

How Common is Stalking?



Who is a Stalker?

A stalker can be an intimate partner, friend, coworker, neighbor, acquaintance, or stranger. 43.4% of female victims and 32.4% of male victims are stalked by an intimate partner.

(NISVS: 2016/17 Summary Report)

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

Effects of Stalking

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

- Intense feelings of fear or anger
- Increased 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

To learn more about stalking and its impact, visit SPARC: <https://www.stalkingawareness.org>

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.

RAPE CRISIS and DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS

Allegany Family Crisis Resource Center 301-759-9244	Charles Center for Abused Persons 301-645-3336
Anne Arundel YWCA of Annapolis Et Anne Arundel County 410-222-6800	Frederick Heartly House 301-662-8800
Baltimore City House of Ruth Maryland 410-889-7884	Garrett Dove Center 301-334-9000 Toll-free: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
TurnAround, Inc. 443-279-0379	Harford Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Center (SARC) 410-836-8430
Baltimore County Springboard Community Services 410-828-6390	Howard HopeWorks of Howard County 410-997-2272
Family Crisis Center of Baltimore County 410-828-6390	Montgomery Abused Persons Program 240-777-4210
TurnAround, Inc. 443-279-0379	Trauma Services 240-777-4673
Calvert Calvert Center for Change 1-877-467-5628	Prince George's Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Center at UM Capital Region Medical Center 240-677-2337
Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot For All Seasons, Inc. 410-820-5600 Para Español: 410-829-6143	Community Crisis Services 301-731-1203
Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence 1-800-927-4673	St. Mary's Southern Maryland Center for Family Advocacy 240-925-0084
Carroll Springboard Community Services 443-865-8031	Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester Life Crisis Center 410-749-HELP (4357)
CARE Healing Center 410-857-7322	Washington CASA, Inc. 301-739-8975 (Hearing impaired: 711)
Cecil The Bridge 410-996-0333	

SPECIALIZED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINES

CHANA (Jewish) 410-234-0030	StrongHearts Native Helpline 844-7NATIVE (762-8483)
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (M-F, 9AM-5PM)

Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) www.mcasa.org 301-328-7023	Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) www.mnadv.org 301-429-3601
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Stalking

information for victims

Options for Safety When You Are Being Stalked



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. This can include actions that occur in person, by electronic communication, or through the use of a device that can pinpoint or track the location of another without the person's knowledge or consent (Criminal Law §3-802). Stalking and other acts of sexual violence are a form of oppression, as well as a crimes. It is an abuse of power that uses violence and coercion to control, silence, and deny people their autonomy and dignity. Sexual violence thrives when people who have power in society use that power to commit violence against vulnerable individuals. We must all work together to end these forms of violence.

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 3 IN 4 STALKING VICTIMS REPORTED SOME FORM OF CYBERSTALKING.¹

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.

1. NISVS: 2016/17 Summary Report