



Seguro Project Chatbot

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24/7 help for women in situations of DV

When I heard the Seguro Project needed a conversation designer to help them build a chatbot helpline for women, I was immediately interested.

I wanted to use my UX chops to help people, and the whole team was so amazing and passionate! I found the work energizing from start to finish.

Problem Statement

Our biggest issue was figuring out how to serve the needs of all our users, or at least as many of them as we could.

We knew even before the research phase that people in situations of DV sometimes want to leave, but others aren't ready yet and need other forms of support.

I was excited, because I knew the possibilities of chatbots were perfect for tackling this multiplicitous task!

USER RESEARCH

Seguro's research survey consisted of 8 qualitative questions around their participation with government websites, information and community engagement; 6 quantitative questions related to demographics. In addition 8 quantitative questions relating to their involvement with the government and community.

PAIN POINTS:



Overwhelming

"There is quite a bit to sift through."

- respondent #6



Elusive

"Search and navigation functions were not great. It isn't clear on how to find individual departments."

-respondent #9



Muddled

"Be concise, less babble."

-respondent #30



Chaotic

"It is complicated, bureaucratic, confusing and not user friendly."

-Laurin



Inefficient

"Many times the intuitive place I went to did not lead to the information I needed."

-Nancy



Time Cryptic

"Want clear and directive information. There is old stuff and new stuff."

-Meghan

User Needs

Our survey also told us a bit about what users are seeking when they access DV resources. We mapped those needs below.



Mental Health

The toll on victims mental state is high throughout the abuse journey



Seek to "Get Out"

The process is broad, complex and unique to each personal experience. These are key themes we noted at this stage



Unsure Cases

Reaching people who haven't yet determined to "get out" is complicated. How do they safely get relevant information to make informed choices



Compassion

Victims seek compensation from family, friends, community, social workers, lawyers, etc



Information

In need of relevant, discreet, location-specific, situation specific



Escape Options

Physical and legal



A Path Forward

Resources and hope in stability of food, job, children, visas, money, etc

Building an MVP with Microsoft's PVA tools

Our priorities were:

- Helping those in emergencies access help immediately
- Giving support to those who weren't ready to leave their situations
- Building trust as a foundation for future help

I accomplished this by:

- Creating a bot persona
- Establishing a style guide for the bot's voice
- Designing filters to help the bot figure out what a user needs

Bot persona

With those core needs crystallized, I came up with a bot persona that would work for all use cases.

My idea was a friendly therapist; someone you can trust with private information but who puts you at ease at the same time. She would be empathic and informed about users' options.

This persona, who I named Andrea after my own therapist, would help guide and support women through their experiences and offer the help they need in the moment.



Visualization of “Andrea.”

Voice and tone

The voice for this bot is supportive and empathetic, like a therapist. The bot doesn't push users to move forward before they're ready, unless they're in immediate danger. It asks clear, specific questions to help people figure out what they need without overwhelm. Above all, it's someone the user can trust.

The bot's tone can shift from informative, therapeutic, or firm. That last one is for emergencies, and it's used to strongly encourage users who say they're in danger to call 911.

Informative: Presents requested information simply. As concise as possible, with no jargon.

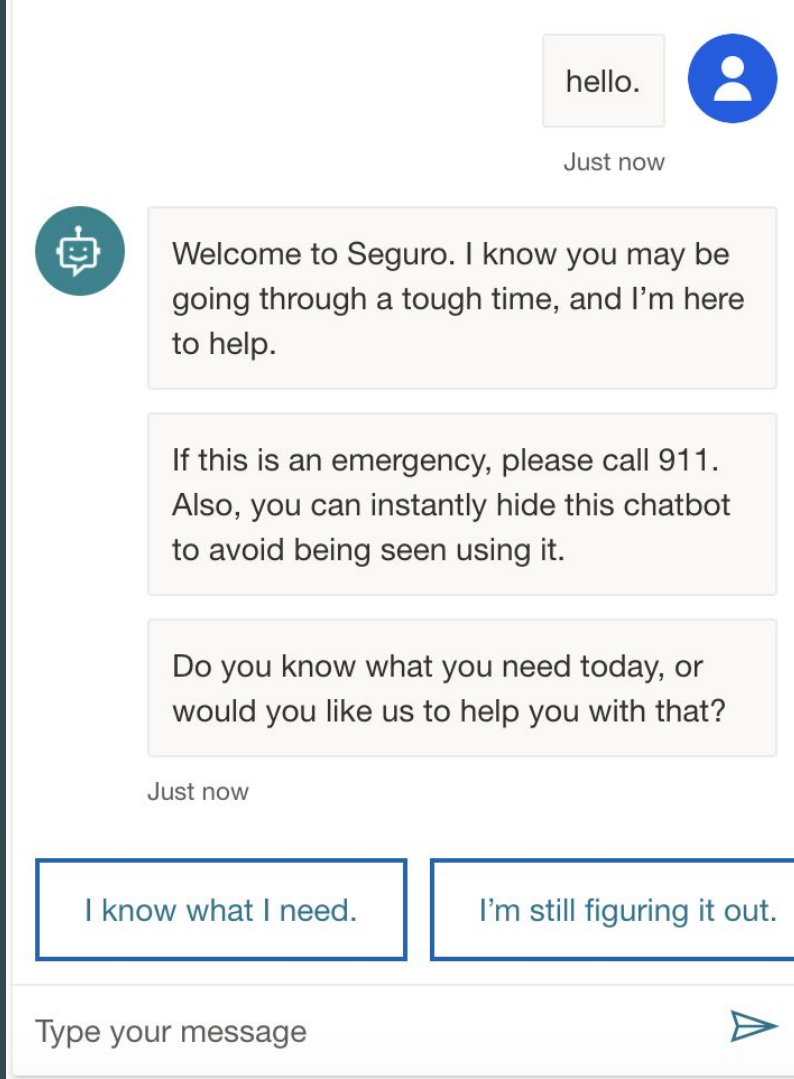
Therapeutic: Invites the user to open up and share. Validates what they're feeling.

Firm: Informs the user their situation is serious enough that they need to call 911. Only for when the user is in physical danger.

Conversation Opener

This was the very beginning of the conversation. I made sure that in a limited amount of space the bot is able to:

- Express empathy
- Filter for emergencies (legally, we must immediately direct them to 911 when they are in danger)
- Filter more generally for whether a user needs specific assistance, or just needs to talk.



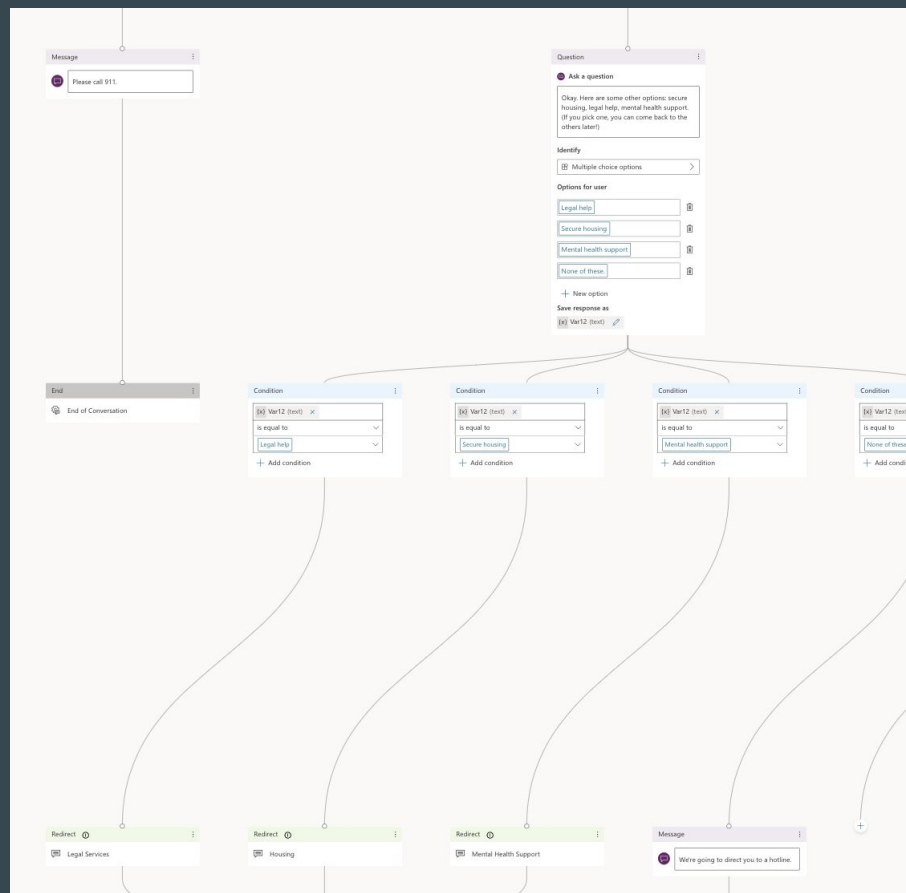
The screenshot shows a chatbot conversation. At the top right, a user profile icon is next to a text box containing "hello." with a timestamp of "Just now". Below this, a chatbot icon (a blue circle with a white robot head) is next to a text box containing "Welcome to Seguro. I know you may be going through a tough time, and I'm here to help." Below that, another text box contains "If this is an emergency, please call 911. Also, you can instantly hide this chatbot to avoid being seen using it." Below that, a third text box contains "Do you know what you need today, or would you like us to help you with that?" with a timestamp of "Just now". At the bottom, there are two buttons: "I know what I need." and "I'm still figuring it out." Below the buttons is a text input field with the placeholder "Type your message" and a blue paper plane icon on the right.

Conversation architecture

From there, our prior research and my content strategy led to three main objectives for the bot:

- Asking questions that lead to other resources we can offer (shelter for a night, housing lawyers, etc.).
- Making it easy change the subject—users are able to request another topic at any time.
- Creating space for users who don't know what they want to share their feelings and figure things out on their own.


That last point is key! Many people going through DV just need to talk to someone about their experiences until they're ready to act.



Safety and Privacy

I ensured safety by coming up with a huge list of trigger phrases that were related to emergency situations, as well as triggers for other subjects to make the bot more efficient. At the time, this was the best way to process user generated text.

We also kept no data on conversation sessions, to ensure sensitive information cannot be retrieved by anyone going through a user's phone.

Trigger phrases	Status	Errors	Editing
(52) Good afternoon	Always on	⊗ 4	
(11) child custody court hearing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On	⊗ 1	
(7) i need a safe place for my...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On	⊗ 1	
(15) 5150	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On	⊗ 1	
(6) how do i pay for a therapist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On		
(12) will you talk to me	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On		
(11) child custody hearing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On		
(10) locked out of the house	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On		
(10) has a gun	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On		
(4) When are you closed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On		
(5) Are there any stores aroun...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On		
(5) Buy items	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On		
(5) What is the best product f...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On		
(65) Talk to agent	Always on		

Demo and Next Steps

I presented my MVP bot to a team at Microsoft, leading to a partnership with the company! We now have Microsoft's support as we seek new opportunities to bring this bot to those who need it. I took full advantage of Microsoft's tools after we were given wider access to their PVA technology.

Seguro has been branching out into non-English markets due to the lack of resources in other languages.

We hope to incorporate LLMs into the bot very soon!

Test it out

My bot has been translated into Spanish as Seguro has pivoted to filling the gap in non-English resources for women in DV situations.

Most recently, we adapted the bot to fit the needs of Paz Para La Mujer (Peace For Women), a domestic violence advocacy group based in Puerto Rico. It's one of their primary sources of outreach now!

You can test the bot at:
<https://seguroproject.org/demo>

Chat with our bot

The screenshot shows a chat window titled "spanish bot 1". At the top right, there is a text input field containing "hello" and a blue circular profile icon. Below this, the text "Just now" indicates the time of the message. The main chat area contains a blue circular profile icon on the left and a text message on the right: "Hola, este es el contestador automático de Paz para la Mujer. Estamos aquí para ayudarte conectar con la organización de servicio más adecuada; ¿puedes contarme que situación tienes?". Below the message is a text input field containing "Si desea hablar con un agente humano, dígamelo en cualquier momento.". Further down is another text input field containing "¿En qué puedo ayudarle hoy?". Below this, the text "Just now" is displayed. At the bottom of the chat area, there are two buttons: "Fui víctima de una agresión sexual" and "Estoy teniendo". The bottom of the chat window features a text input field with the placeholder "Type your message" and a blue paper plane icon on the right.