

## Stop Street Harassment

# Wisconsin

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

### Verbal Harassment

Wisconsin has two laws that prohibit various forms of verbal harassment.

#### ***Disorderly Conduct***

##### [Chapter 947, §01](#)

In Wisconsin, a person can be charged with disorderly conduct if s/he is in a public *or* private place and, under circumstances in which the conduct tends to cause or provoke a disturbance, engages in behaviors that are:

- Violent
- Abusive
- Indecent
- Profane
- Boisterous
- Unreasonably loud

Many examples of street harassment could fall into these categories, such as shouting lewd or sexually explicit comments, or a group of harassers standing on the street, or in another public place, loudly harassing people walking by.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class B misdemeanor, which can result in a fine not to exceed \$1,000 or imprisonment not to exceed 90 days, or both.

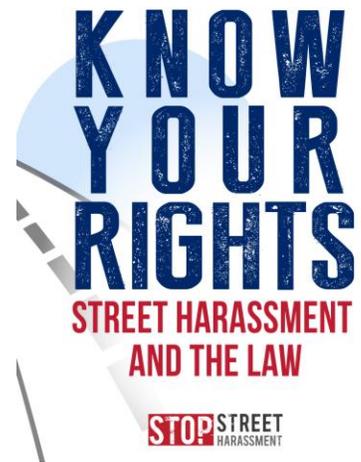
#### ***Harassment***

##### [Chapter 947, §13](#)

A person can be charged with harassment in Wisconsin if s/he repeatedly commits acts or engages in a course of conduct (a series of acts over a period of time) that harass or intimidate another person and serve no legitimate purpose.

If someone makes intimidating, inappropriate or offensive comments to you more than once, such as your bus stop, outside a corner store, or walking past a construction site, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Harassment is a Class B forfeiture, which can result in a fine not to exceed \$1,000. It rises to the level of Class A misdemeanor if the act is accompanied by a credible threat, and the possible penalty increases to a fine not to exceed \$10,000 or imprisonment not to exceed 9 months, or both.



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### Unlawful Filming/Photographing

#### ***Representations Depicting Nudity***

##### [Chapter 942, §9](#)

In Wisconsin, it is illegal for anyone to photograph or record another person when s/he is nude or partially nude, without that person's knowledge and when s/he is someplace where s/he should have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

If a harasser films or photographs you someplace like public restrooms, dressing rooms, locker rooms, and hotel rooms, you can report him/her.

Unfortunately, this law does not address photos or recordings of someone's intimate parts, taking without their permission, including in public spaces like buses and streets.

Penalty: Representations depicting nudity is a Class A misdemeanor and the possible penalty is a fine not to exceed \$10,000 or imprisonment not to exceed 9 months, or both.

### Indecent Exposure

#### ***Lewd and Lascivious Behavior***

##### [Chapter 944, Subchapter IV, §20](#)

It is unlawful for someone to "publicly and indecently" expose his or her genitals.

If a harasser flashes or otherwise exposes him or herself to you or is masturbating in front of you, and you feel alarmed or affronted, you can report that person.

Penalty: Lewd and lascivious behavior is a Class A misdemeanor and can result in a fine of up to \$10,000 or imprisonment for up to nine months, or both.

### 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***

##### [Chapter 940, Subchapter II, §32](#)

Stalking is illegal in Wisconsin. A person commits the crime of stalking if, in at least a series of two or more incidents, s/he acts in a way that would cause a reasonable person to suffer serious emotional distress or fear bodily injury or death including by approaching or confronting the person, or maintaining a visual or physical proximity to that person.

If the same person follows you more than once, shows up outside your home or workplace more than once, or harasses you more than once, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class I felony that can result in a fine of up to \$10,000 or imprisonment up to 3 years and 6 months, or both. There may be more severe penalties if the defendant has a previous conviction for a violent crime, the stalking is combined with assault of the victim, or the victim is under 18 years old.

## Stop Street Harassment

### Groping

#### ***Fourth Degree Sexual Assault***

#### [Chapter 940, Subchapter II, §225](#)

In Wisconsin, it is illegal for a person to have sexual contact with a non-consenting person. Sexual contact includes touching someone's genitals, buttocks, or breasts (if female), over or through his/her clothing.

If a street harasser touches you in a sexual or inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Fourth Degree Sexual Assault is a Class A misdemeanor, resulting in a fine of up to \$10,000 or imprisonment up to 9 months, or both.

### 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 Milwaukee, this number is (414) 933-4444. 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, contact information, date of birth).
  - 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 Harassment, 947.013. 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, for example, the Green Bay Police Department has an [Online Reporting of Crime and Activity System](#).
  
- 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. Visit your local police department website for information.
  - In Milwaukee, you can do this via [this online form](#), and in Madison, [via this form](#).
  
- 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.