What is Stalking?
Stalking is any repetitive, unwanted contact between a stalker and a victim, which may include one person's harassing, obsessive or threatening behavior towards another person. Stalkers are obsessed with controlling their victims' actions and feelings.

Stalking became a crime in Virginia on April 15, 1992.
The Virginia law (18.2-60.3) states that "any person who on more than one occasion engages in conduct directed at another person with the intent to place, or with the knowledge that the conduct places, that other person in reasonable fear of death, criminal sexual assault, or bodily injury to that other person or to that other person's spouse or child shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor."
Anyone having three convictions for stalking within a five-year period shall be guilty of a Class 6 felony.
A person can be charged with stalking for willfully and repeatedly:
- Following or appearing within the sight of another person without that person's permission.
- Confronting another individual in a public or private place.
- Appearing at the work place or residence of another.
- Contacting by phone, mail, or e-mail.

The Good News
The new law will prevent some potential stalkers from stalking. Others will stop stalking after they have been arrested/prosecuted/convicted once or twice.

The Bad News
- Some stalkers will never stop stalking. These stalkers have the greatest potential for killing their victims. Their compulsion to terrorize the victim overrides any fear of punishment. No law will stop them.
- A victim can best assess the stalker's potential for violence. Likewise, a victim can best choose what action he or she need to take to stay safe. This may mean "hiding", pressing charges and then hiding, or staying and utilizing the law enforcement community and courts.
- The sad truth is that no one can promise a victim that if he or she hide, the stalker won't find him or her. Even given the best efforts, it is impossible for the law enforcement officials and the court system to guarantee the complete safety of a victim.
- Stalking is defined as the willful, malicious and repeated following or harassing of another person. The victims, usually women, live in constant fear of their stalkers - which include former spouses, ex-partners, or strangers. The impact of stalking on victims is commonly minimized by society.

What to Do if You Are Stalked
• The first thing a victim of a stalking must do is go to the police and file criminal charges and/or obtain a restraining order. The situation will not go away by itself. Restraining orders may, however, increase the threat of violence. Request that law enforcement agencies log your complaint each time you call whether they respond or not. Request a copy of the report.

• Notify the stalker to stop. Your attorney or you can send a registered letter to the stalker stating that he must stop the behavior immediately.

• Tell someone. Do not attempt to deal with the situation alone. Tell a friend or family member about the stalking and document the stalker's behavior. List date, time, place, what happened, any witnesses, and give a copy of the information to a friend or relative for safekeeping.

• Develop a support system. Keep in touch with friends who are supportive and understanding.

• Never underestimate the stalker's potential for violence. Take all threats seriously. Not all threats are verbal, some nonverbal threats may be sending unwanted notes, cards, or gifts.

• Do not attempt to communicate with the stalker. The stalker may misinterpret this communication as a form of encouragement.

• Use an answering machine and get an unlisted phone number. Use the answering machine to screen your calls. Have emergency numbers posted by the phone. Consider getting the Caller ID option from the local phone company.

• If you are being followed, go to a safe area, DO NOT DRIVE HOME. Drive to the nearest police station or a busy place. Use your horn to attract attention.

• Form a contingency plan. Keep all critical phone numbers handy. Keep a packed suitcase in the trunk of the car, or in a ready location for quick departure. Keep reserve money handy. Keep gas in the car, back up keys with a friend you trust, and always alert law enforcement and family and friends of the situation and potential crisis.

• Give friends, co-workers, relatives and neighbors a description of the stalker. Ask them to watch for the stalker, document everything they see and give a written account to you.

• Take Pictures. When you see the stalker, try to take a photograph if it can be done safely.

• Save all written material. Save and date all cards, letters, notes and envelopes from the stalker.

• Keep all legal documents. Obtain and keep copies of warrants, protective orders, court orders, etc.

Are You Being Stalked?

• Stalking is difficult to identify at first. Initially a victim may not feel there is any cause for alarm and may even feel flattered by the attention. If the behavior escalates and becomes more overt, it presents a very real threat to the victim.

• Anyone can be a victim of stalking. Dating and domestic violence survivors can be victims of stalking. Domestic stalkers use threats that only the victim will recognize. One out of 20 adults will be stalked in his or her lifetime. Twenty percent of stalking cases end in murder; many cases start or end as sexual assault.
Safety Suggestions

- Obtain a post office box, and have the post office send mail to your new post office box. Report threats sent by mail to the FBI.

- Give your address and phone number to as few people as possible. Get an unlisted telephone number. Use an answering machine and use it to screen your calls. Consider getting the Caller ID option from the local phone company. Report threatening phone calls to the telephone company and the local police.

- Trace your calls: Use *69, call trace (directly after call), if off-campus and available in your area. If on-campus, while the caller is still on the line, click to hang up, touch *57 (call trace), then click back over to the caller. You may then hang up at any time. Immediately after the call, phone the police to report the call and have them trace the number.

- Form a contingency plan. Keep all critical phone numbers handy. Keep a packed suitcase in the trunk of the car, or in a ready location for quick departure. Keep reserve money handy. Keep gas in the car and back up keys with a friend you trust.

- Inform professional organizations that they are to provide no one with information about you.

- Seek a trespass warning from your local police.

- Lock all doors at home, in the dorm, and in your car. Use dead bolt locks whenever possible.

- If you are being followed, go to a safe area, DO NOT DRIVE HOME. Drive to the nearest police station or a busy place. Use your horn to attract attention.

- If you move, don't leave a "paper trail". Don't have anything forwarded to your new address.

Taking Care of Yourself

- Develop a support system. Keep in touch with friends who are supportive and understanding. Tell someone about each encounter with the stalker. You can call your local domestic violence shelter, victim witness program, or counseling centers for support.

- You may want to seek assistance. You may begin to experience rage, terror, suspicion, and inability to trust anyone, depression, changes in sleeping and/or eating patterns, exhaustion, and/or frequent crying spells, etc. You are not going crazy. Your body and mind are reacting to the extreme stress caused by the
continuing victimization. Talking to someone who is trained to work with victims
and survivors may help alleviate some of the symptoms that are interfering in
other aspects of your life.

- You have done nothing to provoke the stalking. Stalking is never the victims’
fault. Know that what is happening to you is not okay, not your fault, and not
caused by anything you have done.

**Psychological Effects on Victim/Survivors Include:**
- Anger
- Fear
- Depression
- Inability to trust
- Changes in sleeping and/or eating patterns
- Exhaustion and/or frequent crying spells
- Inability to concentrate on your schoolwork
- Declining academic performance

**Stalkers Can Be Anyone**

...a stranger, another student, a co-worker, an ex-boyfriend or a spouse.

- Stalkers can be male or female.
- Stalkers tend to have a high intelligence level, and
  o they know the stalking laws;
  o they know how to skirt the law;
  o they have a A Wizard of Oz mentality-behind the scenes controlling
    people; and
  o they have a history of failed relationships.

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  hiding; pressing charges and then hiding; or staying and utilizing the law
  enforcement community and courts.

- The sad truth is that no one can promise a victim that if he or she hides, the stalker
  won't find him or her. Even given the best efforts, it is impossible for the law
  enforcement officials and the court system to guarantee the complete safety of a
  victim.

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  stalking on victims is commonly minimized by society.
Campus Stalking

- The college campus is a stalker's dream because it is a closed environment and it is easy to get a student's schedule. A student's movements are predictable and access to residences as well as to academic buildings may be easy for the stalker.
- Never leave your dorm room unlocked, even if you are inside the room. Think safety.
- Some stalkers prey on students by E-mail. If you are a victim of unwanted E-mail communication, contact the campus police.
- Other tools stalkers use on college campuses are the telephone, the Internet, peers, fitness centers, clubs, and advertisements for models.
- Be cautious of tutors. Do not answer blind ads for tutoring sessions; use tutors recommended by the professor. Never meet a tutor alone in your room. Always arrange to meet in a public place, such as the library or computer lab.

George Mason University Guidelines for Stalking Incidents

Guidelines for victim:

This list of procedures is not meant to take the place of legal action.
Get advice from police or legal support for official action.

1. It is hard to handle this alone. Get help. There are resources on campus to give you options and support.
2. Call the police non-emergency line and report the incident as suspected stalking. In an emergency call 911.
3. Call Sexual Assault Services, Counseling Center, and Women’s Center for support and assistance.
4. Keep a journal of stalking incidents (date, time, place, event, and witnesses).
5. Do not walk or ride alone. Call the University Escort Services or stay in the company of people you know and trust. University Escort Services provides trained escorts who can accompany students on campus after dark. These services are provided free of charge and are available 7 days a week.
6. Change your travel routes frequently.
7. Consider seeking a police trespass warning for the suspected stalker, and/or asking the University’s Judicial Officer to put the suspected stalker on notice that he or she is to leave you alone.
8. Ask your friends, family, and classmates to support your decision to remain separate from the suspected stalker.
9. Identify as much as you can about your stalker, such as descriptive data or student status.
10. Save any evidence such as:
    o notes, gifts, objects, photos
    o printed email messages
    o voice messages
11. If you receive suspicious packages or mail, this should be reported to the police as soon as possible.
12. Get caller ID if possible or let voicemail answer incoming calls. Use *57 on campus and *69 off campus.
13. Fill out a Directory Hold Form from the Registrar’s Office to make your personal information unavailable and omitted from the telephone directory.

14. Do not assume you are "overreacting." Trust your instincts. Stalking is not a harmless game or a form of flattery. Use all of your resources to protect yourself.
   - Take a self-defense class
   - Lock your doors
   - Carry pepper spray, not mace
   - Carry a personal alarm

For more information about legal options or for legal assistance, contact the following:

**Police Department:** Tell police facts of incident to document what happened for possible criminal investigation. Call department in locality where incident occurred – if on campus, call GMU Police. Criminal cases may result in jail and/or fines imposed.

**University Judicial Officer:** Tell Judicial Officer facts of incident if both victim and accused are students. Judicial proceedings may result in an academic sanction, such as probation, suspension, or expulsion, against the accused if found guilty.

**Civil Attorney:** Contact a private civil attorney to initiate a civil proceeding against the accused stalker. Civil lawsuits may result in monetary damages paid to the victim.