacceptable:** The company sells or shares data. The company will comply with a legal request without notifying you first.
Will they provide notice of a data breach?	❑ **Best:** They will notify you immediately and assist with remedies. ❑ **OK:** They will notify you immediately. ❑ **Caution:** They will notify you, but the timeline is unclear. ❑ **Unacceptable:** They will not notify you of a data breach.

Accessibility

Do survivors need to download an app in order to use the tool?	❑ **Best:** The survivor doesn't need to download anything. ❑ **Caution:** Survivor would need to download software or an app. *(This may only be acceptable for survivors whom the agency has been able to assess risk and safety plan, including downloading the app).*

	❑ **Unacceptable:** Survivor would need to download software or an app. *(This could be a safety risk for survivors in crisis or who have not had a chance to assess their risk or safety plan around the use of tech.)*
Do survivors need to create a user account, profile, or screen name (this includes any requirement to give the company an email address or phone number)?	❑ **Best:** The tool doesn't require an account, profile, or user name. ❑ **OK:** The survivor needs to create an account, profile, or user name, but no identifying information is required to create the account. *(Only OK for tools used for ongoing clients only – not crisis lines.)* ❑ **Unacceptable:** A survivor would need to set up an account, profile, or user name. *(For tools being used for crisis response lines.)*
Is access to a strong internet connection required for a victim to use the tool or service?	❑ **Best:** The tool will work with little or no broadband access. ❑ **OK:** The tool requires broadband or cellular data, and the victims in your area have reasonable access. Or, you offer other options. ❑ **Caution/Unacceptable:** The tool requires strong internet access and many victims don't have reliable access.
Is the tool in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or meet accessibility standards (e.g. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)? (see specific items below)	❑ **Best:** The tool offers many accessibility features. It may be marketed as being in compliance with the ADA or specific accessibility standards, a portion of their website may describe accessibility features and/or may include accessibility policies, and there is a way to report errors. ❑ **OK:** Offers some accessibility features. May or may not have a section of their website describing their accessibility features and/or policies. ❑ **Unacceptable:** Does not offer any accessibility features.

Is the tool easy to navigate for people with cognitive disabilities?	❑ **Best:** The tool uses a consistent organized layout for ease of navigation. ❑ **OK:** Advocates are skilled at assisting victim with using the tool. ❑ **Caution/Unacceptable:** Another person (a caregiver or other support person) would need to help a victim to use the tool.
Is the tool or service compatible with screen-reading technology for people with visual disabilities?	❑ **Best:** The tool has been tested with a variety of screen readers. It includes accessibility features such as alt tags, long descriptions, and/or captions for all images, videos or audio files, audio descriptions for videos, and accessible forms and tables. Users can change the size and style of fonts, color contrast, and have options for reading text inside of images. ❑ **OK:** The tool is compatible with some screen readers, or that it is navigable for screen reader users, but there are still some "traps," such as redundant labels. ❑ **Unacceptable:** The tool is not compatible.
Is the tool or service compatible with closed captioning or ASL interpretation (if video or audio)?	❑ **Best:** The tool has built in features to support closed captioning and ASL interpretation, and/or the option to create a text transcript for video and audio. ❑ **OK:** A work around is available, and is acceptable to the victim. ❑ **Unacceptable:** The tool isn't compatible and no workaround is available.
Is the tool compatible with assistive technology for people with physical disabilities?	❑ **Best:** The tool is compatible with assistive technology devices. ❑ **OK:** A work around is available, and is acceptable to the victim.

	❑ **Unacceptable:** The tool isn't compatible and no workaround is available.
Does the company offer language translation or interpretation? Is it provided by a machine or a person?	❑ **Best:** The tool allows for a skilled live interpreter to join the conversation. ❑ **OK:** Work arounds are possible such as a separate audio line for video calls or webinars, or an interpreter could be added to a chat, text, or email conversation. ❑ **Caution:** The tool offers machine translation that can be turned off. ❑ **Unacceptable:** The tool offers machine translation that can't be turned off.

Features & Customizability

Does the tool support emojis, pictures, and video? Can that be turned off?	❑ **OK:** The tool allows emojis, pictures, and/or videos, and you can customize the settings to turn off some or all. ❑ **Caution:** The tool allows emojis, pictures, and/or videos, but you cannot turn them on or off to create a default for whether they are available for use. (This means you'll have to rely on telling advocates and survivors whether or not they should use these features.)
Can you set up "canned" or cut-and-paste messages?	❑ **Best:** The tool allows you to write an unlimited number of canned messages that can be easily inserted into a conversation and can be updated any time. ❑ **OK:** The tool allows a limited number of canned messages, and you have to ask the company to make updates or changes to the messages.

	❑ **Caution:** The tool only offers standard messages that you can't edit, and which don't suit your program.
Is there cross-platform integration? (e.g., can a survivor reach out through text, social media, and secure chat, etc.)	❑ **OK:** The tool doesn't offer this. Or, the tool does offer this, but you can turn the feature on or off by platform (for example, some cross-platform integration may not be preferable). ❑ **Unacceptable:** The tool offers these integrations, and you can't turn it on or off. Some identifying data might be shared across platforms.

Customer Service

Technical support & troubleshooting	❑ **Best:** The company offers 24/7 dedicated technical support and customer service. ❑ **OK:** The company does not have 24/7 technical support, however they respond to questions in a reasonable amount of time. The tool is easy enough to use, and your staff and volunteers can likely resolve common problems OR you have dedicated IT staff or consultants who can help. ❑ **Caution:** The company doesn't have a dependable technical support or customer service team. Your agency has dedicated IT staff who are comfortable with the tool and have sufficient access to help. ❑ **Unacceptable:** The company doesn't have dependable technical support and your agency does not have access to IT staff.
Is there any limit on the number of users from your program?	❑ **Best:** There are unlimited users (including for your staff and people who reach out to you for help).

	❑ **OK:** Limits on users (for your staff and people who are seeking help) are well above your anticipated need, and cost for additional users is reasonable. ❑ **Caution:** Limits on users (for your staff and people who are seeking help) are just enough. Cost for additional users is significant.
What internet bandwidth is required for your advocates to use the tool?	❑ **Best:** Your program won't need to upgrade Internet bandwidth or equipment. ❑ **OK:** Your program has the budget to make any necessary upgrades. ❑ **Caution:** The company isn't sure if you'll need upgrades. ❑ **Unacceptable:** The required bandwidth isn't available in your area, and/or you can't afford to make upgrades.
What is their record regarding system downtime? What are their plans in case of unexpected downtime? Will their regular maintenance impact your services?	❑ **Best:** The company has systems in place to avoid scheduled downtime, and a plan for unexpected downtime. ❑ **OK:** The company gives advance notice of scheduled downtime and works to ensure it will have minimal impact on users. They also have a plan for unexpected downtime. ❑ **Caution:** The company has scheduled downtime that interferes with your services, and/or they have no plan for unexpected downtime.