

NLG HOTLINE MANUAL APPENDIX



Published August 2025

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APPENDIX A: BASIC DIGITAL TOOLS

The following apps/tools are all free, open source, very secure, and hosted in the cloud in such a way that their developers do not have access to users' data. This makes them a good choice when a hotline has to be established quickly, but some of them have usability and scalability issues that render them less than ideal for long term use by larger organizations.

NOTE: Google Docs should be avoided at all costs. While its ubiquity and features make it a tempting choice, especially when a hotline needs to be set up quickly, it is highly insecure. As with the hotline number, Google will happily turn over the contents of all documents and communications to the police when subpoenaed, without even informing the affected users. This vulnerability could potentially endanger not only arrested protesters, but also everyone involved in legal support in your community.

Appendix A: Basic Digital Tools

Signal Private Messenger: This text and voice app has become the gold standard for secure communication in activist communities thanks to its ease of use, ready availability, and security-enhancing features such as disappearing messages, end-to-end encryption, and PIN protection for user accounts.

All texts between team members should be over Signal. For more information on how to use Signal most effectively, see Device Security subsection in the Internal Communications section.

Jitsi: This online videoconferencing app is similar to Zoom, except it's free and more secure. It can be found at <https://vc.autistici.org> and works on phones and computers as a standalone app or in a web browser. While Jitsi is not end-to-end encrypted (as of this writing), its developers are working on including this feature. In the meantime, Jitsi's main security protection comes from being free of charge. While the main Jitsi website now requires a user account to create meetings, the Autistici Jitsi server linked above has no such restriction, and it would be highly impractical for police to attempt to monitor every Jitsi meeting on Autistici.

Appendix A: Basic Digital Tools

Best practices for Jitsi include making a new link for each meeting instead of reusing an old one, circulating meeting invitations only through Signal or other secure channels, and asking attendees to turn their cameras on only long enough to confirm that they are known to the group. Jitsi allows attendees to call in on a regular phone line, but doing so opens the entire meeting to eavesdropping by police or others. This should be avoided if at all possible.

Jitsi has exhibited bugs and sound quality issues sometime arise, but it is still one of the best videoconferencing options for meetings of up to about 30 people, as long as most of the attendees keep their cameras turned off.

For added security, Jitsi can be self-hosted. See Appendix B: Advanced Digital Tools below.

Appendix A: Basic Digital Tools

Cryptpad: A secure, encrypted, online office suite similar to Google Docs, Cryptpad features end-to-end encryption and free storage, along with the usual office functions such as spreadsheets, documents, presentations, etc. Cryptpad contains certain bugs, and does not have a calendar function.

These deficiencies make Cryptpad inconvenient for many of the tasks that users take for granted with Google Docs. But, unlike Google, Cryptpad can't turn data over to the police. Cryptpad works well for basic spreadsheet operations and collaborative editing of text documents, but does not have “track changes” capability and tends to stutter on slow connections or when its servers are under strain. You should periodically back up all files stored in Cryptpad to a dedicated encrypted flash drive, and make sure to keep the drive in a safe place and remember the password. Cryptpad can be found at <https://cryptpad.fr>.

Appendix A: Basic Digital Tools

Keybase: A secure collaboration tool offering similar functionality to Slack or Mattermost, Keybase also features end-to-end encryption and over 10 GB of free storage per user. Like Cryptpad, Keybase also contains some bugs, and is only available as its own app, not in a web browser. Keybase works well for light use by small groups, but may present some problems for large and active teams. Keybase is now owned by Zoom, and Keybase workers have the ability to shut down user accounts, although they cannot read the associated data. This has happened to at least one hotline team already. If a hotline team needs to use Keybase for an extended period, consider migrating to a self-hosted instance of Mattermost. More information can be found in Appendix B: Advanced Digital Tools below. Keybase can be downloaded at <https://keybase.io>.

APPENDIX B: ADVANCED DIGITAL TOOLS

NOTE: The tools described in this section are all open source. This means (among other things) that users can run their own servers or choose a server from among several providers. However, using an outside provider opens up the hotline to the same vulnerabilities as Google, namely that providers will comply with subpoenas for your data. This means that self-hosting your tools is the only secure option. You can run your own physical server in someone's home or business, but this is reserved for teams with technical, logistical, and legal expertise and it may be best to leave it to a professional hosting company.

Securing a professional hosting company is not technically self-hosting, but the rise in popularity of virtual private servers (VPSs) allows users to rent the digital equivalent of their own computer in a dedicated server farm and run whatever software they want on it. This is unlike specialized shared hosting solutions that only provide certain apps.

Appendix B: Advanced Digital Tools

The trick is to find a host that is resistant to court orders from the United States. Njalla, a Caribbean-based VPS provider and domain name registrar that accepts payment in cryptocurrencies and refuses to honor US subpoenas, is one option. Njalla VPSs suffer from data transfer and storage limitations, but these should be manageable for a reasonably small team that doesn't handle a lot of large files. Njalla can be downloaded at <https://njal.la>.

Nextcloud: A secure cloud storage app with a multitude of useful plugins, including those for office, calendars, appointments, forms, tasks, and project management. Nextcloud is not perfect, but is still a reasonable alternative to Google Docs for many functions. Nextcloud plugins can be tricky to install, and it's important to read the documentation carefully before attempting even trivial administrative operations. However, it works well when everything is up and running. Nextcloud can be downloaded at <https://nextcloud.com>.

Appendix B: Advanced Digital Tools

Mattermost: An online collaboration tool similar to Slack and Keybase, and easier to use according to many users. Mattermost features a very user-friendly interface, a strong focus on security, and native client apps for all major operating systems, as well as a capable in-browser option. Mattermost can be downloaded at <https://mattermost.com>.

Grist: A web-based spreadsheet with database capabilities, Grist is conceptually similar to Microsoft Access, and easier to use. Grist has advantages for long-term support of defendants in areas with frequent large protests. Grist's granular permissions allow administrators to limit access to information on a need-to-know basis within the team. Grist can be downloaded at <https://getgrist.com>.

Keycloak: An open source single sign-on solution that allows team members to log in to multiple apps with the same credentials, avoiding the hassle of remembering or storing yet more passwords. Keycloak can be downloaded at <https://keycloak.org>.

VOIP Tools

Grasshopper: A commercial VOIP provider that is used by several established legal hotlines. Reportedly, Grasshopper will alert users of any subpoenas for their data. Offers multiple lines at fairly reasonable prices. More information can be found at <https://grasshopper.com>.

Asterisk: The OG open source internet telephony app, Asterisk is the engine that drives most commercial VOIP systems today. If your team has members with strong technical abilities, you can self-host an Asterisk server and ensure that any subpoenas for the hotline's data will come to the team itself, instead of an unaccountable corporate provider. Configuring Asterisk can be challenging however, and should not be undertaken by those without technical skills. Asterisk can be downloaded at <https://www.asterisk.org/>

Linphone: A VOIP client app that is open source and easy to use, Linphone makes a great complement to whatever server solution you end up with. Linphone can be downloaded at <https://linphone.org/>.

APPENDIX C: VIGIL SUPPLIES

Burner Phone: Protesters getting out of jail may have had their phones seized by police and not yet returned, or their phones may have dead batteries. Providing recently released protesters with a burner phone will at least allow them to make calls to anyone whose phone number they remember.

Power Supply: To keep burner phones charged during long vigils, power supplies will allow arrestees and organizers to charge their own phones. Commonly used charger cables should also be made available if possible.

Snacks: Be sure to have lots of snacks. All the snacks. Vigil organizers will get hungry too. Ideally, the hotline team can let the vigil know what food each released prisoner likes best, but make sure there are plenty of vegan and gluten-free options available. It's also a good idea to provide coffee and energy drinks.

Cigarettes: Smokers will likely want a cigarette when they get out of jail. Don't forget a lighter.

Appendix C: Vigil Supplies

Outtake Forms: To collect any outstanding information about the arrestee's case and support needs, have sufficient outtake forms on hand. If you want to get fancy, you can bring a laptop and update the database directly over a cellular wifi hot spot. If you use paper forms, remember to enter the information electronically as soon as possible and destroy the hard copies.

Rides: Offering rides to recently released prisoners can be very helpful. If people are not available with cars, you could arrange for Uber or Lyft rides. Public transit passes are a last resort, but often better than nothing.

Warm/Dry/Clean Clothes: It may be helpful to have clean clothes on hand. Fresh clothing will be appreciated by prisoners who are released wearing the same pepper spray-covered t-shirt in which they were arrested. Shoelaces are always crucial, since most jails take them away on entry.

Scissors: Release prisoners will want to remove the plastic ID bracelets most jails force prisoners to wear and scissors will come in handy.

Appendix C: Vigil Supplies

Pen and Notebook: In case a released prisoner wants to write something down or a supporter wants to record details of a prisoner's injury, a pen and notebook will be instrumental.

Medics: Prisoners often need medical attention when they are released and may need to be transported to a hospital or emergency room. Try to arrange for a street medic(s) to be present, at least when it is known someone with health issues is being released.

APPENDIX D: ARRESTEE INFORMATION

The following is an annotated list of spreadsheet columns for arrestees, arranged in priority groups. Not all columns will be applicable in all situations, but this list should be a reasonable start. Note that the priority level is not the same thing as column listing order. Columns should be grouped by subject matter.

Priority One

- Full Name
- Legal First Name
- Legal Last Name
- Preferred Name
- Pronouns
- Date of Birth
- Jail (if more than one in your area)
- Jail ID #
- Medical Details (this can be deleted for privacy when the defendant is released)
- Priority Tasks for Defendant
- Time of Last Contact (It's good to have this when multiple operators might be in contact with a defendant)

Priority Two

- Incarceration Status (released, jail, prison, warrant but not arrested, etc. Important, but will usually be known.)
- Arrest Date (Important, but will usually be known.)
- Arrest Location
- Arrest Situation (such as what protest, etc. This will jump to Priority One if an arrestee's name is not known at the time of arrest.)
- Case Resolved? (Can also be done using background color)
- Case # (or equivalent in your jurisdiction. If multiple types of case number are in use in your jurisdiction, create a separate column for each type).
- Type of Charge (If multiple charges, enter the level of the most severe - felony, misdemeanor, etc.)
- Charges
- Defendant Phone
- Defendant Email
- Defendant Other Contact Info
- Support People
- Liaison to Support Crew (if applicable)

Appendix D: Arrestee Information

- Bond Amount (Important, but can almost certainly be looked up on line.)
- Bond Details (type, conditions, bail bond company if applicable, etc. Might in some cases be worth breaking up into separate columns.)
- Bonding Priority Information (Ideally the team will be able to bond everyone out quickly, but if not the most vulnerable defendants should be bailed first. In this case this column will jump to Priority One.)
- Bail Bond Company Preferences (OMG yes please, I suppose If that's what it takes, at least try to get it lowered first, not in a million years...)
- No Contact List (of people who should not be given information about the defendant)
- Wants Lawyer Visit?
- Can Name be Shared? (for fundraising purposes for example, or in calls for letters.)
- Defendant's Jail Conditions
- Ongoing Tasks for Defendant (like finding them a lawyer, for example.)
- Topics for Next Conversation (such as if a prisoner had questions on their last call the operator couldn't answer.)

Priority Three

- Next Court Date
- Next Court Location
- Lawyer of Record
- Other Lawyers
- Lawyer Notes
- Wants to Sue? (yes or no)
- Physical Description (can help at jail vigils. This jumps to Priority One if the arrestee's name is not immediately available.)
- Housing Notes (Some defendants will need housing when they get out, such as if their bond conditions forbid them to leave a state they don't live in.)
- Other Notes

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE SCRIPT FLOWCHART FOR A FIRST-TIME CALLER FROM JAIL TAKING CALLS

- **Short Initial Phone Call Checklist**

- Police may be recording this conversation, so don't say anything about possible crimes, ok?
- What is your legal name? (can still ask for chosen name and use that in conversation)
- What is your date of birth (DOB)?
- Call us back if the call drops, and call again in a few hours or when possible.
- If applicable, how many other people were arrested with you and you are in with?
 - What are their names & DOB?

Appendix E: Sample Script Flowchart

- For people who are newly arrested, remind them that they do not have to answer questions from cops, or even talk to the police at all (aside from logistics like “I need to use the bathroom”)
 - Can instead say "I am going to remain silent, and I want to speak to a lawyer"
- **Triage Questions**
 - How are you feeling about your physical and mental safety right now?
 - Do you have medical issues that need attention?
 - If yes: What is going on/what happened?
 - How do you feel now?
 - Have you had this before?
 - How urgent do you feel like this is?
 - You have the right to ask for medical care
 - Do you want us to try to get a medic on the phone?
 - Are there any identities or issues you're facing that put you at higher risk being in jail?

Appendix E: Sample Script Flowchart

• Triage Questions

- Do you have any other medical/safety issues you want us to know about?
 - What meds do you take?
 - What happens when you miss the 1st dose? The 2nd? So on?
 - Be sure to get doctor/prescriber's name and contact info if possible-this can help get them meds in jail
- If they have anything going on that is a threat to their safety (medical or otherwise), then that person needs to be highlighted as HIGH PRIORITY for followup
- Do you need help being bailed out? (Sometimes arrestees have their own pre-arranged jail support set up.)
 - If yes - how would you feel if arrestees with a more urgent need were bonded out before you?

- **Contact Information**

- What is your phone number, email?
- Who can we contact for you?
 - What can we tell them?
 - Anything we should not tell them?
- How do we verify it's them? Just the number, email, or a question like name of first pet? (make sure they can RECEIVE messages – numbers and emails can be spoofed)
- Anyone we should not talk to? What to say? (e.g. "I don't have any info about that person")
- Get physical description of arrestee & anyone they're in with so we know who to look for when they're released and to make sure everyone is accounted for

• If You Have Time

- Once you have the crucial info, it becomes a more organic conversation. See what they want to talk about!
- I might have to hang up if I get another call, but call me back later, ok?
- In case the Jail Support number is blocked by the jail, give backup numbers for them to call back.
 - Or they can call a friend and have the friend call us.
 - A volunteer could also give out their number as a backup--but use caution.
- Reassure and explain the whole process
 - Explain how the process works. Don't know? Ask other volunteers!
 - We are going to do everything we reasonably can to get you out and support you through this process. (not "we will get you out"--no false promises)

- **If You Have Time**

- Bail bondsmen are terrible and you have to give up some rights. Usually we discourage going that route; they should consider other options to get the full bond paid!
- Follow up with jail support or a similar group after release
 - If they want to talk about their rights being violated, tell them to follow up afterwards try to connect them with lawyers and others to fight for their rights
- Any info you need me to get? (e.g. phone numbers for folks outside of jail, look on jail web sites for court dates, etc.)

