

WHAT IS STALKING?

New Hampshire passed a stalking law in July, 1993. This makes it a crime if someone is repeatedly following you or appearing at your home, or engaging in threatening conduct. If the stalker is causing you to fear for your safety, you should report the conduct to the local police.

WHAT CAN THE POLICE DO?

The police will investigate your complaint. If the offender has not yet committed a crime, a formal warning will be issued and recorded. There may be other related crimes such as trespass, harassment, violating a restraining order and vandalism, that the offender can be charged with.

WHAT STEPS CAN I DO TO HELP POLICE?

First, if you do not have a restraining order, and you have had some type of relationship with the offender, you may go to the Local District or Superior Court where you reside and obtain a restraining order. This protective order will order the offender to leave you alone and stay away from you and your family. Any violations will subject the offender to immediate arrest.

Second, you should also keep a journal of any attempts made by the offender to contact or intimidate you. Keep all mail, gifts and/or phone messages for evidence to be turned over to the police. Report each contact.

Next, tell your family, neighbors, and employer so they can be on the look-out if the offender attempts contact you.

WHAT SAFETY STEPS CAN I TAKE?

Consider a portable cell phone. Change your phone number to an unlisted number. Screen your calls through the use of Caller I.D. or an answering machine. Vary your travel, shopping and social habits. Request the local police to send a crime prevention officer to inspect your residence and offer home security tips. Consider a self defense course or non-lethal weapon for self defense. Consult with the local safe shelter - In the Seacoast area of New Hampshire contact "Haven" at 1-800-854-3552.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THE STALKER IS ARRESTED?

When the police arrest the offender in most cases there will be a bail hearing. The judge can order the offender to stay away from you, and may in some cases here in NH, order the defendant to wear an electronic bracelet which will set off an alarm if the offender goes near your residence. The Dover, NH City Prosecutor's Office will contact you and explain more about how the system works. A second type of system can be installed on your phone which only requires you to push a panic button if you see the offender, and the local police will respond immediately. Both systems are free of charge to the victim.

TRIAL/SENTENCING

If the offender wants a trial, you will be required to testify in Court. In Dover, NH, a trained volunteer advocate will be assigned to your case, and upon request an advocate can accompany you to Court. If you are uncomfortable at the Court, you can request to stay in the City Prosecutor's Office until you are called. The Prosecutor will meet with you before the trial and explain what questions will be asked. Most cases do not go to trial. The offender agrees to plead guilty for a recommended sentence. You will be asked for your input. In most cases first time offenders will be ordered into counseling and probation with a suspended jail sentence.