

# Who is a Stalker?

A stalker can be an intimate partner, friend, coworker or a neighbor. One-third of the stalkers who commit violent acts, such as sexual assault and murder, were intimate partners.



Most often, a stalker is male. Stalkers are usually not "psychotic." Their primary motivation is anger, hostility and a desire to control their victim.

# What effects can Stalking have on you?

Being stalked causes 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 do not have to be 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

Help is available 24/7. Calls are free and always confidential.

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

**Anne Arundel**  
Sexual Assault Crisis Center  
410-222-7273

**YWCA Domestic Violence Services**  
410-222-6800

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

**TurnAround**  
410-828-6390

**Baltimore County**  
Family and Children's Services  
410-828-6390

**Family Crisis Center**  
410-828-6390

**TurnAround**  
410-828-6390

**Calvert**  
Crisis Intervention Center  
410-535-1121, 301-855-1075

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

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

**Carroll**  
Family and Children's Services  
410-857-0077

**Rape Crisis Intervention Service**  
410-857-7322

## SPECIALIZED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINES

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

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA)**  
www.mcasa.org  
800-983-7273

**Cecil**  
Domestic Violence/Rape Crisis Center  
410-996-0333

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

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

**Garrett**  
Dove Center  
301-334-9000

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

**Howard**  
Domestic Violence Center  
410-997-2272

**Montgomery**  
Abused Persons Program  
240-777-4195

**Sexual Assault Program**  
240-777-4357

**Prince George's**  
Family Crisis Center  
301-731-1203

**Sexual Assault Center**  
301-618-3154

**St. Mary's**  
Walden-Sierra  
301-863-6661

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

**Washington**  
CASA  
301-739-8975

**CHANA (Jewish)**  
800-991-0023

**Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV)**  
www.mnadv.org  
800-MDHELPS (634-3577)

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# Stalking

## a guide for victims

### How to Find Safety When You Are Being Stalked



# What is Stalking?

In Maryland, stalking is a crime and is legally defined as a persistent 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. Criminal Law §3-802.



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 networking 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
- Installing spyware or GPS tracking software on your computer or cell phone
- Contacting your friends or family to gain information about you



# What can you do about a Stalker?



## DOCUMENT THE ABUSE

Keep an incident log. Visit [www.mcasa.org/incident-log](http://www.mcasa.org/incident-log) to download an incident log. Record all communication with and from the stalker in your incident log. 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 give the copies to someone you trust for safe keeping.



## CALL THE POLICE TO FILE A 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. Use a P.O. Box address to help maintain privacy, as your report may become public record.



## OBTAIN A PEACE OR PROTECTIVE ORDER

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 up to seven days before the court hearing.

If the stalker is your current or former spouse, parent of your child, or an intimate partner or relative that you lived with for more than 90 days in the past year, you can file a petition in the District or Circuit Court for a protective order, which can last up to 12 months and can possibly be extended.

If the stalker is someone—a stranger, acquaintance, or dating partner—that you haven't lived with (or that you have lived



with for less than 90 days in the past year) AND at least one incident has occurred within the last 30 days, you can file a petition in District Court for a peace order, which can last up to six months and possibly be extended for another six months.



## ASK FOR HELP

Phone numbers for agencies that can help you are listed on this brochure. Trained hotline counselors can offer support, tell you how to stay safe and discuss your legal options. Also be sure to tell your family, friends, neighbors and employer. Show them pictures of the stalker so they can notify you if they see him/her. Remember, you do not have to handle the situation alone.



## DO NOT TALK TO A STALKER

There is no way to "reason," "talk sense into" or "clarify things" with a stalker. Say "NO" just once, document it in your incident log and never talk to him/her again. Don't bother pleading to be left alone and never return items to the stalker. It's best to never have any contact with a stalker — stalkers often see the slightest response as encouragement.

# How can you stay safe?



## ON THE PHONE

- Get an unlisted phone line and keep it confidential. Your old phone number can be used to track calls and messages for documentation.
- Turn off Location Finder under Settings on your cell phone and be aware of GPS tracking applications that may be installed on your cell phone.
- Report threatening calls to the phone company and police.
- If the stalker calls from an unknown number, the phone company can trace the call. Simply hang up, lift the receiver, listen for a dial tone and then press \*57 or dial 1157 on a rotary phone. An announcement will tell you the call was traced and give you further instructions. You will not receive the number from the phone company. The results of a successful trace will only be provided to the police or other legal authorities.
- If you receive calls from a specific number, enter it into a reverse directory online to find out who is calling you. If the calls are being received on a landline, the phone company can block the number.



## ON THE COMPUTER

- Twitter, Facebook and other social media have tracking functions - check to see if it's on and turn it off. Keep in mind that someone else may have turned on the tracking without you knowing.
- It is possible that your personal computer has been hacked or hijacked. Find a safe computer at a friend's, work, library or college.
- Use anti-virus and anti-spyware software. Update both often and make sure your firewall is installed and running.
- Use strong passwords and avoid personal information such as your real name, birthday or location for online accounts.
- NEVER give anyone access to your online accounts.
- Do a web search for your full name. Request that sites remove your personal information.
- Be careful what information you share online. Even if you delete something, it can stay online forever.



- When using social media, only friend people you know and trust.
- Block any unwanted instant messages or social media friend requests.
- If you are being stalked online, report it to your local law enforcement agency.



## WHILE AT HOME

- Try to keep your home address secure by obtaining a P.O. Box.
- Change the locks on your home or car.
- Install outside motion detectors with light bulbs out of reach.
- Install a security system.
- Keep your doors and windows locked at all times.

## ALSO, DON'T FORGET TO . . .

- Have your cell phone with you at all times. Call 911 immediately if you are being followed and go to a busy place. DO NOT go home.
- Park in well-lit areas, be aware of your surroundings and avoid walking alone.
- 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.
- Consider temporarily relocating and in extreme cases, move away from the area.