



BETTERSAFE

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

What You & Your Loved Ones Need to Know

ABOUT STALKING

Stalking means engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for his or her safety or the safety of others or suffer substantial emotional distress. Stalking is a crime in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, the military, and tribal lands. It's important to be familiar with your state's laws about stalking along with common signs and what you can do if you or a loved one become a victim of stalking. Here's some key information that may help to get familiar with.

WHAT DOES STALKING LOOK LIKE?

Stalkers use a variety of tactics, including (but not limited to) unwanted contact including phone calls, texts, contact via social media, unwanted gifts, approaching an individual or their family/friends, monitoring, surveillance, property damage, and threats. Many stalkers' behaviors seem harmless or even desirable to outsiders – for example, sending expensive gifts. For victims, however, the stalker's actions create fear and that can sometimes be hard to explain.

Stalking and harassment are similar and can overlap. Harassment may be part of a stalking pattern of behavior/course of conduct. Typically, the element of fear is what separates stalking from harassment. Harassment is typically irritating and bothersome, sometimes to the point where a victim feels deeply uncomfortable. However, victims of harassment are not



Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

typically afraid of their perpetrators. For example, an employee who constantly makes fun of a co-worker may be harassing her/him by continually making unwanted, crude jokes. While the victim is distressed and may feel sad, anxious, angry and/or uncomfortable, he/she is not afraid of the offender—there's no feeling that he/she will cause more harm. However, if that same perpetrator began calling the victim's cell phone, following the victim and/or posting disparaging things about the victim online, it could become stalking.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS BEING STALKED

If you or someone you know is being stalked, notify law enforcement immediately. While victims cannot control the stalking behavior, they should feel empowered to take steps to keep themselves, their families, and their loved ones safe. Gather and provide all evidence, like threatening text messages, voicemails, etc.

Victims of stalking often experience psychological trauma. You can help victims by providing support and acknowledging what they are experiencing and feeling—simple validation goes a long way.

While predatory stalkers deliberately commit acts of violence, many other stalkers are simply obsessed with their victims in addition to suffering from mental issues like depression, personality disorder, and substance abuse. The latter type of stalkers often do not realize that what they are doing is wrong and can usually be rehabilitated. Some can be treated to see the harm of their ways and terrible consequences of their destructive behavior.

STALKING FACTS

Here are some facts about stalking from the Bureau of Justice Statistics:

- » Every year, 3.4 million people over the age of 18 are stalked in the United States
- » More than 1 in 4 stalking victims reported some form of technology was used, such as e-mail (83%) or instant messaging (35%)
- » 3 in 4 stalking victims are stalked by someone they know

Recognize the signs of a stalker:

- » Repeatedly calling and texting, including hang-ups
- » Following you and showing up wherever you are
- » Sending unwanted gifts, letters, cards, or e-mails
- » Damaging your home, car, or other property
- » Monitoring your phone calls, computer use, or social media account
- » Hacking into your social media accounts or email
- » Using technology, like hidden cameras or global positioning systems (GPS), to track where you go
- » Driving by or hanging out at your apartment/



residence hall, outside your classroom or at your work

- » Threatening to hurt you, your family, friends, or pets
- » Finding out about you by using public records or online search services, hiring private investigators, going through your garbage, or contacting your friends, classmates, family, neighbors, or co-workers
- » Other actions that control or frighten you