

▶▶▶▶ Increase your personal safety

Improve home and work security. Vary your daily routine as your stalker may rely on this for contact. Local police may be able to give you a free home security check. Make a safety plan in case something does happen. Think about who you can phone and where you can safely go.

▶▶▶▶ Contact the police

If you are being stalked, and it has persisted for more than two weeks, call your local police station and make an appointment to see a police officer. Bring evidence of the stalking as it will help establish your case, plus the police may not be able to act immediately if there is a lack of evidence. You may be assigned an officer that you can contact directly so you don't have to re-explain the situation each time you have fresh evidence. Report each new incident and keep a copy of any 'incident reports' you make to the police in a secure place.

▶▶▶▶ Intervention Orders

Could give you a false sense of security and may not deter those who have stalked you for a long time, people with a history of violence or a strong sense of power over the victim. It may also increase an ex-partners sense of shame and rejection with a violent outcome. It is important to have a safety plan before applying for an intervention order. To apply for an Intervention Order in the local area:

Frankston Magistrates' Court

Phone: **9784 5777**

Web: **www.magistratescourt.vic.gov.au**

or ask the police to do it on your behalf.

▶▶▶▶ Seek help and support

You and your loved ones, particularly children, can be badly affected by stalking and should be encouraged to seek help if needed. Talk to a counsellor or call an anonymous service. Support organisations, community health clinics and family doctors can provide support, counselling and referrals. If your stalker is an ex-partner or family member, domestic violence services can also offer support. Tell them you are a stalking victim and emphasize personal information must be kept confidential.

▶▶▶▶ More assistance

Victims of Crime Helpline

Phone: **1800 819 817**

Web: **www.justice.vic.gov.au**

Also see the following Frankston Community Support and Information Centre brochures:

- *How to Apply for an Intervention Order*
- *Abuse by Cyberstalking*
- *Family Violence — Exploring your Options (Support for women)*
- *Family Violence — Anger Management (Support for men)*
- *Strategies to Manage your Anger (for women)*



**FRANKSTON COMMUNITY SUPPORT
AND INFORMATION CENTRE**

Inc. Reg. No. A0000431J ABN 95 426 151 625

Tailored information for Sole Parents
Project funded by FaHCSIA

Unwanted Contact by Stalking

May 2011

what it is & what you can do



- **stalking behaviour** ●
- **personal safety** ●
- **seeking help** ●

FRANKSTON
COMMUNITY SUPPORT
&
INFORMATION CENTRE

68 Playne Street, Frankston
Phone: 9768 1600

▶▶▶▶ **Stalking is a crime**

Stalking is a criminal offence everywhere in Australia and police in other states cooperate to give victims moving interstate support.

In Victoria, the law states that a person is guilty of stalking if they intend to cause physical or mental harm to the victim, or cause fear or apprehension for the victim's safety, or for the safety of their loved ones.

For emergency assistance Call the Police on 000

You are not to blame for the behaviour of the stalker, whatever your relationship is or was to them. Stalking often begins as a minor encounter and turns into a distressing experience that disempowers you, disrupts your life and leaves you feeling anxious.

Stalkers may also threaten and harass your family members, pets, friends or workmates. If unable to harass you, stalkers may enlist their friends or family to do so on their behalf and you may be stalked by a stranger who may follow, approach, try to engage you in conversation, make repeated telephone calls or send text messages.

If a stalker persists for more than two weeks the chances are they will persist for at least six to twelve months and typically it is long-term stalkers who become violent. For this reason it is very important to contact the police and seek further advice and assistance.

Stalking causes you fear or distress when a person keeps contacting or spying on you when you don't want them to.

▶▶▶▶ **Stalking includes**

Receiving:

- Phone, SMS, answering machine and voicemail messages
- Notes, letters, email, faxes, unwanted romantic, bizarre or sinister 'gifts'
- Direct or indirect threats to harm you or your loved ones or threats to self-harm themselves in order to get a response

Being:

- Under surveillance, followed or approached directly (which may result in an assault)
- Harassed or stalked online in chat rooms

Having:

- People loiter near your home or workplace
- Your property damaged or graffitied
- Malicious gossip or lies spread about you
- False legal actions started against you (to maintain some form of contact)
- Goods and services ordered (or cancelled) on your behalf
- Your identity traced through the Internet

▶▶▶▶ **Increase your awareness**

Anyone may be a stalking victim regardless of their age, occupation, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Most are pursued by a person they know – very often an ex-partner, co-worker, neighbour, customer or acquaintance.

The stalker may be:

- Obsessed about seeking a relationship
- Lacking social skills to form a relationship
- A rejected partner, parent, or associate
- Resentful, desiring revenge over a perceived injustice
- A predator, enjoying power and control.

▶▶▶▶ **Avoid contact with the stalker**

Give one plain, direct message that their attention is unwanted and not to contact you again. Avoid any communication and don't reason with them as it may be misinterpreted as implying a second chance or playing hard to get. Don't return gifts or respond to insults or verbal taunts. Get an answering machine to screen your calls. Contact prolongs the stalking as it acknowledges and 'rewards' the stalker.

To many stalkers a negative relationship is better than no relationship at all.

▶▶▶▶ **Document the stalking**

Don't delete answering machine messages. Date letters, cards and gifts and keep them in a secure, lockable location. Detail all unwanted communication with dates and times for future investigation and action.

▶▶▶▶ **Protect your information**

Only give your address and phone number to trusted people and businesses. Destroy old mail as it may contain private information. Get an unlisted phone number and a lockable mailbox, or a post office box.

▶▶▶▶ **Inform people you can trust**

Tell your family, friends, child's school, workmates, and, if appropriate, trusted neighbours you are being stalked. They can offer a support network which is important for your emotional well-being as well as your safety. Also, if they are unaware of your situation they may give the stalker information about you. If you can, provide them with a photo or description of the stalker and vehicle which may help record their movements.