

# 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

In most counties, help is available 24/7. Calls are free and

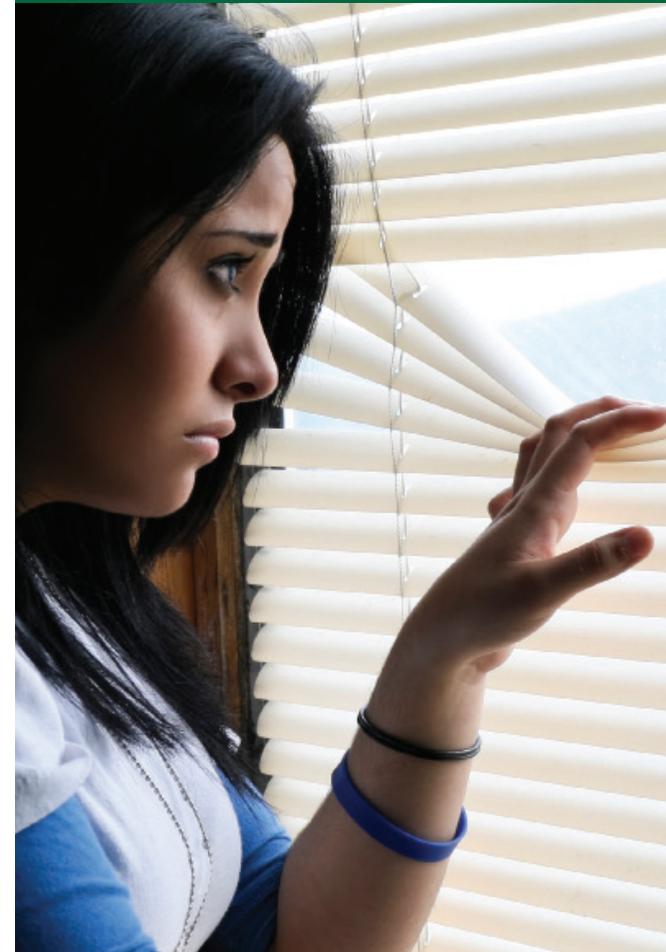
<b>Allegany</b> Family Crisis Resource Center 301-759-9244	<b>Charles</b> Center for Abused Persons 301-645-3336
<b>Anne Arundel</b> YWCA of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County 410-222-RAPE (7273)	<b>Frederick</b> Heartly House 301-662-8800
<b>Baltimore City</b> House of Ruth Maryland 410-889-7884	<b>Garrett</b> Dove Center 301-334-9000 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
<b>TurnAround, Inc.</b> 443-279-0379	<b>Harford</b> Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Center (SARC) 410-836-8430
<b>Baltimore County</b> Family and Children's Services 410-828-6390	<b>Howard</b> HopeWorks 410-997-2272, 1-800-752-0191
<b>Family Crisis Center</b> 410-828-6390	<b>Montgomery</b> Abused Persons Program 240-777-4000
<b>TurnAround, Inc.</b> 443-279-0379	<b>Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP)</b> 240-777-4357
<b>Calvert</b> Crisis Intervention Center 410-535-1121, 301-855-1075	<b>Prince George's</b> Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Center, Dimensions Healthcare 301-618-3154
<b>Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot</b> For All Seasons 410-820-5600 toll free 1-800-310-7273	<b>Family Crisis Center</b> 301-731-1203
<b>Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence</b> 800-927-4673	<b>St. Mary's</b> Walden-Sierra 301-863-6661
<b>Carroll</b> Family and Children's Services 443-865-8031	<b>Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester</b> Life Crisis Center 410-749-HELP4357
<b>Rape Crisis Intervention Service</b> 410-857-7322	<b>Washington</b> CASA 301-739-8975
<b>Cecil</b> Domestic Violence/Rape Crisis Center 410-996-0333	
<b>SPECIALIZED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINES</b>	
<b>Adelante Familia at House of Ruth Maryland (Hispanic/Latino)</b> 410-889-7884	<b>CHANA (Jewish)</b> 410-234-0023
<b>ADDITIONAL RESOURCES</b>	
<b>Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA)</b> www.mcasa.org 301-328-7023	<b>Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV)</b> 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 and 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 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 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. You can also take screenshots of messages received on your phone or tablet.

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 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, 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. Note that a "sexual relationship" may include some forms of sexual assault.

If your relationship to the stalker does not fall under the



protective order categories listed above (for example, the stalker is an acquaintance, you're dating but not having 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.

Peace orders may also be granted for the following acts: harassing acts through the use of a telephone, computer or other electronic means; using any electronic device to observe and capture a person's private areas without that person's consent; and intentionally posting an image of a person's private areas or of a person engaged in a sexual act without that person's consent.

An attorney can help you decide if a peace order or protective order is more appropriate.



**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?



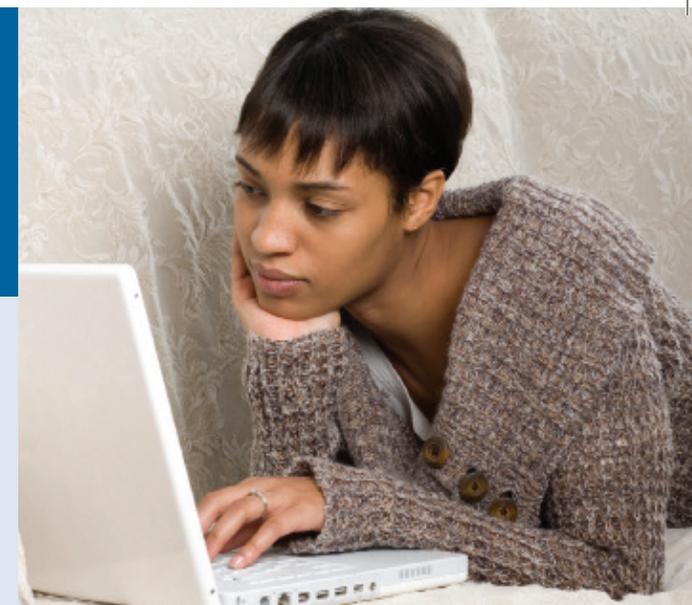
## ON THE PHONE

- 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 add 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.