



# Safety Advisory

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## ONLINE DATING THROUGH WEB BASED SERVICES OR MOBILE APPLICATIONS

The introduction of web based services and mobile applications designed to facilitate social dating has changed the way individuals date. This has also increased the ways in which unknowing individuals can be victimized by predators that use such services to identify victims. The following are safety tips which are intended to help mitigate the possibility of being victimized, as well as resources for those who have been victimized.

### Safety Tips

- Don't change personal information online to include your phone number, email address, or street address.
- Don't post personal information on social media profiles or on dating profiles.
- Use applications such as TinEye to verify the person's profile picture is actually them and not taken from elsewhere.
- Do a web engine search of your date's name and information to determine if it is accurate and if your date has a known criminal history. The District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia all permit online access to court records through their websites.
- Check your date's social media profiles to determine if there are any red flags.
- Meet potential dates in public areas such as restaurants, shopping malls, etc.
- Tell a friend where you will be and what time you expect to be home; or consider taking a friend with you.
- Provide your own transportation to and from the date.
- Do not go on late-night dates or on dates at unfamiliar, secluded, or private locations.
- Use a service such as Google Voice and create a phone number for online dating. Set this number to forward to your cell phone so that dates do not have your real phone number.
- Never give out financial information to a date.
- Never transmit messages, including photos, that you would not want seen by the public.
- Do not accept drinks from other people, open containers yourself and keep your drink with you at all times, even when you go to the bathroom.
- Don't drink anything that tastes or smells strange. Sometimes, drugs such as GHB can taste salty.
- If you realize you left your drink unattended, pour it out.
- If you feel drunk and haven't consumed any alcohol – or, if you feel like the effects of drinking alcohol are stronger than usual – get help right away.
- Trust your instincts, if something does not feel right, leave the date.
- Install the AU Public Safety Rave Guardian application on your cell phone. Rave Guardian allows you to:
  - Create a Safety Session during which your selected Guardians can view your status and location, ensuring your privacy and automatically alerting others in the event of an emergency;
  - Deliver crime tips and chat in real-time with campus safety officials, or select those officials to be your Guardian;
  - Set your Rave Guardian Safety Timer. During a timer session, Guardians and Campus Safety can check status of the student. If the Safety Timer is not deactivated before it expires, Campus Safety is automatically provided with the user's Rave Guardian profile to proactively identify and check in on the individual.

### Resources

- The Office for Advocacy Services for Interpersonal and Sexual Violence (OASIS) develops and implements prevention and education programs for the AU community about sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. OASIS also provides victim advocates for survivors of interpersonal and sexual violence and can assist survivors in contacting counselors and other resources, when requested. OASIS is a confidential resource and can be reached at 202-885-7070 or [OASIS@american.edu](mailto:OASIS@american.edu).
- For information about resources available to survivors of interpersonal and sexual violence, please visit the Wellness Center website at: <http://www.american.edu/ocl/wellness/about-sexual-assault-resources.cfm>.

If you have information relating to this incident, or witness suspicious activity, please call the Department of Public Safety at 202-885-3636 or 911 for the Metropolitan Police Department.

Make a Confidential Tip through the Department of Public Safety Webpage at:  
<http://www.american.edu/finance/publicsafety/tips.cfm>

If you would like a copy of this advisory, please visit: <http://www.american.edu/finance/publicsafety/crimealerts.cfm>