

All 50 states have an anti-stalking law. **Boynton Beach Police Department** and the **Victim Advocate Unit** can assist you if you believe that you are being stalked or harassed. **Victim Advocate Unit** can help you file a police report and/or obtain an injunction (restraining order) if needed.

WHAT IS STALKING?

Stalking occurs when a person willfully, maliciously, and repeatedly follows, harasses, or cyberstalks another person. Aggravated stalking occurs when that person makes a credible threat to that person through stalking (Florida State Statute 784.048).

A **credible threat** is a verbal or nonverbal threat, or a combination of the two, including threats delivered by electronic communication or implied by a pattern of conduct, which places the person who is the target of the threat in reasonable fear for his or her safety, or the safety of his or her family members or individuals closely associated with the person, and which is made with the apparent ability to carry out the threat to cause such harm.

It is not necessary to prove that the person making the threat had the intent to actually carry out the threat.

Cyberstalking means to engage in a course of conduct to communicate, or to cause to be communicated, words, images, or language by or through the use of electronic mail or electronic communication, directed at a specific person, causing substantial emotional distress to that person and serving no legitimate purpose.

STALKERS MAY:

- Repeatedly call you, including hang-ups
- Follow you and show up wherever you are
- Send unwanted gifts, letters, texts, or e-mails
- Damage your home, car, or other property
- Monitor your phone calls or computer use
- Use technology, like hidden cameras or GPS to track where you go
- Drive by or hang out at your home, school, or work
- Threaten to hurt you, your family, friends, or pets
- Find out about you by using public records or on-line search services, hiring investigators, going through your garbage, or contacting friends, family, neighbors, or co-workers
- Other actions that control, track, or frighten you

A stalker can be someone you know well or not at all. Most have dated or been involved with the people they stalk. Most stalking cases involve men stalking women,

but men do stalk men, women do stalk women, and women do stalk men.

You are not to blame for a stalkers behavior!

WHAT IS HARASSMENT?

Harass means to engage in a course of conduct directed at a specific person which causes substantial emotional distress to that person and serves no legitimate purpose (Florida State Statute 784.048).

- Immediately report the harassment. Contact the police to file a report, or contact the Victim Advocate Unit to speak with an advocate.
- Keep a log of all calls and/or a copy of all e-mails received; include the date, time & details of the call/e-mail.
- If you are continually harassed, you may want to consider changing your phone numbers and/or e-mail address.

TYPES OF HARASSMENT

Phone calls:

- Pay attention to any background noises, the caller's sex, accent, speech pattern, or anything else that might aid in identification.
- If calls are recorded on a voicemail, save the message and provide it to the police.

E-mails:

- If the offender is known, send them a clear written warning to stop sending you e-mails. Communicate that the contact is unwanted, and ask the perpetrator to stop sending communication of any kind. Then, no matter what the response, do not communicate with the harasser again.
- Make copies of all e-mails, being sure to get the address they were sent from, and report these to the police.

Social Media:

- Document any messages/comments, take screenshots and save them. Some platforms may auto-delete after a set period of time; police are able to retrieve these messages. Speak with an officer about retrieving lost messages or data.
- Speak with an advocate about safety planning and filing a report.

Sexual Harassment:

- Tell somebody. Talk to a trusted friend or colleague, teacher, administrator, supervisor, or supervisor's supervisor, victim advocate or counselor.
- Do not appear to ignore the harassment; your silence may be mistaken for consent.
- If possible, speak up when the incident occurs, and tell the perpetrator to STOP the offensive behavior in a clear and firm manner.
- Consider communicating with the harasser by writing a letter detailing your concerns and asking the person to STOP.
- Keep a written record, noting incidents as they occur and any witness that may be present. Keep any physical evidence (notes, letters, pictures, etc.) and anything else that will corroborate your story.

IF YOU'RE STALKED YOU MIGHT:

- Feel fear of what the stalker will do.
- Feel vulnerable, unsafe, and not know who to trust.
- Feel anxious, irritable, impatient, or on edge.
- Feel depressed, hopeless, overwhelmed, tearful, or angry.
- Feel stressed, including having trouble concentrating, sleeping, or remembering things.
- Have eating problems, such as appetite loss, forgetting to eat, or overeating.
- Have flashbacks, disturbing thoughts, feelings, or memories.
- Feel confused, frustrated, or isolated because other people don't understand why you are afraid.

These are common reactions to being stalked.

IF SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS BEING STALKED, YOU CAN HELP

- Listen.
- Show support.
- Don't blame the victim for the crime.
- 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.

WHOM SHALL I TALK TO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

Victim Connect

855-484-2846

(Confidential referrals for crime victims)

AVDA Shelter Hotline

561-265-2900

Harmony House Shelter Hotline

561-640-9844

Palm Beach County Victim Services

561-355-2418, option 3

Hotline: 866-891-7273

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-7233

National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline

1-866-331-9474

To learn more about stalking, visit the Stalking Resource Center Web site www.victimsofcrime.org/src

SAFETY FIRST!!!

Stalking is unpredictable and dangerous. No two stalking situations are alike. There are no guarantees that what works for one person will work for another, yet you can take steps to increase your safety.

- **If you are in immediate danger, call 911.**
- Trust your instincts. Don't downplay the danger. If you feel you are unsafe, you probably are.
- Take threats seriously. Danger generally is higher when the stalker talks about suicide or murder, or when a victim tries to leave or end the relationship.
- Contact a crisis hotline, victim services agency, or a domestic violence or rape crisis program. They can help you devise a safety plan, give you information about local laws, weigh options such as seeking a protection order, and refer you to other services.
- Develop a [safety plan](#), including things like changing your routine, arranging a place to stay, and having a friend or relative go places with you. Also, decide in advance what to do if the stalker shows up at your home, work, school, or

somewhere else. Tell people how they can help you.

- Tell the stalker to stop all contact. Do this **ONLY ONCE!** Afterwards, ignore the stalker no matter what the threat. Do not communicate with him/her again.
- Don't communicate with the stalker or respond to attempts to contact you. Notify law enforcement of any further contact.
- Keep evidence of the stalking. When the stalker follows you or contacts you, write down the time, date, and place. Keep emails, text messages, phone messages, letters, "gifts", or notes. Photograph anything of yours the stalker damages and any injuries the stalker causes. Ask witnesses to write down what they saw.
- Compile a witness list.
- Contact the police. Every state has stalking laws. The stalker may also have broken other laws by doing things like assaulting you or stealing or destroying your property.
- Consider getting a court order (injunction) that tells the stalker to stay away from you.
- Tell family, friends, roommates, and co-workers about the stalking and seek their support.
- Describe the stalker so that they may alert you to his/her presence.
- Tell security staff at your job or school. Ask them to help watch out for your safety.

If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

INFORMATION ABOUT ADDITIONAL VICTIM ASSISTANCE

If you have any questions/concerns regarding your case or if you require additional referral for Victim/Witness Services, please contact

VICTIM ADVOCATE UNIT

561-742-6108

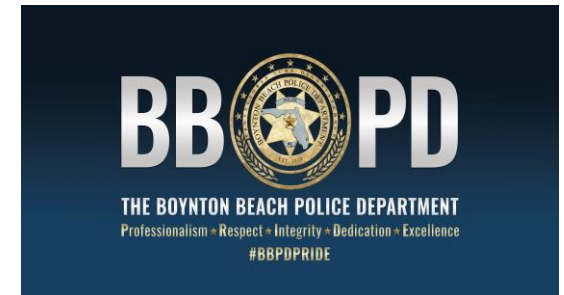
Boynton Beach Police Department

This project was supported by Award No. VOCA-2020-City of Boynton Beach-00716 awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs. Sponsored by City of Boynton Beach and the State of Florida. The City of Boynton Beach is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Source: Stalking Resource Center, National Center for Victims of Crime

**BOYNTON BEACH
POLICE DEPARTMENT
(561) 742-6100**

**VICTIM ADVOCATE UNIT
(561) 742-6108**



Stalking

Harassment

OFFICER: _____

CASE NUMBER: _____