

STALKING

What is stalking?

Stalking is when one person repeatedly follows or watches another person, causing them to feel afraid. Stalking can also occur through the mail, by computer or over the phone.

Stalkers turn everyday actions – telephone calls, walking by someone’s house, or leaving gifts – into harassment.

What causes stalking?

Sometimes it is caused when romantic relationships don’t work out. Other times the stalker may be trying to make you feel afraid or try to get you to do something that you don’t want to do. Often, stalking is caused by someone’s mental illness. It is important to remember, though, that stalking is not the fault of the victim. The law protects you, and you do not have to feel afraid.

How could I be stalked over the phone?

If someone keeps calling you, even after you have asked them to stop, they may be stalking you. Also, if someone is listening in on your calls, that could be stalking.

What is Internet or computer stalking?

This is when someone repeatedly sends you e-mails when you have asked them to stop. It is also when someone has figured out a way to read your private e-mails or tries to keep up with where you were on-line. If someone sends you a threatening, hateful, or suggestive e-mail, that can also be considered stalking.

How can I deal with stalking?

If you are being stalked clearly and directly tell your stalker to leave you alone. Only talk to your stalker if you feel safe. Even if you do tell your stalker to leave you alone, it may not stop the stalker. You may need to take other actions.

What actions should I take to deal with a stalker?

You should let someone else know what is happening, such as a friend, family member, or co-worker. Also, start writing down exactly what is happening and when. If you call the police, they will need this information.

How else can I be sure I am safe if I am being stalked?

Avoid being alone, especially at night. Be careful while driving; check your car for signs of tampering, before getting into it. Around your home, keep areas well-lit and trees and shrubs trimmed. Also make sure that you have working locks on all windows and doors.

How can I protect myself from being harassed on the phone or Internet?

If your stalker continues to call your home, use an answering machine instead of answering yourself. Save any messages a stalker leaves you.

On-line, keep all e-mails from the harasser, and be sure there is no personal information, such as your address or phone number, on any profiles.

Consider changing your phone number or e-mail address. In both cases, you should not reply to the stalker once you have asked them to stop what they are doing. This is true, even if what they are saying, or e-mailing is very bad. Responding to the stalker is what the stalker wants.

Is stalking against the law?

Yes. When someone causes you or a family member to fear being harmed or killed that is illegal. If the stalker harms you or a family member, that is a crime. A stalker also can not damage your property or a family member's property. The stalker can be arrested for such behavior.

Should I call the police if I think I am being stalked?

Yes. Call the police. This could make the stalker mad, though, and cause the stalker to become violent. You need to be prepared for this reaction. However, if you feel your life is in danger, you should call the police for help.

**Do not be afraid to call the police because you are undocumented.
There are laws to help immigrants, documented or not, who have been abused.
You need to consult an immigration attorney about the law.**

This is not all the information you need to know if you or someone in your family is dealing with stalking. You may want to talk to a lawyer about your situation.

If you do not have a lawyer, the South Carolina Bar Lawyer Referral Service can give you the name of a lawyer who is willing to meet with you and advise you at a lower rate. For the name of a lawyer in your area; call the Lawyer Referral Service (800) 868-2284 statewide or (803) 799-7100 in Columbia.

If you have a very low income, your local legal services office may be able to help you. To get in touch with them, call the Legal Assistance Telephone Intake Service for a referral (888) 346-5592 statewide or (803) 744-9430 in Columbia.

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