

Louisiana

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in Louisiana, including verbal harassment, up-skirt photos, indecent exposure, following, and groping. Here are the laws and reporting procedures you need to know.

Verbal Harassment

There are two laws in Louisiana that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

Disturbing the Peace

[§14.103](#)

Louisiana’s law against disturbing the peace prohibits a number of actions, including the most common street harassment behaviors. The relevant section reads:

“Disturbing the peace is the doing of any of the following in such manner as would foreseeably disturb or alarm the public: [...] Addressing any offensive, derisive, or annoying words to any other person who is lawfully in any street, or other public place; or call him [or her] by any offensive or derisive name, or make any noise or exclamation in his presence and hearing with the intent to deride, offend, or annoy him, or to prevent him from pursuing his lawful business, occupation, or duty.”

Essentially, if you are lawfully in a public place, you have the right to be free from offensive verbal harassment. If someone insults you, uses obscene language toward you, or otherwise verbally harasses you *or* prevents you from pursuing the business of your day, you can report him or her for disturbing the peace in Louisiana.

Louisiana’s law seems like the ideal statute for addressing street harassment, as the prohibited acts correspond very closely to typical verbal street harassment. But nonetheless, this is a law that regulates speech, and so to make your best case when reporting a disturbance of the peace in Louisiana, we recommend taking a look at our guide to [fighting words and the First Amendment](#).

Penalty: Disturbing the peace in Louisiana is punishable by a fine of up to \$100 and/or up to 90 days in jail.

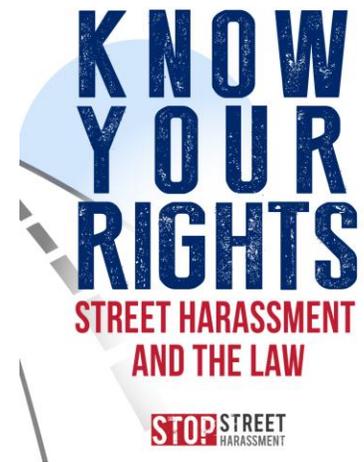
Soliciting for Prostitutes

[§14.83](#)

Soliciting for prostitution is illegal in Louisiana. 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.



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Penalty: Soliciting for prostitutes is punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail. However, if the person being solicited is under 18 years old, the penalty rises to a fine of up to \$50,000 and/or between 15 and 50 years in prison. If the person being solicited is under 14 years old, the fine may be as high as \$75,000 and prison time may be between 25 and 50 years.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Video Voyeurism

§14.283

It is illegal in Louisiana for anyone to photograph or videotape a non-consenting person for “a lewd and lascivious purpose.” It is also illegal for anyone to disseminate such an image or recording – such as by text message or e-mail – or to share it on the Internet.

If a harasser takes an up-skirt photo of you, or records some other image or video of the private area of your body, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Video voyeurism is punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 2 years in prison. If the photograph or recording is of “any portion of the female breast below the top of the areola or of any portion of the pubic hair, anus, cleft of the buttocks, vulva, or genitals,” the fine may be as high as \$10,000 and/or between 1 and 5 years in prison.

Indecent Exposure

Obscenity

§14.106

In Louisiana, there are two aspects to the indecent exposure law.

1. It is illegal for a harasser to expose his or her genitals, butt, or breasts in a public place in a way that either arouses sexual desire, appeals to prurient (sexual) interest, or is patently offensive.

If a street harasser flashes or exposes him or herself to you, you can report him/her.

2. It is also illegal for a harasser to solicit or entice an unmarried person under the age of 17 to expose him or herself in public.

If you are under 17 and a street harasser asks you expose yourself to him or her, or if this happens to a young person you care for, you can report the harasser for obscenity.

Penalty: Obscenity is punishable by a fine of between \$1,000 and \$2,500 and/or between 6 months and 3 years in prison. If the forms of obscenity described here are directed at someone less than 17 years of age, the penalty may be as high as a fine of \$10,000 and /or 5 years in prison.

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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

§14.40.2

Stalking is defined as “intentional and repeated following or harassing ... that would cause a reasonable person to feel alarmed or to suffer emotional distress.” Harassing means the “repeated pattern of verbal communications or nonverbal behavior without invitation.”

If you experience street harassment more than once from the same person, whether someone repeatedly follows you in your neighborhood, where you work, or near your school, repeatedly communicates with you without your consent, and/or repeatedly gives you reason to fear bodily harm or sexual assault, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is punishable by a fine of between \$500 and \$1,000 and between 30 days and 1 year in jail. Anyone convicted of stalking in Louisiana must also participate in either a psychiatric evaluation and/or court-approved counseling.

Groping

Simple Battery

§14.33

Louisiana law defines battery as “the intentional use of force or violence upon the person of another,” but a representative of the state police department defined it to a SSH staff member by phone as touching someone without his or her consent.

If a street harasser grabs your crotch, this is sexual battery; but any other touching without your consent – of your thigh, your breasts, your butt, or even grabbing your hand or your arm in the context of street harassment or sexual harassment – would be considered simple battery, and you can report this to the police.

Penalty: Simple battery is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Sexual Battery

§14.43.1

Sexual battery occurs when someone intentionally touches a non-consenting person’s genitals or anus with their own body or with any instrument *or* intentionally causes that person to come in contact with the harasser’s genitals or anus.

If a street harasser grabs your buttocks or your crotch, rubs against you, or touches you in any other sexual way, you can report him/her.

- Note: Sexual battery is also a crime that may be considered a hate crime in Louisiana if it is done with any intentional bias on the part of the harasser. If a harasser indicates any hate or bias against you because of your actual or perceived race, age, gender, religion, color, creed,

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disability, sexual orientation, national origin, or ancestry, you can report this to the police as well. An indication of hate might be a gendered, racial, homophobic, or transphobic slur.

Penalty: Sexual battery is punishable by up to 10 years in prison. Sexual battery that constitutes a hate crime may incur an additional sentence of a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison.

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
 - 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 New Orleans, this number is (504) 821-2222 and in Baton Rouge it's (225) 389-2000. In Shreveport, it is (318) 673-2583 and in Metairie, it is (504) 835-3116. 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 witnesses, if you spoke to any.
 - It can be helpful to include the law the crime falls under, such as Stalking, [La. R.S. 14:40.2](#). 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.

- Many police departments also have online reporting forms. Visit your local police department for information.

- Some police departments also allow you to anonymously send a tip about a non-emergency incident, for example if you see a group of people routinely harassing passersby at the same location.
 - In New Orleans, you can do this by calling either 504-822-1111 or 1-877-903-STOP or by using their [webform](#). The New Orleans webform can also be used for Metairie.
 - In Baton Rouge, you can call either 225-344-STOP or 877-723-7867. You can also text the number 274637 and begin the message with CS225, or submit a [webform](#).
 - In Shreveport, you can do this by calling 318-673-7373, submitting a [webtip](#), or by texting 274637 and beginning the message with CADD0.

- Once you've reported a crime, if you've provided your contact information, within a few days, you will receive a call with a police report case number and 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.