

Stop Street Harassment

Alabama

A variety of street harassment actions are illegal in Alabama, including obscene language, flashing, following, and groping. Here are the laws and reporting procedures you need to know.

Verbal Harassment

There are five laws that can apply to various types of verbal harassment in Alabama.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 13A, Chap. 11 §7](#)

In Alabama, it is illegal for someone to intentionally cause public inconvenience, annoyance or alarm by:

- Using abusive or obscene language.
- Making an obscene gesture in a public place.
- Making unreasonable noise.
- Obstructing vehicle or pedestrian traffic.
- Engaging in a fight or threatening behavior.

If a harasser shouts at you, uses abusive, offensive or violent language, or causes a serious disruption in public – such as repeatedly blocking your path or harassing multiple people – you can report her or him for disorderly conduct.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or 3 months in jail.

Harassment

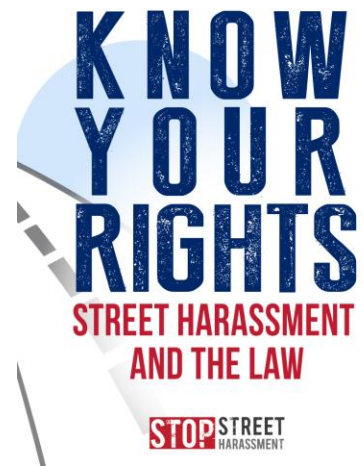
[Title 13A, Chap. 11 §8a](#)

In Alabama, it is illegal for anyone with the intent to harass, annoy, or alarm you to:

- Direct abusive or obscene language to you.
- Make an obscene gesture toward you.
- Subject you to physical contact like shoving and kicking.
- Threaten you, either verbally or nonverbally, with the intent to carry out the threat and in a manner that would cause a reasonable person to fear for his/her safety.

You can report street harassers who make overtly sexual references to you, threaten to hurt you, or touch or strike you in any way. The actions do not have to be repeated – you can report harassment the first time it happens.

Penalty: Harassment is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or 3 months in jail.



Stop Street Harassment

Loitering

[Title 13A, Chap. 11 §9](#)

Alabama's loitering law could potentially protect you from street harassment in two ways.

1. It is illegal to loiter near a school.

If street harassment happens to you in or near a school, college, or university and the harasser does not have a custodial relationship with a student or a legitimate reason for being there, you can report that person under this law. Then the police or school authorities can ask him or her to leave.

2. It is illegal to loiter in a public place for the purpose of engaging in prostitution or an act of "deviate sexual intercourse," defined as "an act of sexual gratification between persons not married to each other involving the sex organs of one person and the mouth or anus of another."

If a harasser appears to be loitering and makes remarks about prostitution or oral or anal sex, you can report that person for loitering.

Penalty: Loitering is a violation, punishable by a fine of up to \$200 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Menacing

[Title 13A, Chap. 6 §23](#)

In Alabama, it is illegal for anyone to, by physical action, intentionally place you or attempt to place you in fear of imminent, serious physical injury.

If a street harasser does something to make you fear you might be hurt, such as following you or blocking your path, this may be considered menacing.

Penalty: Menacing is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$3,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Prostitution

[Title 13A, Chap. 12 §121b](#)

Soliciting someone for the purposes of prostitution is illegal.

If a street harasser solicits sexual activity from you, you can report him/ her. You can also make the case that harassers who yell, "How much?!" or offer you money, or anything else, for sex, even in jest, are soliciting prostitution.

Stop Street Harassment doesn't oppose consensual sex work, but we do think it's inappropriate for a street harasser to make assumptions about your sexual availability and make you feel uncomfortable.

Penalty: Soliciting prostitution is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$6,000 and/or up to a year in jail.

Stop Street Harassment

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Title 13A, Chap. 6, §68](#)

A person commits indecent exposure in Alabama if s/he knowingly exposes his or her genitals to you in a way that is likely to cause affront or alarm and with the intent to arouse or satisfy sexual desire.

If a harasser flashes or otherwise exposes him or herself to you in a public place, such as a park, on public transportation, or in a store, and you feel alarmed or upset, you can report that person for indecent exposure.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$6,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Public Lewdness

[Title 13A, Chap. 12 §130](#)

A street harasser commits public lewdness if s/he exposes his or her genitals or anus in a public place and “is reckless about whether another may be present who will be offended or alarmed by his [or her] act,” or commits any lewd act that is likely to be observed by others who would be affronted or alarmed. The statute doesn’t specifically define a lewd act, meaning this law could encompass a variety of the obscene things street harassers do in public.

If you see a harasser flash anyone or engage in public masturbation, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Public lewdness is a Class C misdemeanor and is punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 3 months in jail.

Following

If you think someone is following you, you can call 911 right away, the first time it happens. You do not have to wait for that person to commit a crime.

Stalking in the Second Degree

[Title 13A, Chap. 6 § 90.1](#)

Stalking in Alabama occurs when, with an improper purpose, a person repeatedly harasses or follows someone and harms that person mentally or physically.

If the same person on more than one occasion follows you or harasses you and you feel harmed or threatened, s/he may be found guilty of stalking.

Penalty: Stalking in the second degree is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$3,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Stop Street Harassment

Groping

Harassment

[Title 13A, Chap. 11 §8a](#)

Alabama's harassment law not only protects you from verbal harassment, but also from any unwanted physical contact.

If a harasser touches or grabs you, especially on an intimate or private part of your body, you can report him or her for harassment in Alabama.

Penalty: Harassment is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 3 months in jail.

Sexual Abuse

[Title 13A, Chap. 6 §66](#)

A harasser commits sexual abuse in the first degree if s/he "subjects [you] to sexual contact by forcible compulsion."

If anyone touches you in a sexual way, such as grabbing your butt or breasts, against your will in a public place, you can report him or her for sexual abuse.

Penalty: Sexual abuse in the first degree is a Class C felony, which is punishable by between 366 days and 10 years in jail.

Reporting Crimes to the Police

- Call 911 for help if:
 - The crime is in progress,
 - You or someone else is physically hurt or have been threatened with physical violence, and/or
 - You can provide information about who may have committed a crime.
- Call the local police office's non-emergency number to submit a report afterward. For example, in Birmingham, this number is (205) 328-9311 and in Montgomery it's (334) 241-2651. In Mobile, it is (251) 208-7211 and in Huntsville it is (256) 722-7100. Be prepared to provide them with:
 - When it happened (date and time).
 - Where it happened (street location, store location, bus line or bus stop, park name, etc.).
 - Who is reporting (your name and contact information).
 - A description of what happened.
 - The name and contact information of any witnesses, if you spoke to any.
 - It can be helpful to include the law the crime falls under, such as harassment or harassing communication in Alabama Law [1975, § 13A-11-8](#). If you're not sure which law you should use to report an incident of street harassment, just tell the police what happened and s/he or the district attorney's office can determine the appropriate charges.
 - A description of the harasser/s.

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- Many police departments also have online reporting forms, for example, [Central Alabama](#), [Metro Alabama](#), and [Mobile, Alabama](#) have a Crime Stopper Web form where you can report crimes like harassment and sexual assault and you can even upload a photo of the perpetrator. Visit your local police department website for information.
- Some police departments also allow you to anonymously send a tip about a non-emergency incident, such as, for example, if you see a group of people routinely harassing passersby at the same location.
 - In Central Alabama, you can do this by texting CACS and the tip or crime, to CRIMES or 274637.
 - For Huntsville, you can text 53CRIMES followed by the tip/crime, to the same number.
 - Also available in Huntsville is a Crime Stoppers app called “[TipSoft](#)” for iPhone and Android phones. This allows you to communicate tips anonymously, and send videos and pictures.
- Once you have reported a crime, if you provided your contact information, you should receive a call with a police report case number within a few days and you may have to answer follow-up questions. Save a copy of the police report for your records.

If someone tries to tell you that street harassment “isn’t a big deal,” or isn’t illegal, don’t buy it. You always have the right to be free from sexual harassment and assault in public.