

# Who is a Stalker?

A stalker can be an intimate partner, friend, coworker, neighbor, acquaintance, or stranger.



The most commonly experienced stalking tactic was the leaving of repeated unwanted telephone calls, voicemails, or text messages.

(NIPSVS: 2016/17 Summary Report)

# Effects of Stalking

Being stalked can cause extreme emotional and physical stress reactions. You may experience:

- Intense feelings of fear or anger
- Increased anger or irritability
- Decreased energy level or exhaustion
- Indecision or difficulty concentrating
- Withdrawal from family, friends or activities
- Major changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- Frequent sadness or crying
- Feelings of powerlessness or depression

You are not alone.  
Help is available. Contact your local rape crisis or domestic violence program, listed on this brochure, for more information and support.

Services for sexual assault survivors are still available during this next phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Local rape crisis centers, MCASA, and MNADV are open – we are here for you.

## RAPE CRISIS and DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS

**Allegany**  
Family Crisis Resource Center  
301-759-9244

**Anne Arundel**  
YWCA  
410-222-6800

**Baltimore City**  
House of Ruth Maryland  
410-889-7884

TurnAround, Inc.  
443-279-0379

**Baltimore County**  
Springboard Community Services  
410-828-6390

Family Crisis Center of  
Baltimore County  
410-828-6390

TurnAround, Inc.  
443-279-0379

**Calvert**  
Calvert Center for Change  
1-877-467-5628

**Caroline, Dorchester, Kent,  
Queen Anne's, Talbot**  
For All Seasons, Inc.  
410-820-5600  
toll-free: 1-800-310-7273

Mid-Shore Council on  
Family Violence  
1-800-927-4673

**Carroll**  
Springboard Community Services  
443-865-8031

Rape Crisis Intervention Service  
410-857-7322

**Cecil**  
The Bridge  
410-996-0333

**Charles**  
Center for Abused Persons  
301-645-3336

## SPECIALIZED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINES

**Adelante Familia at  
House of Ruth Maryland  
(Hispanic/Latino)**  
410-889-7884, oprima 8

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (M-F, 9AM-5PM)

**Maryland Coalition Against  
Sexual Assault (MCASA)**  
www.mcasa.org  
301-328-7023

**Frederick**  
Heartly House  
301-662-8800

**Garrett**  
Dove Center  
301-334-9000  
toll-free: 1-800-656-HOPE  
(4673)

**Harford**  
Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse  
Resource Center (SARC)  
410-836-8430

**Howard**  
HopeWorks  
410-997-2272  
toll-free: 1-800-752-0191

**Montgomery**  
Abused Persons Program  
240-777-4210

Victim Assistance and Sexual  
Assault Program (VASAP)  
240-777-4357

**Prince George's**  
Domestic Violence and Sexual  
Assault Center at UM Capital  
Region Medical Center  
240-677-2337

Community Crisis Services  
301-731-1203

**St. Mary's**  
Southern Maryland Center for  
Family Advocacy  
240-925-0084

**Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester**  
Life Crisis Center  
410-749-HELP (4357)

**Washington**  
CASA, Inc.  
301-739-8975

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5/2023

# Stalking

information for victims

## Options for Safety When You Are Being Stalked



**MCASA**  
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault

**mnadv**  
Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence

# What is Stalking?

In Maryland, stalking is a crime and is legally defined as a malicious pattern of approaching or pursuing someone in order to make the person feel afraid that they or someone else will suffer serious bodily injury, assault, rape or sexual offense, false imprisonment or death, or the stalker intends to cause, knows, or should know that such conduct will cause serious emotional distress to another person. Criminal Law §3-802.


Stalking is not normal behavior.  
It is never your fault.


A stalker may engage in any of the following behaviors:

- Watching, following, approaching or assaulting you at home, work, or in a public place
- Making threatening calls, hang-ups, or sending threatening texts
- Sending hate mail, e-mail, or social media messages
- Using social media websites to track or harass
- Repeatedly sending unwanted love notes or gifts
- Breaking into or vandalizing your property or going through your garbage
- Using surveillance such as a private detective, cameras, or tapping your phone
- Using tracking devices to track another's physical location without the person's knowledge or consent
- Installing spyware or GPS tracking software on your computer or cell phone
- Contacting your friends or family to gain information or spread rumors about you


# If you are experiencing stalking, you have options


IF YOU ARE BEING STALKED, IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT. PEOPLE WHO USE HARASSING, CONTROLLING, AND ABUSIVE BEHAVIORS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN ACTIONS.

 Phone numbers for agencies that can help you are listed on this brochure. Trained advocates can offer support, help you take steps to increase your safety, and discuss your legal options.


 You can receive support to develop a **SAFETY PLAN**, which is a tool to help victims of stalking or abuse decrease their risk of harm. Safety plans take multiple factors into consideration, including what is known about the stalker, identifying people who can help, how to improve one's environmental and technological safety, and what to do in various emergency scenarios.

- The **Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI)** can help you with creating a safety plan: **(301) 565-2277**

 There are laws against stalking in Maryland. You can contact the **POLICE** to report the crime; an advocate can discuss this process with you. Take threats from the stalker seriously.

 Consider keeping an **INCIDENT LOG**. Document anything that makes you feel scared or uncomfortable, no matter how seemingly small. Documentation can show a pattern of behavior, which can be useful if reporting to law enforcement.

- Documentation could include harassing voice mails, screenshots of text messages, e-mails or online messages, harassing use of internet, social media websites and applications, photos, videos, and information regarding the individual's use of a tracking device.

 Stalking behavior is inappropriate. You do not owe the stalker any communication. Clearly and firmly tell the person to **STOP CONTACTING YOU** and document it in your incident log. Once you have communicated your boundaries, it is typically safer to **not contact or respond to the stalker again**. You only have to say "No" once.

IF AT ANY TIME YOU FEEL YOU ARE IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, CALL 911.



## PEACE AND PROTECTIVE ORDERS

In Maryland, a peace or protective order can require a stalker to refrain from threatening or committing abuse, end all contact with the victim, and stay away from the victim's home, place of employment, or school. Before either order is granted, you must file for a temporary order, which will be in effect until a final hearing.

- If the stalker is someone you had a sexual relationship with in the past year, your current or former spouse, parent of your child, a relative, an intimate partner that you lived with for at least 90 days in the past year, a person who committed a sexual assault against you in the past six months, or if you are an adult who lacks the ability to take care of your daily needs, you can file a petition in the District or Circuit Court for a **PROTECTIVE ORDER**, which generally lasts up to 12 months.
- If your relationship to the stalker does not fall under the protective order categories listed above (for example, the stalker is an acquaintance, you dated but did not have sex, or the stalker is a stranger) **AND** at least one incident has occurred within the last 30 days, you can file with the District Court for a **PEACE ORDER**, which generally lasts up to six months.
  - Some of the acts for which a peace order may be granted include: harassing acts through the use of a telephone, computer or other electronic means; using any electronic device to track, observe and capture a person's private areas and location without that person's consent.

If you are interested in a peace or protective order, it's important to speak with an attorney. Call the **Sexual Assault Legal Institute** at **(301) 565-2277**; SALI can help you decide if a peace order or protective order is more appropriate.

# Steps that can increase your safety

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING TIPS TO INCREASE YOUR OPTIONS FOR SAFETY.

## RELY ON TRUSTED PEOPLE

- Inform roommates, coworkers, friends, and family about the stalking and seek their support.
- Let them know your safety is a concern, and to not have contact with the stalker.
- Let security staff know at your school, work, or residence about your concerns.

## CONSIDER GETTING A NEW PHONE NUMBER

- Your old phone number can be used to track calls and messages for documentation.

## TURN OFF LOCATION SERVICES

- Check your phone, tablet, and laptop location settings and be aware of GPS tracking applications that may have been unknowingly installed on your cell phone.
- Social media accounts have tracking functions - check to see if they are on and turn them off. Keep in mind that someone else may have turned on the tracking without you knowing.
- Take photos of any tracking devices you find and the location in which you found the device.

## PROTECT YOUR TECHNOLOGY

- Keep passwords private, and change any that may have been compromised.
- Use anti-virus and anti-spyware software. Update both often and make sure your firewall is installed and running.

## PRESERVE PRIVACY

- Do a web search for your full name; request that sites remove your personal information.
- Avoid personal information such as your real name, birthday or location for online accounts.
- Request your family and friends not tag you or the location on pictures they are posting.



# Cyberstalking

APPROXIMATELY 1 IN 4 STALKING VICTIMS REPORTED SOME FORM OF CYBERSTALKING.<sup>1</sup>

**CYBERSTALKING** resembles physical stalking in that it includes the unwanted pursuit, harassment, or contact of others via electronic means.

A cyberstalker may use technology to engage in the following behaviors:

- Sending threatening text messages, instant messages, or emails.
- Using social media networking sites to track or harass.
- Hacking your social media accounts, changing your passwords, or impersonating you online.
- Using tracking devices to track your movement and location.
- Building a fake social media profile.
- Posing as another, including a fictitious person in an electronic communication.

## IF YOU ARE BEING STALKED ONLINE...

- Block the stalker on social media.
- Set all social media profiles to private, and block all unwanted messages or suspicious friend and follow requests online.
- Consider contacting your email provider to see if they can block an email address.
- Do a web search for your full name; request that sites remove your personal information.

<sup>1</sup> Baum, K., Catalano, S., Rand, M. & Rose, K. (2009). Stalking victimization in the United States. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report National Crime Victimization Survey. U.S. Justice Department. <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=1211>