

What is Stalking?

Stalking is any behavior directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear. Stalking behaviors may include repeated unwanted phone calls, unwanted gifts or letters, damage to a home, car, or property, monitoring phone calls or computer use and other actions that control, track, or frighten. Most victims are stalked by someone they know. Stalking is serious, often violent, and can escalate overtime.

Texas' anti-stalking law (Penal Code §42.072) became effective on January 28, 1997. This law forbids the following actions by the stalker or other(s) who act on his/her behalf:

On more than one occasion, following, placing a person under surveillance, making threats, restraining, confining, or behavior or threats that cause the victim to fear immediate or future injury, death, or damage to his/her property. Threats and/or actions can be conveyed either directly to the victim or through family or household members.

Statistics

3.4 million Adults over the age of 18 are stalked each year in the United States. 3 out of 4 stalking victims are stalked by someone they know. 30% of stalking victims are stalked by a current or former intimate partner. Adults aged 18-24 experience the highest rate of stalking. 46% of stalking victims experience at least one unwanted contact per week. 1 in 4 victims report being stalked through the use of some form of technology (such as e-mail).

Profile of a Stalker

Two-thirds of stalkers pursue their victims at least once per week; many stalkers pursue their victim daily. 78% of stalkers use more than one way of approaching their victim. Weapons are used to harm or threaten victims in 1 out of 5 stalking cases. Almost one-third of stalkers have stalked before. Intimate partner stalkers' behaviors escalate quickly. Even when an intervention has been made (jail, protective order, etc.) 60% of stalkers will continue their behavior with the same or a new victim.

Are You Being Stalked?

A stalker may: Follow you and show up wherever you are. Drive by or hang out at your home, school, or work. Vandalize or destroy your personal property. Threaten to hurt you, your family, friends, or pets. Repeatedly call you, including hang-ups and voicemails. Send repeated text messages, email or instant message you, or harass you in chat rooms. Send unwanted gifts, letters, or cards. Spread false rumors about you. Monitor your phone calls, text messages, or computer use. Use technology, like hidden cameras or global positioning systems (GPS), to track where you go. Use other actions that control, monitor, or frighten you.

If You Are a Victim of Stalking You Could... The following options may be useful to you in trying to enhance your safety. Please consider which suggestions may work for you in your unique circumstances. Work with your local shelter or victim services program to develop a safety plan. Notify police. Engage in no further communication with the stalker. Keeps a log of every stalking incident including the date, time, what happened, and the names and phone numbers of any witnesses? Be aware that your cell phone and computer may be monitored by the stalker. Change your normal daily routine. Screen all phone calls but keep in mind that caller ID can be falsified. Save all text messages, voicemails, and emails from the stalker. Tell your family, friends, and neighbors that you are being stalked. Know that if the stalker is an intimate partner, you may be eligible for a civil protection order under Texas Law.

The Use of Technology to Stalk

Many stalkers use technology to stalk their victim. Stalkers may monitor a victim's cell phone,

send text messages, access voicemails, monitor computer usage, and use a GPS device to track a victim, or use other forms of technology to pursue their victim.

Technology changes constantly and victims should use caution and become familiar with the safety features available with the technology that they use.

If You Are Being Stalked Through the Use of Technology

Tell the stalker “Leave me alone, stop harassing me. Do not contact me again.” If you are in instant message or chat, log off immediately. Do not reply to anything else the stalker says. Do not reply to emails, taunts, or lies said about you by the stalker. If the stalker has had access to your computer, go to an internet café, public library, or a trusted friend’s house to use a computer. Spyware software or keystroke logging hardware may have been installed onto the computer without your knowledge. Change passwords to email accounts frequently. Make your new passwords complicated, using both letters and numbers. Never give your passwords to anyone. Be aware that if the stalker is monitoring your computer or cell phone use, simply changing a password may not prohibit the stalker from continuing to monitor you. Never give out your primary email address to anyone you don’t know. Choose a free email service where you don’t have to provide your name or address. Do an internet search on your name to make sure none of your personal information is posted by others. If you find information posted about you, notify the site’s webmaster immediately and request that the information be removed. Don’t give out your online identification except to VERY trusted friends and tell them not to give it to anyone else. If someone makes threats in a chat room or on a message board, notify the moderator or webmaster immediately. Keep screen shots for evidence. Make sure NONE of your online profiles contain any personally identifying information about you, such as age, sex, address, phone number, schools attended, or where you work. Document all communication from the stalker, including: text messages, IM’s, social network posts and e-mails, voice mails, etc. Preserve these communications in case they are needed as evidence.

If You Are Being Stalked You Might...

Feel fear for what the stalker will do. Feel hopeless, powerless, depressed, angry, or nervous. Feel confused, frustrated, or isolated because other people don’t understand why you are afraid. Have flashbacks, disturbing thoughts, feelings, or memories. Feel vulnerable, unsafe, anxious, and not know who you can trust. Feel stressed, including having trouble concentrating, sleeping, remembering things. Feel nervous, irritable, impatient, or “on edge.” Feel that you have lost control of your life.

If You Have a Friend Who is Being Stalked Listen. If someone says they are being stalked, believe them. Do not blame your friend for the crime. Show support. Do not respond to the stalker in any way. Advise your friend to document everything. You can also document any incidences of stalking that you witness. Do not give any information out about your friend, no matter what the stalker may say. Offer to accompany your friend to places so she/he does not have to be alone. Refer your friend to a local shelter or victim service program. Remember that every situation is different, and allow the person being stalked to make choices about how to handle it. Find someone you can talk to about the situation. Take steps to ensure your own safety.

Employee or Students at The University of Texas Health Science Center are encouraged to contact the University Police at 210-567-2800 and report if you are being stalked.

HELPFUL PHONE NUMBERS:

The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio Police Department 7703 Floyd Curl Dr, San Antonio, Texas 78229

Non Emergency/24-Hour Dispatch: 210.567.2800

Emergency: 911

Emergency Cell: 210.567.8911

Crime Prevention Unit/Victim Liaison: 210.567.2800

Silent Witness Program: <http://utpolice.uthscsa.edu/divisions/crimeprev/silentwitness.asp>

San Antonio Police Department

Emergency 911

Non Emergency 210-207-7273

UTHSC Harlingen Police

2102 Treasure Hills Blvd. Harlingen, TX 78550 Ph# 956-365-8900

City Of Harlingen Police Dept 956-216-5940

UTHSC Laredo Police

Laredo 1937 E. Bustamante St. Laredo, TX 78401 Ph# 956-523-7414

City Of Laredo Police Dept 956-795-2800

UTHSC Edinburg Police

UT Pan American 214 West Schunior Edinburg, TX 78541 Ph# 956-316-7151

City Of Edinburg Police Dept 956-383-7411

National Center for Victims of Crime Stalking Resource Center www.ncvc.org/src

1-800-FYI-CALL (394-2255)

Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

<https://rainn.org/>

