

Stalking

Stalking occurs when your abuser, or anyone, intentionally and repeatedly takes action that cause you to fear for your safety, the safety of an immediate family member or someone you know, your pets, or your property. This can include harassing you through a third party, such as sending letters through friends. If your stalker causes harm to your mental or emotional health, he may also be guilty of stalking if he has been previously warned to stop this behavior. Some examples of how stalking can effect your mental or emotional health include not being able to eat, sleep, or go to work.

Stalking is a criminal offense that requires a pattern of two or more acts. Individual acts within the pattern do not have to be criminal offenses. When a pattern of non-criminal behavior is directed at a particular person and causes reasonable fear of harm, it may be the criminal act of stalking. Stalking can also consist of a criminal act, like assault, in addition to an otherwise non-criminal act, like sending you flowers or other unwanted contact. Examples of stalking behavior may include:

- Unwanted phone calls, letters, gifts, flowers, email, text messages, or faxes;
- Following or showing up at the places that you or your family and friends frequent (such as home, work, school, etc.);
- Driving by or parking near your home or office;
- Verbal, written, or implied threats directed at you, an immediate family member or someone you know;
- Acts that cause you to fear that your business, employment or career are threatened;
- Vandalism of property that belongs to you, an immediate family member or someone you know, such as damaging your car or breaking windows at your home; and/or
- Actual assaults or other acts of violence directed at you, an immediate family member, your pet, or someone you know, including sexual assault.

These are only a few examples of stalking behavior. Any repeated unwanted contact, harassment or violent act directed at you, an immediate family member or someone you know may be stalking.

Stalking can be extremely dangerous, so you may want to talk to your local domestic violence program about specific steps you can take to protect yourself and/or document the stalking. Keeping a record of issues, concerns, and all acts of stalking is a good idea, even if you do not want to pursue any immediate legal action. A stalking log can be used to record any and all incidents that concern you. To create a stalking log, list the date and time of the incident, where it happened, what happened, what your response was, and the names, ideally the signatures, of any witnesses to the incident. Should you decide to involve the police or take a civil legal action, the stalking log showing a pattern of abuse can help you build your case. Even if your abuser is being prosecuted for other crimes, it is possible to charge your abuser with stalking since it is separate and distinct from other criminal acts such as assault or harassment. Please keep in mind that stalkers will probably see any log, journal, and/or other information used as evidence against them in either criminal prosecutions or civil actions. Therefore, document only the facts of the case and do not include any personal information that you do not want the stalker, or anyone else, to see.