

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*

In the United States,

 **1 in 6 women** &  **1 in 19 men**

are stalked at 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.

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 or hateful calls or messages.
- Using spoofing services to impersonate family or friends to contact you.
- Using social media, spyware, GPS, or tracking devices, often too small to detect, to stalk or harass.
- Repeatedly sending unwanted love notes or gifts.
- Breaking into or vandalizing your property or going through your garbage.
- Hacking into social media, email, banking sites, security camera, ride sharing apps, or any other accounts/apps.
- Contacting/ friending your friends or family online to gain information about you.

How to Find Help

24-Hour National Hotline: 1-866-799-SAFE (7233)

ALLEGANY COUNTY
Family Crisis Resource Center
301-759-9244

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
YWCA Domestic Violence Services
410-222-6800

BALTIMORE CITY
House of Ruth Maryland
410-889-7884

BALTIMORE COUNTY
County-wide Hotline
410-828-6390

CALVERT COUNTY
Calvert Center for Change
301-855-1075

**CAROLINE, KENT,
DORCHESTER, QUEEN
ANNE'S & TALBOT
COUNTIES**
Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence
1-800-927-4673

CARROLL COUNTY
Springboard Community Services
443-865-8031

CECIL COUNTY
The Bridge
410-996-0333

CHARLES COUNTY
Center for Abused Persons
301-645-3336

FREDERICK COUNTY
Heartly House, Inc.
301-662-8800

GARRETT COUNTY
Dove Center
301-334-9000

HARFORD COUNTY
Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Center (SARC)
410-836-8430

HOWARD COUNTY
HopeWorks of Howard County
410-997-2272

MONTGOMERY COUNTY
Montgomery County Trauma Services
240-777-4195

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
Community Crisis Services, Inc.
301-731-1203

ST. MARY'S COUNTY
Southern Maryland Center for Family Advocacy
301-373-4141

SOMERSET, WICOMICO & WORCESTER COUNTIES
Life Crisis Center, Inc.
410-749-4357

WASHINGTON COUNTY
CASA, Inc.
301-739-8975



Crossing the Line

WHEN CARING BECOMES CONTROLLING



What can you do about a stalker?

DOCUMENT THE ABUSE

Download the free **Stalking Incident Log**, at <https://www.mnadv.org/get-help/stalking>.



Document all communication and stalking behaviors, such as:

- Texts, instant messages, emails, & voicemails. Do not delete these.
- Location tracking or unrecognized login notifications.
- New apps on your device you did not download.
- Recordings from security cameras of stalker showing up.
- Duplicate social media accounts made by stalker to impersonate or gain information about survivor.
- Photos of unwanted gifts, destroyed property, or personal injuries.
- Letters sent to home or residence.

Take photos of destroyed property and/or personal injuries. Save all of your documentation, especially police reports and legal documents. Make copies of these materials. Keep in a secure place or give to a trusted person.

NOTE: All documentation could be used as legal evidence and could be shared with the stalker.



ASK FOR HELP

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 the 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.

A PEACE OR PROTECTIVE ORDER

These are court orders you can get with or without an attorney.

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.

Peace or protective orders give police a greater ability to respond and potentially arrest your stalker if they violate it.

Note that engaging in a court process could provoke your stalker. 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.

TECH SAFETY

- Do not click on links from unknown senders.
- Be wary of any devices gifted to you from stalker.
- Periodically check your app downloads.
- Research the safety and security settings on your device and turn off location services. Someone else may have turned on the tracking without your knowledge.
- Invest in anti-virus and or anti-spyware software to increase safety.
- Use strong, complex passwords and use a different password for each account. Avoid personal information such as your name, birthday, or location. Stalkers usually know the correct answer to security questions; be creative with your answers. Write down passwords and security questions and keep them stored in a safe space.
- Do a web search of your name. You can request that the sites remove information that you don't want public. Set your social media pages to private. Ask friends not to post photos of you online without your permission.

If you believe your device has been hacked:

- Get a new device (with a new phone number, if applicable).
- If unable to purchase a new device, back up the device and perform a factory reset.

REMEMBER: A Stalker does not need to have physical access to a device to hack it.

WHILE AT HOME

Apply for a free, confidential mail-forwarding service, like the Maryland "Safe at Home" Address Confidentiality Program, which helps keep your physical location private.

To learn more, go to:

- <https://sos.maryland.gov/ACP/Pages/default.aspx>
- Contact a local domestic violence agency listed in this brochure to apply.
- Request to have your address removed from websites. Install a security system, home camera, or motion detection lights. Use a strong and unique password for your security systems.
- Change the locks on your home or car, and keep your doors and windows locked at all times.

If possible, do not to communicate with the stalker. Tell them you do not want contact with them and document any further attempts to contact.

However, disengagement is not always the safest option and could cause the stalker to escalate stalking behaviors. Remember, you are the expert in your situation. Trust your instincts.

