

## Are You Being Stalked?

Stalking is a pattern of repeated and unwanted attention, harassment, or contact. Stalkers use tactics like:

- Following you and showing up wherever you are: work, school, shopping, or place of worship.
- Sending you unwanted emails, texts, messages, letters, or gifts.
- Monitoring your phone use, social media sites, or email.
- Using your cell phone or GPS to track you.
- Making threats to harm you, your children, relatives, friends, or pets.
- Damaging your personal property.
- Intimidating you in any way.
- Securing personal information about you by accessing records, hiring private investigators, using Internet search services, contacting friends, family, work or neighbors, or going through your garbage.
- Driving by your home, school, or work.
- Other actions that control, track, or frighten you.

## Domestic Violence and Stalking

Most stalking is committed by a current or former intimate partner. Intimate partners who stalk know the most about their victims so they are particularly hard to get safely away from. For this reason, ending an abusive relationship can be difficult and dangerous. It is important to contact your local domestic violence program or victim assistance office for support and safety planning during this time.

For more information about safety planning, community resources or domestic violence programs and services in your area, contact your nearest domestic violence program.

For information about free legal assistance please contact the Ohio Legal Services at 866-lawohio (866-529-6446) or [www.ohiolegalhelp.org](http://www.ohiolegalhelp.org).



[www.odvn.org](http://www.odvn.org)

800-934-9840 • 614-781-9651



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The Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) is a statewide coalition of domestic violence programs, supportive agencies, and concerned individuals working together to stop domestic violence through education, information and training for those who are affected by domestic violence, and by promoting social and systems change.

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## Stalking is a Crime

Menacing by stalking is the act of a person who knowingly engages in a pattern of conduct that causes you to believe that the offender (stalker) will cause you physical harm or that causes you mental distress.

- “Pattern of conduct” means two or more actions or incidents that occur in a short period of time.
- “Mental distress” means any condition that would normally require counseling. However, receiving counseling is NOT required to obtain legal remedies. If a person follows, pursues or harasses you in a threatening manner on more than one occasion, this person may be guilty of stalking under Ohio law. Contact local law enforcement to report all stalking incidents. Even if charges are not filed, law enforcement reports may be helpful to record the pattern of stalking.

## Protection Orders through Civil Court

- If someone is engaging in behaviors that may be considered stalking, whether or not criminal charges are filed, you may ask the court for a civil stalking protection order.
- If the stalker is a family or household member or a current or former dating partner, then you may have the option to request a Domestic Violence or Dating Civil Protection Order (CPO) instead.
- This order can last up to five years.
- It can order the stalker not to contact you in any way, to stay away from you, and other measures to help keep you

protected.

## Protection Orders through Criminal Court

- If someone is stalking you and is charged with certain crimes, you may be able to ask the criminal court for a criminal protection order.
- This is a temporary order which only lasts during the criminal case. This order can end suddenly and without notice to you leaving you without protection.
- It can order the stalker not to contact you in any way and to stay away from you along with other orders to help keep you safe.

For more information on Criminal and Civil Stalking Protection Orders, contact an attorney, your local domestic violence agency, a prosecutor-based victim advocate for assistance, or go to [www.odvn.org/](http://www.odvn.org/) for more information. Only an attorney can give you legal advice or help you present your case to the court.

## Planning for Your Safety

Even if you choose to seek help from the courts, planning for your safety should be an on-going process. Here are some suggestions that may help to improve your safety:

- Never contact your stalker or try to reason with this person. Let calls from unknown numbers go to voicemail.
- Document all stalking incidents or actions in a journal. Keep the journal in a safe place. Keep all evidence of the stalking, including voicemails, photos, texts, social media posts, emails and notes/letters. Ask any witnesses to provide a written statement about what they observed along with their contact information.
- Protect personal information by

keeping as much as possible offline and out of public records. Do not give out personal information unless absolutely necessary. If the stalker knows your social security number or other critical information, talk to an advocate to consider your options.

- Open a post office box a fair distance from your home and use it as your new address for all mail and as your address in all transactions.
- Ask utility companies to require a password for anyone to access your account.
- Use a different schedule and route of travel each day.

For more information to help you safety plan, visit [www.odvn.org/](http://www.odvn.org/).

## Technology and Stalking

Cyber stalking is the use of the Internet, email, GPS, or other technology to harass or stalk another person. Here are some safety tips:

- Use your phone’s security and privacy settings.
- Know how to change and turn off location settings and features for your apps.
- Turning off your phone and taking out the battery or putting your phone on airplane mode can stop all communication sharing to and from the phone.
- Change passwords and security questions often to protect your online accounts.

For more information, visit [www.odvn.org/](http://www.odvn.org/) for technology stalking resources.

