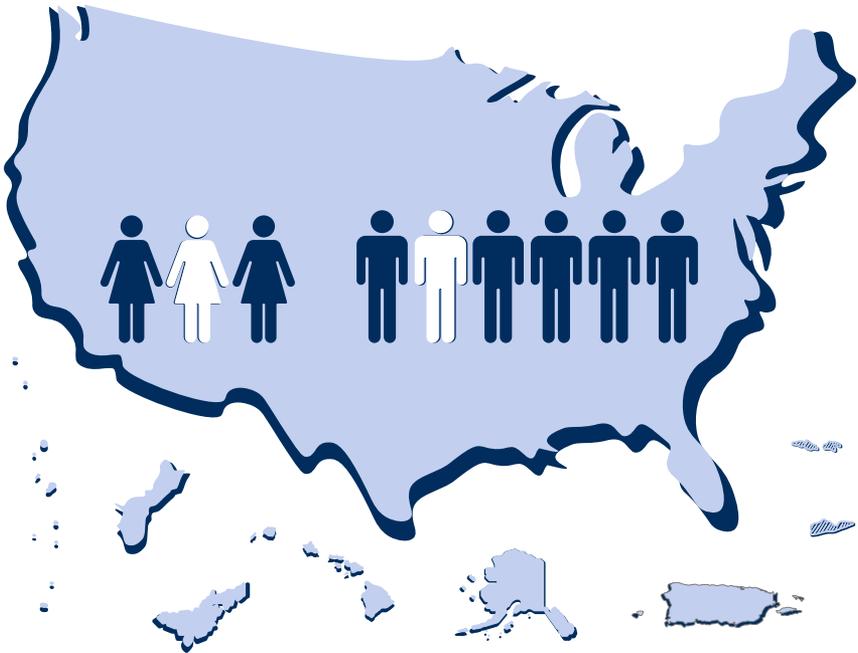


STALKING

A SHORT HANDBOOK FOR VICTIMS



**1 IN 3 WOMEN & 1 IN 6 MEN
EXPERIENCE STALKING AT SOME
POINT IN THEIR LIFETIMES.**

This project was supported by Grant No. 15JOVW-22-GK-03986-MUMU awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice.

The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

WHAT IS STALKING?

A pattern of behavior directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear and/or emotional distress.

**STALKING IS
CRIMINAL,
TRAUMATIC, AND
DANGEROUS.**



**STALKING IS
COMMON.**



Nearly 1 in 3 women
and 1 in 6 men are
stalked at some point
in their lifetime.

**STALKING OFTEN
ESCALATES
OVER TIME.**



**MOST VICTIMS
ARE STALKED
BY SOMEONE
THEY KNOW.**



**STALKERS USE
A VARIETY
OF TACTICS**

to watch, contact,
sabotage, and otherwise
scare their victims



UNDERSTANDING STALKING



Stalkers often engage in behaviors that seem insignificant or flattering to people who aren't involved, but are terrifying in the context of the situation. Victims often have to explain to others why something scares, upsets, or worries them.

Stalking often includes following, watching, and waiting. Most stalkers use multiple tactics to monitor, contact, sabotage, threaten, isolate, and otherwise terrorize their victims—and many do so both in-person and using technology.

Technology-facilitated stalking can be just as invasive, threatening, and fear-inducing as in-person stalking.



Friends, family, TV, and movies often interpret stalking behaviors as flattering, cute, romantic, or just being awkward. This normalization can help mask stalkers' abusive behavior. In real life, there's nothing desirable about stalking.

STALKING FACTS



- The vast majority of victims are stalked by someone they know, most often a romantic partner (current or former), friend, neighbor, co-worker, or classmate.
- Stalkers can be dangerous. Stalking often intersects with sexual violence, physical violence, and other victimizations.
- Generally, the more access to and information about the victim that the stalker has, the more dangerous and threatening the stalker can—and is likely to—be.



- Stalking can be a part of an abusive relationship. Abusers who stalk are generally more dangerous than those who don't stalk.
- Stalking can last a long time and often changes over time, requiring ongoing risk assessment and safety planning.
- Many stalkers combine criminal acts (property damage, trespassing) with legal behaviors (sending gifts or texts). Otherwise legal acts can become criminal when part of a stalking case.

STALKING BEHAVIORS

Stalkers engage in a wide range of threatening and disturbing behaviors to monitor, watch, control, or frighten their victims; and/or to damage the victims' credibility or reputation.

At first, stalking behaviors may not seem upsetting or scary to people without knowing the context of the situation or the history between the stalker and the victim.

Since the majority of stalkers know their victims, they often ask family, friends, colleagues, and others to help them get information or access to the victim. Some of these third parties know they're helping a stalker, while others may be tricked into it.

Stalking can take on specific tactics and implications when abusers identify characteristics or vulnerabilities they can exploit as part of the abuse—including race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, and immigration status.



TYPES OF STALKING TACTICS

All of the incidents in a scary pattern of behavior could be stalking. Common stalking behaviors can be organized into four groups:

SURVEILLANCE



Follow, watch, wait, show up uninvited, track or monitor location, monitor activities and routine, hack into accounts, ask others for information

LIFE INVASION

Contact repeatedly (unwanted calls, messages, notes, gifts, showing up), invade property (sneaking into home or car), spread rumors, humiliate victim in public or online, harass victim/friends/family, share or post private information



INTIMIDATION



Threaten implicitly or explicitly, damage property, force confrontations/fights, threaten to or actually harm themselves, threaten to harm victim or others

INTERFERENCE (THROUGH SABOTAGE OR ATTACK)

Attack victim/family/friends/pets (physically or sexually), ruin reputation, sabotage finances or work, interfere with custody or housing or work, damage victim's credibility or reputation



THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO STALK

The majority of stalkers use technology to monitor, watch, contact, control, threaten, sabotage, isolate, and frighten victims, as well as to damage victims' credibility or reputations.

Using technology to stalk may also be called cyberstalking, digital abuse, or online harassment. Stalkers may use computers, tablets, mobile devices, software, the internet, email, social media, messaging apps, smart home devices, recording devices, tracking devices, and/or other technology.



Common ways stalkers use technology to stalk include: excessive, unwanted calls, texts, or messages; monitoring online activity; monitoring a victim's life through social media; posting or sharing inappropriate or personal information, photos, or videos (or threats to do so); spying or monitoring with technology; location tracking through a device or app, demanding passwords to, or control of, online accounts; impersonating a victim online; and hacking into online accounts (or threats to do so).

STALKING RISK FACTORS



The most dangerous time for a victim tends to be when they distance themselves from the stalker. The factors below also tend to indicate higher risks to the victim:

- Escalation of stalking behaviors (intensity or frequency)
- Upcoming significant dates, events, or occasions that might trigger the stalker (anniversaries, court dates, holidays, etc.)
- Specific and detailed threats (the more specific and detailed, the higher the risk)
- Stalker has previously followed through on threats to the victim or others
- Stalker has the ability to follow through on threats
- Stalker has previously abused victim or others, in any way
- Stalker has access to (and/or training and experience with) guns and weapons
- Stalker persists despite victim resistance

ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

Documentation Log

Keep a documentation log of stalking incidents. This can help identify options to increase safety, tell the story of what's going on, capture everything you've experienced, and assess risk. Save evidence like call logs, voicemails, messages, screenshots, notes, etc.



SHARP Assessment



Fill out the Stalking, Harassment, Assessment & Risk Profile (SHARP) with a victim advocate. SHARP is a free, web-based assessment that examines a stalking situation at a single point in time (available at www.StalkingRisk.com).

You are the expert on your own life, especially balancing your need to live a normal life with your safety concerns. You may decide to change your routines, activities, transportation, and more to avoid or minimize the stalker's access and influence.

PLANNING FOR SAFETY

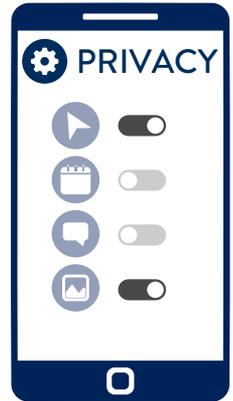
Remember that only the stalker can control their behavior. However, safety planning can reduce risks and harm. Think through what is best for you and what changes in your daily life may enhance your safety.



- Consider what the stalker’s next tactics might be.
- Think about how the stalker might react to things you say or do, changes you make to your life, or if they are told to stop (by you, a friend, a court, a police officer, etc.).
- Consider applying for a protection order.
- Consider stopping all communication with the stalker. Many stalkers perceive any contact (even negative contact) as a victory, so you responding to them at all often reinforces their behavior. However, some victims are unable to stop all contact and/or decide to maintain contact to gauge the stalker’s mood, location, etc.

Be mindful of what you share online, what others share about you, and what information is publicly available.

- Check sharing and privacy settings of apps, social media platforms, and devices. Default settings usually share information and/or location, but can be changed to be more private.
- If you think the stalker is monitoring your phone or accounts, consider using a friend’s phone or the computer at a public library to get help.
- Use the safest device you have access to and learn more about tech safety:



Safety Net Toolkit for Technology Safety & Privacy
www.TechSafety.org/Resources-Survivors

SEEKING HELP

- Consider calling 911 if you feel you're in immediate danger.
- Reach out to a victim advocate. Victim advocates are trained professionals who can help you make a safety plan and connect you to legal, housing, and other resources. They typically work at domestic violence shelters or rape crisis agencies and can help stalking victims (even if the stalking does not include those elements).
- Consider who you can ask for help and/or give instructions to if the stalker contacts them—family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, security guards, police, etc.

VICTIM RESOURCES:

Victim Connect (for help finding local resources)
VictimConnect.org (online chat & info)
1-855-484-2846 (call or text)

National Sexual Assault Hotline
RAINN.org (online chat & info)
1-800-656-4673 (call)

National Domestic Violence Hotline
TheHotline.org (online chat & info)
1-800-799-7233 (call) or text "START" to 88788

National Human Trafficking Resource Center
HumanTraffickingHotline.org (online chat & info)
1-888-373-7888 (call) or text 233-733

Sample documentation log at StalkingAwareness.org.

This handbook provides information and resources on stalking. Learn more at StalkingAwareness.org.

