

What is Stalking?

In Maryland, stalking is a crime. It is legally defined as "a malicious course of conduct that includes approaching or pursuing another where the person intends to place or knows or reasonably should have known the conduct would place another in reasonable fear of suffering serious bodily injury, assault, rape or sexual offense, false imprisonment, or death, or that a third person likely will suffer any of the acts listed." *Criminal Law §3-802*

 **1 in 12** women & **1 in 45** men
are stalked during some point in their lifetime 

In most cases, stalkers aren't strangers, but someone you know. Usually it's a current or former abusive partner, and stalking is another way they assert power and control in a relationship. Stalking is not normal behavior and is not part of a healthy relationship.

Stalking is never your fault and it is not caused by something you have done. Stalking is not normal behavior.

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 instant messages
- Using social media 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
- Installing spyware or GPS tracking software on your computer or cell phone
- Contacting your friends or family to gain information about you

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS

You are not alone. Contact your local domestic violence program anytime, 24/7, for more information and support. Calls are free and confidential.

ALLEGANY COUNTY
Hotline 301-759-9244
TTY 301-759-9244

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
Hotline 410-222-6800

BALTIMORE CITY
Hotline 410-889-7884
TTY 410-889-0047
Hotline 443-279-0379

BALTIMORE COUNTY
Hotline 410-828-6390

CALVERT COUNTY
Hotline 410-535-1121

CARROLL COUNTY
Hotline 443-865-8031

CAROLINE, KENT, DORCHESTER, QUEEN ANNE'S, & TALBOT COUNTIES
Hotline 1-800-927-4673

CECIL COUNTY
Hotline 410-996-0333

CHARLES COUNTY
Hotline 301-645-3336

FREDERICK COUNTY
Hotline 301-662-8800
TTY 301-662-1565

GARRETT COUNTY
Hotline 301-334-9000

HARFORD COUNTY
Hotline 410-836-8430

HOWARD COUNTY
Hotline 410-997-2272

MONTGOMERY COUNTY
Hotline 240-777-4673
TTY 240-777-4850

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
Hotline 301-731-1203

ST. MARY'S COUNTY
Hotline 301-863-6661

SOMERSET, WICOMICO & WORCESTER COUNTIES
Hotline 410-749-4357 OR
410-641-4357

WASHINGTON COUNTY
Hotline 301-739-8975
TTY 301-739-1012

Statewide Helpline
1-800-MD HELPS
(1-800-634-3577)

Monday - Friday, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm



Maryland Network
Against Domestic Violence
WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SAFER FUTURE

CROSSING THE LINE

WHEN CARING BECOMES CONTROLLING



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WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT A STALKER?



DOCUMENT THE ABUSE

Download the **Stalking Incident Log**, free at www.mnadv.org/stalkinglog. It's recommended to **record all communication** with and from the stalker, and be sure to keep all harassing voice mails, texts, e-mails, and online messages. You can take a **screen shot** of e-mails and online messages using the Print Screen button on your computer and paste them into a Word document to save.

Take photos of destroyed property and/or personal injuries. Make sure you **save all of your documentation**, especially police reports and legal documents. **Make copies** of all of these materials and keep in a safe, secure place, or give the copies to someone you trust.



ASK FOR HELP

Phone numbers for agencies that can help you are listed in this brochure. **Trained hotline advocates** can offer support, plans for safety, and explore your legal options.

If you feel comfortable, **tell someone** what is going on. Show them pictures of the stalker so they can notify you if they see them. Remember, **you do not have to handle the situation alone**.



FILE A POLICE REPORT

Give police a copy of your incident log with all dates and times. If they ask for other documentation, be sure to **keep the originals** for yourself. You might want to use a P.O. Box to help maintain privacy, as your report may become public record.



OBTAIN A PEACE OR PROTECTIVE ORDER

These are court orders you can get with or without a lawyer, which restrict the stalker's behavior, and may **grant certain protections to make you safer**. In Maryland, a peace or protective order can require a stalker to refrain from threatening or committing abuse, end all contact with you and stay away from your home, place of employment, or school. Before either order is granted, you must file for a temporary order.

Peace or protective orders give police a greater ability to respond and potentially arrest your stalker if they violate it. Many survivors find peace and protective orders to be helpful, but **engaging in a court process could provoke your stalker**. If this happens, other safety measures become even more important, such as more specific-safety planning or shelter. You know your situation and what will make you safer. **Contact an agency listed in this brochure to discuss planning for your safety**.

TIPS FOR STAYING SAFER

Below are some options for staying safer. Remember, you get to decide what to do. Only you know what is best for your situation.



ON THE PHONE

- Get a new phone and only give the number to people you trust
- Keep your old phone to document the stalker's calls and/or texts.
- Research your privacy settings on your phone and apps that track your location.
- Turn off location services for phone apps under Settings → Privacy → Location Services.
- Report threatening calls to your phone company and the police.



ON THE COMPUTER

- Many social media platforms have tracking functions. Check to see if they are on. Keep in mind that someone else may have turned on the tracking without your knowing.

- It is possible that your personal computer has been hacked or hijacked. Find a safe computer at a friend's, at work, or at a library.
- Purchase anti-virus and anti-spyware for extra protection. There are many low-cost options on the market.
- Use strong, complex passwords Use a different password for each account. Avoid personal information such as your name, birthday, or location. You can also purchase programs like Last Pass and Keeper to add extra password protection.
- Do a web search for your information. If you find information about yourself online that you don't want public, you can request that the sites remove the information.
- Be aware of what you post and share online. Even if you delete something, it can stay online forever.



WHILE AT HOME

- Apply for a free, confidential mail-forwarding service, like the Maryland Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program, which helps you keep your address confidential. Contact a local domestic violence agency listed in this brochure to learn more and apply.
- Install a security system, home camera, or motion detection lights.
- Change the locks on your home or car and keep your doors and windows locked at all times.

OTHER OPTIONS FOR STAYING SAFER

- Try not to communicate with the stalker. There is often no way to "reason," "talk sense into," or "clarify things" with a stalker. It's usually best to never have contact. Stalkers often see the slightest response as encouragement.
- Have your cell phone with you at all times. Call 911 immediately if you are being followed and go to a public place.
- Pack an emergency bag with extra clothing, money, critical phone numbers/addresses, copies of important papers, and valuables in case you need to get away quickly, and keep in a safe, secure place.