

**KNOW
YOUR
RIGHTS**

**STREET HARASSMENT
AND THE LAW**

STOP! STREET
HARASSMENT

Know Your Rights: Street Harassment and the Law

Lead Author: Talia Hagerty

With: Holly Kearl, Rickelle Mason, and Whitney Ripplinger

December 2013



About the Author and Collaborators

Talia Hagerty is a peace economics consultant working on a variety of projects that ensure the equitable economic participation of all. She holds a B.A. in Economics from Eckerd College and an M.S. in Global Affairs with a concentration in Peacebuilding from New York University. Talia blogs about peacebuilding, human rights, economic development, and witty responses to street harassment at www.theoryofchange.wordpress.com. Follow her on Twitter: @taliahagerty.

Holly Kearl is the founder of Stop Street Harassment. She's written two books about street harassment, given 125 talks, 200 media interviews, and written 45 published articles. She began her work on this issue in 2007 when she wrote her master's thesis on the subject at George Washington University. She also is a consultant to the United Nations and works part-time with The OpEd Project.

Whitney Ripplinger is a graduate of Brigham Young University and the University of Virginia School of Law. She works as a judicial clerk in Virginia Beach and plans to practice law in Virginia.

Rickelle Mason is a senior at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte where she is majoring in Psychology and receiving a minor in Women's and Gender Studies. She has worked for several years in the university's Community Psychology Research Lab, which was recently the recipient of the "Outstanding Training in Community Psychology" International Award.

Special thanks to Elizabeth Bolton and Alan Kearl for reviewing and editing sections of the toolkit and Amy Mastrine for creating the cover art and website graphics.

Thank You, Donors

This toolkit was made possible by the **generous contributors** to Stop Street Harassment, a 501 (c)(3) organization based in Reston, Virginia.

Stop Street Harassment works to document and address gender-based street harassment through public education and community mobilization. We run awareness campaigns such as International Anti-Street Harassment Week, work with entities such as the United Nations and the NYC and DC City Councils, and hold prevention events. Learn more at: www.StopStreetHarassment.org.

Disclaimer: This Information Does Not Constitute Legal Advice

It's important to know when reading or using our guide that **the information presented here does not constitute legal advice**. Stop Street Harassment is not a law firm and the information in this guide and on our website does not replace the advice of an attorney. We cannot provide guidance on a specific case, and we cannot guarantee that law enforcement or justice officials will interpret the laws included here as we have interpreted them.

We have collected and analyzed each state's laws to the best of our ability, but laws do change — sometimes quickly. The outcome of a specific case will be determined by the most current state law, precedent in your state, and the details of the specific event. For advice on an individual case, contact a lawyer you trust. If you find a law in our guide that is out of date or misrepresented, please [contact us](#).

Table of Contents

1. Note from the Executive Director	1
2. Introduction	2
a. Why and When to Report Street Harassment	3
b. What to Expect When You Report Street Harassment	4
c. Degrees of Crimes	5
d. Criminal vs. Civil Remedies	6
e. Assault and Battery	6
f. Following and Stalking	6
g. Hate Crimes	7
h. Engaging With Police	8
i. Direct Responses to Street Harassment	10
j. Reporting Verbal Harassment: Freedom of Speech, Fighting Words, and the “Reasonable Man” Standard	11
k. Children and Minors	13
l. Harassment At (or Near) School	13
m. Public Intoxication	14
n. On Sexist Laws	14
3. 50 States	15
a. Alabama	16
b. Alaska	21
c. Arizona	26
d. Arkansas	32
e. California	39
f. Colorado	45
g. Connecticut	51
h. Delaware	57
i. District of Columbia	63
j. Florida	70
k. Georgia	76
l. Hawaii	81
m. Idaho	86
n. Illinois	90
o. Indiana	96
p. Iowa	102
q. Kansas	107
r. Kentucky	111
s. Louisiana	115
t. Maine	119

u. Maryland	125
v. Massachusetts	129
w. Michigan	136
x. Minnesota	142
y. Mississippi	147
z. Missouri	152
aa. Montana	157
bb. Nebraska	161
cc. Nevada	165
dd. New Hampshire	170
ee. New Jersey	177
ff. New Mexico	183
gg. New York	189
hh. North Carolina	196
ii. North Dakota	200
jj. Ohio	204
kk. Oklahoma	208
ll. Oregon	212
mm. Pennsylvania	215
nn. Rhode Island	221
oo. South Carolina	225
pp. South Dakota	229
qq. Tennessee	233
rr. Texas	237
ss. Utah	241
tt. Vermont	245
uu. Virginia	249
vv. Washington	254
ww. West Virginia	258
xx. Wisconsin	262
yy. Wyoming	265
4. Success Stories	269
5. The Best Laws, Advocating for Stronger Laws, and Anti-Street Harassment Ordinances	272
6. Related Resources	292

Note from the Executive Director

After years of dealing with leering, whistling, honking, catcalls, and sexually explicit comments at the hands of unknown men in public spaces, as well as being followed and even grabbed, I wrote my master's thesis on gender-based street harassment in 2007 at The George Washington University. Since then, I have devoted thousands of hours to researching, documenting, and addressing the issue.

Why Address Street Harassment?

For far too long, street harassment has been seen as “the way things are,” a compliment, or the fault of the harassed person. That needs to change. In reality, street harassment is about an abuse of power. It's about which people feel entitled to public spaces. It's often about disrespect. Street harassment has real consequences for harassed persons, often on a sub-conscious level.

- Frequent or severe street harassment can limit harassed person's access to public spaces by making them feel too unsafe to go certain places or to go to various locations at certain times of the day or night.
- People report changing hobbies and habits, altering routes and routines, avoiding certain bus stops or stores, missing out on night events, and even moving or changing jobs because of street harassers.

Because of the negative and often severe impacts it has, **street harassment is a human rights violation**. That is why we released this toolkit on the United Nations' Human Rights Day, December 10, 2013.

Ending Street Harassment

I believe that ending street harassment requires a multi-pronged approach, including education, awareness campaigns, examining its intersection with other social justice issues, and engaging the legal system.

While laws will never be THE answer—and in some cases they can be problematic when they are applied disproportionately to low-income people and persons of color—they are important. They can influence societal attitudes about what is and is not okay and create consequences to deter harassment. Also, as many harassers are repeat offenders, reporting incidents may prevent future crimes.

The intent of this toolkit is to equip people with the knowledge they need to stand up for their rights to safe public spaces and to report harassers, if they choose to do so. Another purpose is to allow people to see what laws exist in their state, understand which ones address street harassment well, and learn what elements could strengthen the existing laws in their states.

I hope you will find the information useful. And please don't hesitate to [reach out](#) if you have ideas or recommendations for improving the toolkit or if you find additional information we should include.

In Solidarity,

Holly Kearl
Stop Street Harassment Founder and Executive Director
December 10, 2013

Introduction

What Is Street Harassment?

Leering, catcalls, obscene comments, repeated requests for your phone number or name after you've clearly said no, following, flashing, and groping. These are common forms of sexual harassment in public spaces initiated by strangers that millions of people worldwide experience, especially girls and women.

While the term commonly used to describe this social problem is “street harassment,” and is the term we use in this toolkit, the term is meant to encompass all public spaces. Also, it's important to note that it refers only to interactions between strangers—of the opposite or same sex.

While it happens at a more frequent rate in cities, street harassment also is a problem in rural and suburban locations.

Street Harassment and the Law

In general, street harassment is not specifically criminalized the way sexual harassment in schools and the workplace is, despite its prevalence and the negative effects it has on harassed persons, especially women and LGBTQ individuals.

Fortunately, however, many common street harassment behaviors are already illegal. In fact, since at [least the late 1880s](#), some women have used these laws to report street harassers to the police.

If someone verbally harasses you, exposes him or herself to you, or gropes you, there is likely a law in your state that prohibits this inappropriate behavior. The Know Your Rights Toolkit explains what those laws are and how you can report street harassment using them.

The most important thing to know is that you always have the right to be safe from sexual harassment, violence, and sexual assault, of any kind, in every state. If you ever feel threatened or unsafe, you can call 911 immediately.

What's in the Toolkit?

This toolkit primarily covers verbal harassment, unlawful photographs/video recordings, indecent exposure, following, and groping. Physical assault, sexual assault, and rape are also illegal, but they are not covered in this document because there are many other places that collect those laws and offer help to survivors of those crimes.

The toolkit introduction covers definitions of commonly used legal terms, why and when to report street harassment, what to do if police are the harassers, and how laws specifically apply to minors.

The largest portion of the toolkit is the states section. Each state, and Washington, D.C., has its own section, organized alphabetically. In each state section, you will find the name of the different crimes, links to the legal codes so you can learn more, a description of the elements of each crime, examples of how street harassment relates to the crime, and the penalties a harasser might face.

The toolkit closing section includes examples of success stories, a discussion of the “best” laws, and information about how to advocate for stronger laws to better address common forms of street harassment.

Why and When to Report Street Harassment

Whether to report street harassment can be a difficult choice. You may feel that what happened to you wasn't that serious, worry that police won't believe you or won't do anything about it, or that, for a variety of reasons, you'll face more harassment by engaging police than by just getting on with your life.

At Stop Street Harassment, we believe that however you respond to street harassment — whether you report it, ignore it, or deal with the harasser directly — is a valid choice; there is no best way to deal with harassers. But reporting street harassment — especially serious violations like indecent exposure, following, or groping — there can be several positive outcomes.

Reasons to Report

- It can give you a sense of justice and empowerment.
- It may prevent future acts of harassment or more severe crimes.
- It can help raise awareness about how upsetting and inappropriate street harassment really is.

When to Report

You can report an act of street harassment as it happens, by calling 911 on the scene, or after the incident.

- The chances that a street harasser will be apprehended are greatest during and immediately after the incident.
- But if you decide later that something should be reported, you can still call your local police non-emergency number or file a report online.

What to Report

To make reporting easier — and to increase the chances that police take you seriously — we've provided the names of each crime that applies to street harassment in your state so that you can give police the most exact information possible. For example, you can say, "I'd like to report someone for disorderly conduct," or "sexual battery."

If you do report an incident of street harassment or think you might want to report it later, it helps to:

- Make sure you're safe before you do anything else.
- Take a deep breath. Try to stay calm. Street harassment is never your fault, and you're doing the right thing.
- If the crime you're reporting is in progress, call 911. If it has already happened, call your local non-emergency number.
- Ask anyone who saw the incident — whether a friend or a stranger — if s/he would be willing to serve as a witness for police. Take down his or her contact information and include it in your report.
- Write down everything you remember, including the time and place of the incident, what the harasser did and said, and a physical description of the harasser (eye color, hair color,

approximate height and build, age, etc.). Details can fade from your mind quickly, so even if you aren't sure you'll report something, it's a good idea to make thorough notes of what happened.

- If you do speak to an officer, try not to be intimidated. It's his or her job to ask you a lot of questions. Do your best to answer them, and know that you can always follow up with more information later.
- If an officer does ask what *you* were wearing, why you were out alone, or another irrelevant or victim-blaming question, it's ok to (politely) say, "I don't think that's relevant, sir/ma'am. The harasser was wearing..."

Also, it's important to note that many states have provisions that punish repeated behavior more severely. You may not know when a street harasser is a repeat offender, or is about to become one.

- Many states also punish street harassment and sexual harassment more severely if the offender is a government employee or the victim is a minor.
- If you are under 18 or you witness harassment of a young person or child, this is important information to report to the police.

What to Expect When You Report Street Harassment

If you decide to report a street harassment incident, here is what you can expect to happen. In order to get the best possible result, it's important to be patient (it can be a long process), know your rights, and be ready to advocate for them.

So You've Chosen to Report...

1. A police officer will file a report to begin the legal process.
 - a. If you report a crime that is in progress by calling 911, an officer will come to the scene and may arrest the person you are reporting right away.
 - b. Officers will attempt to apprehend the suspect after the incident has taken place if the suspect fled the scene when you called 911, or if you reported the incident at a later time. If the suspect is apprehended, s/he will be arrested.
 - c. When someone is arrested, police may hold him or her in custody (usually for 24 hours) and s/he may have to appear before a judge. Whether or not this happens depends on state law and the specifics of the case and the individual.
2. The prosecuting attorney, the lawyer who represents the government in criminal cases, decides whether to press charges against someone accused of committing a crime.
 - a. The police officer or detective tasked with investigating the crime will present the investigation to the prosecutor's office.
3. If the prosecutor's office decides to press charges, the defendant (the person being charged with a crime, in this case, the street harasser) will appear before a judge for an arraignment, where s/he will be formally notified of the charges filed against him or her.
4. At the arraignment, the defendant will enter a plea – either guilty or not guilty.

- a. If the charge is a misdemeanor and the defendant pleads guilty, the judge may proceed with sentencing, typically at a later hearing.
 - b. If the defendant pleads not guilty, a trial date will be set.
 - c. You may choose whether to be present at the arraignment.
5. After being charged, the defendant may be released from custody. A judge typically makes this decision, and s/he may or may not require the defendant to pay bail.
6. Before a trial, there may be a hearing, pre-trial meeting, or any number of delays in the process. This is normal – judicial processes can take a long time.

Your Rights

If you are the victim of the crime you have reported, you have certain rights throughout this process. You may have the right to a protective order or a no-contact order against the defendant if s/he is released from custody. Your legal rights may vary by state and according to the circumstances, so you should ask a police officer or someone from the prosecutor's office to explain your rights to you.

This is also a good time to find out the specifics of the legal process in your state, and your rights and responsibilities regarding pre-trial meetings, appearance at hearings and the trial, and testimony.

No Charge?

There are a variety of reasons why a street harassment charge may not be upheld, including [these ones](#). No matter the reason, we know it can be very frustrating after you've invested time and energy.

It won't be a complete waste though, because bringing street harassment to the attention of the justice system can help prevent it in the future.

Degrees of Crimes

On each state page, you will find a description of relevant crimes and their approximate penalties. In order to determine the penalty for a crime, you need to know its degree. Most states classify crimes in three ways. Violations or infractions are civil offenses that result in a ticket or citation (typically accompanied by a fine or some other penalty). Misdemeanors are more serious crimes and are usually punishable by up to one year in jail. Felonies are the most serious crimes and are punishable by time in prison, usually more than a year. Misdemeanors and felonies may also have fines associated with them.

Within these three categories, states may designate different degrees or classes, such as Class A, B, and C misdemeanors or first and second-degree felonies. Class A or first-degree crimes are usually the most serious. Class C (or D, or E, depending on the state) or third-degree crimes are usually the least serious.

Most street harassment crimes are misdemeanors, but you will find violations/infractions and felonies included in this toolkit as well. We've included the possible sentencing for each crime to give you an idea of the penalty a street harasser may face if convicted.

Criminal vs. Civil Remedies

This guide covers the criminal elements of street harassment behaviors that violate state law and therefore constitute a crime. We haven't covered every aspect of civil responses to street harassment. You can consult a lawyer in your state to explore when, where, and why you can file a lawsuit.

Assault and Battery

Assault and/or battery laws are not relevant to street harassment in every state, but when they are, you will find them listed under the "Verbal Harassment" or "Groping" sections of those states.

In many states, assault and battery are considered two separate crimes.

Assault: In general, a person commits an assault when, by word or action, s/he places another person in fear of receiving a battery.

Battery: A person commits a battery when s/he intentionally touches, strikes, or injures another person without that person's consent.

When assault and battery are defined as separate crimes, one can take place without the other.

- For example, someone can verbally assault you, but the situation might not escalate to battery.

Alternatively, in many states groping is considered battery because it is nonconsensual touching.

- Someone might commit battery by groping, but it needn't be preceded or followed by an assault.

We usually hear of assault and battery together because acts of violence such as fights are often preceded by verbal assault. However, in the case of street harassment, it may be just as likely that assault or battery happen independently of one another.

Keep in mind that these crimes are considered distinct *in general*.

In New York state, for example, a person commits assault when s/he causes physical injury to another person. As such, New York state does not have a separate law for battery.

See your individual state's page for relevant laws on assault and battery in the context of street harassment.

Following and Stalking

Followed Once?

Some states have specific laws that prohibit street harassers from following you the first time it happens, usually under their general harassment law.

- These states are: Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Kentucky, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania

Followed at Least Twice?

Every other state prohibits someone from following you at least twice (a "course of conduct") under a stalking or harassment law. There are many victim advocacy groups and organizations that address stalking and you can contact one of them, or local law enforcement office to get help.

You Can Always Call 911!

Regardless of your state's law, however, you can always call 911 if you think someone is following you (no matter if it's the first time or the fifth time) and you are afraid or feel unsafe, and regardless of whether that person has committed a crime yet.

- Use your cell phone (if you have one) to call 911 or ask a passerby, a neighbor, or someone in a nearby business to call for you.
- If the harasser can see or hear you, knowing that you're calling for help may be enough to deter him or her.
- Even if s/he flees, you can give the police a description of his or her behavior and physical appearance. You may be preventing a future crime.

Following is usually addressed in the harassment, disorderly conduct, or stalking laws of each state.

Hate Crimes

If street harassment is based on your race, gender identity, orientation, or another protected characteristic, it may be considered a hate crime. In our toolkit, we include hate crimes for the states that treat it as a specific offense. Most states allow bias motivation in ordinary criminal offenses to be taken into account as aggravating circumstances in sentencing but do not have a separate statute and so we do not include it.

The organization [Human Rights First found](#) that 45 states and D.C. either have separate hate crime legislation or allow bias motivation in ordinary criminal offenses to be taken into account as aggravating circumstances in sentencing. Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina, and Wyoming do not have any form of hate crime legislation. This is what they found:

- The laws of 30 states and D.C. punish bias crimes based on sexual orientation.
- The laws of 30 states and D.C. punish bias crimes based on disability.
- The laws of 26 states and D.C. punish bias crimes based on gender.
- The laws of 10 states and D.C. currently punish bias crimes based on transgender/gender identity.
- The laws of California, Connecticut, Washington D.C., Missouri, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, and Vermont punish bias crimes on the basis of all of the above-mentioned categories: race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, gender, and gender identity.

- Forty-two states and D.C. have either general or specific statutory provisions that criminalize institutional vandalism.

The [Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act](#) (passed in 2009), allows the federal government to provide assistance in the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes. When a local government is unable or unwilling to prosecute, this allows the federal government to step in.

Engaging with Police

There are several reasons why people may choose not to report street harassment and one of those is the requirement to work with police and other law enforcement officials.

While there are many upstanding, compassionate, and moral police officers, there is no guarantee that you will have the chance to work with one.

Reasons Why People Don't Report

Understandably, many people feel reluctant to involve police in minor, or even major, street harassment offenses. There are several legitimate reasons why:

- They may fear that the police won't respond, or won't believe them.
- They may fear the police will engage in victim-blaming by questioning their clothing or their choice to be out alone or late at night.
- Some people may feel that their communities are already over-policed and fear that the treatment a harasser will face from police or the justice system will be disproportionate to his or her offense.
 - For example, individuals and communities of color often face more severe outcomes from legal processes than their white counterparts.
- Other individuals may fear further harassment from police even when they are victims of a crime.
 - Police harassment of LGBTQ individuals is a real and serious issue in many cities around the United States.

At Stop Street Harassment, we believe that however you choose to respond to street harassment — whether you report it, ignore it, or deal with the harasser directly — is a valid choice. If you do want to report street harassment to the police, this guide can help. If you aren't sure, see our section on [Why and When to Report Street Harassment](#).

When Police are the Harassers

Unfortunately, **sometimes street harassment can come from police officers** themselves. It can be hard to know what to do in those cases, but you do have options. If an officer is making lewd comments to you, touching you inappropriately, or otherwise making you uncomfortable, the first step is to realize that these actions are not the lawful execution of his or her job: They're harassment.

If a police officer is harassing you, you have the right to do any of the following:

- Ask for his or her name and badge number. If you decide to file a complaint, this will be important information to include. Write it down or make a note in your phone.
- Walk away. If you are not being detained in relation to a crime, you do not have to talk to an officer. If an officer is speaking to you in a way that is clearly street harassment – such as, “Hey, baby!” or some other catcall, you have the right to walk away. If you aren’t sure if you’re allowed to leave, ask the officer, “Am I free to go?” If s/he does not say no, walk away.
- Record what’s happening. Police officers may try to stop citizens from recording their actions, but [you do have the right to film or photograph](#) police officers with your phone or camera. In most circumstances, police cannot confiscate your phone or camera or request to view photos or recordings without a warrant. Police cannot delete your photos or videos under any circumstances. (Unfortunately, that doesn’t mean s/he won’t, but s/he would be breaking the law.)
- Remain silent. If an officer does detain you, you have the right to remain silent. (In some states, you are required to give your name if asked to identify yourself.) Remaining silent is often the best choice, even when you haven’t done anything wrong. Tell the officer out loud that you are exercising your right to remain silent, and don’t say anything else.
- Refuse a search. Police may pat you down, but s/he cannot further search your person, your car, or your home without either your consent or a warrant. If a police officer is harassing you and tries to search you, do not consent to the search. Say calmly and loudly enough for passersby to hear, “I do not consent to this search.”
- File a complaint. For most illegal street harassment, we recommend that you report it by calling the police. But when police officers are the harassers, file a complaint with his or her department. Immediately after the incident, make a note of what happened, including:
 - A physical description of the officer(s) involved (eye color, hair color, approximate height and build, age, whether s/he were uniformed or in plain clothes, etc.)
 - Where you were and the time of day.
 - The officer’s name, badge number, patrol car number, and/or license plate number
 - A description of the incident. Writing down as many details as soon as possible, including what was said, will help you file the most effective report.

You can either call your local precinct or, in some places, file a complaint online. For example, in New York City, visit [this page](#). Ask anyone who saw the incident — whether friends or strangers — if they would be willing serve as a witness. Take down their contact information and include it in your report.

- Contact your local chapter of the [American Civil Liberties Union](#) for more resources and support.

It can be intimidating to file a complaint against a police officer, and upsetting that the police aren’t always the protectors we’d like them to be. But reporting police harassment can help hold the department in your community accountable.

Direct Responses to Street Harassment

There is no one “right” way to deal with harassers and since street harassment includes a variety of behaviors from catcalls (mostly legal) to groping (definitely illegal), you could employ a variety of responses.

Every situation and person is different and often you only have a second or two to assess your safety and decide what to do.

*** If your physical safety is at risk, get to safe place and call 911. If you can’t leave, ask a bystander to call for you. Looking a bystander directly in the eye and asking for help is often the best way to ensure s/he understand that you need help. ***

But if you want to address harassers and harassment directly — either instead of or in addition to reporting them to the police — there are [many different ways](#) to do it.

Respond to the Harasser

If you feel safe enough to do so, [respond to the harasser](#) calmly, firmly, and *without* insults or personal attacks.

- Use simple statements like, “Stop harassing women!” “Back off” or “Leave me alone now,” to let the person know that his or her actions are unwelcome, unacceptable, and wrong.
- If applicable, let the harasser know that his or her actions are illegal and that you intend to report them to the police if s/he doesn’t stop.
- Or get creative — hand the harasser a card or flyer on why street harassment is inappropriate or find some other [surprising way](#) to respond.
- Public shaming is often an effective tactic: Ask the harasser to repeat him or herself or loudly announce to passersby what the harasser just said or did.
 - Marty Langelan’s book [Back Off! How to Confront and Stop Sexual Harassment and Harassers](#) and Holly Kearl’s book [50 Stories about Stopping Street Harassers](#) include many examples of confronting harassers.
 - METRAC offers a free “[Not Your Baby App](#)” that allows users to find examples of ways to respond to specific sexual harassment scenarios.

Report Harassers to Their Company

If the harassers work for an identifiable company, [call or write the company](#) to let them know that their employees are harassing people on the job and why that is unacceptable.

- [Here](#) are [three examples](#) of women who successfully did this.
- Even [threatening to report harassers to their company](#) can make a difference.)

Share Your Story

- Share your story with loved ones and friends to raise their awareness about the issue.
- Share your story on the Stop Street Harassment [blog](#) and/or your social media accounts.
- Download the Hollaback! [phone app](#).

Be an Active Bystander

If you see street harassment happening, [do something](#).

- You can ask the person being harassed if s/he wants help and what s/he would like you to do.
- Or simply check in to see if that person is okay.
- You can also let the harasser know his or her actions are not condoned by others.
 - Men speaking up can be particularly powerful since men (the majority of street harassers) look to other men for approval. Check out this [great bystander campaign](#).

Freedom of Speech, Fighting Words, and the Reasonable Man Standard

White Men Write the Laws

Verbal harassment is both the most common form of street harassment and the type that is most difficult to regulate and report.

This is in large part because the laws in the United States have historically been written by white, straight men, and often are written and enforced to only protect against the types of violence, harassment, and intrusion that they experience.

Take for example, physical forms of street harassment, they are always illegal and usually something that police will take seriously. This is not because it is street harassment but because the law is meant to protect everyone from basic acts of physical violence.

Thus, in order to anticipate and address this possible gender bias, it's helpful to be familiar with three key legal concepts and how they apply to street harassment.

1. The First Amendment

State laws meant to protect citizens from any type of verbal harassment are necessarily narrowly defined because they cannot violate the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, granting us all the right to freedom of speech. Any law that broadly restricts what someone can say is likely to be ruled unconstitutional in court.

In fact, the United States Supreme Court sets a very high bar against government intervention in the case of the First Amendment, only regulating speech that is clearly intimidating, rather than merely offensive, which is what most street harassment is. In addition, regulations have to be applied in a "content neutral" way that does not target particular kinds of speech.

- In practice, the court often strikes down laws aimed at racist or sexist speech, but, as sociologist Dr. Laura Beth Nielsen's [research](#) has shown, they have upheld laws that restrict panhandling,

which is another form of potentially offensive public speech.

- In her study of offensive speech in the California Bay Area, Nielsen suggests this reflects a judiciary that is largely male and thus unfamiliar with the problem of street harassment.

This makes it difficult to prohibit catcalls and other types of verbal street harassment. But the First Amendment is intended to protect our rights in the context of political discourse and democratic debate. It doesn't mean that we have the *right* to use profanity or insult each other whenever we feel like it.

2. Reasonable Man

Throughout this guide, you will find laws that include phrases like “a reasonable person” or “reasonable fear.” This is a key legal principle that makes regulating verbal street harassment challenging. These phrases provide guidance for judges and jurors in interpreting the law. Because our laws are meant to be generally applicable to society, they are often written according to how a reasonable person is expected to react to a given situation.

For example, if a law prohibits actions that would make a reasonable person fear for his or her safety, the fact that I was scared by your action is not enough to establish that you broke the law. Your action would have to be something that would cause fear for the average, reasonable person – not *just* the person that was actually made afraid.

Because the majority of lawmakers and judges in the United States have historically been white men, and white men don't typically experience street harassment, or if they do, they are rarely afraid as a result, the fear associated with street harassment has not always passed the reasonable man test.

3. Fighting Words

The [the fighting words doctrine](#) is another legal principle that makes it challenging to address verbal street harassment. It applies specifically to speech and often employs the reasonable man standard.

Lawmakers can't broadly prohibit speech, even when it is insulting or offensive to some. However, U.S. courts have ruled that the First Amendment does not protect speech that is likely to incite violence because “fighting words” do not contribute to democratic discourse and because society has a collective interest in reducing violence.

As such, words or language that would incite a reasonable person to react violently may be legally prohibited. Many of the verbal harassment laws included in this guide either refer specifically to fighting words or prohibit taunts, insults, or other language that is likely to incite a violent reaction. Fighting words are typically prohibited by disorderly conduct, disturbance of the peace, and harassment laws.

The fighting words doctrine is [problematic for addressing street harassment](#) because, although the words do not have to incite actual violence in order to be considered a violation of the law, the language has to be such that a “reasonable person” would react violently.

- Women – the typical targets of street harassment – do not usually react violently to men who speak to them on the street.
- The kind of comment that might make a man want to throw a punch often makes a woman afraid for her safety, and so she may be unlikely to retaliate with physical force.
- Simultaneously, male law enforcement officers and judges, not typically being targets of street harassment, may not find verbal harassment as alarming, intimidating, or infuriating as women do.

Thus there is little precedent for a judge to see verbal street harassment as fighting words.

It's Time for the Reasonable Woman

The challenge of the fighting words doctrine has led some scholars to argue for a [“reasonable woman” standard](#): if the average woman would be annoyed, alarmed, or threatened by a particular comment, it should be considered illegal speech. But changing legal precedent takes time, many court cases, and a certain amount of awareness among lawmakers, law enforcement officers, judges, jurors, and other individuals tasked with writing and interpreting laws.

What Does It Mean For You?

In the meantime, this may mean that police officers or legal officials won't always take cases of street harassment seriously. Sadly, we can't guarantee that every incident reported to police will result in a positive outcome. But that's why safe spaces activism — and continuing to report serious street harassment — is so important.

“Hey, baby!” may never become illegal speech, and there are good reasons why it shouldn't. But the more offensive insults and slurs that street harassers use are likely what a fighting words law would prohibit when directed at a man and so should be equally prohibited when directed at a woman.

By raising awareness about street harassment in a variety of ways, from creative direct action to calling the police, we can demonstrate the violent and inappropriate nature of verbal street harassment. Over time, we can achieve more gender equitable outcomes from our legal system, and we hope to move closer to those outcomes with this guide.

Children and Minors

In most places, street harassment crimes are considered more serious if anyone under the age of 18 is present to witness the action or is the target of the harassment. This especially applies to indecent exposure and groping. If you are under the age of 18, or if someone under 18 is present at the time of an incident you experience, or if you witness someone harassing a young person or child, report that information to the police.

Harassment at (or Near) School

Most states have laws that prohibit loitering on or near a school or university. The specifics vary from state to state, but if someone is harassing you or your classmates at or near your school, even if it is outside of the campus, you have the right to report it.

1. Your first step should be to report the harassment to an administrator.
 - a. In many places, any person loitering on or outside school grounds and/or impeding the free work or movement of students or faculty and who is neither a parent of a student nor has legitimate business at the school, is required to leave upon instructions from an administrator.
 - b. In some places, an individual can be ticketed for loitering even without express instructions to leave.
 - c. Either way, asking an administrator or teacher to ask the harasser to leave can often be a simple way to solve the problem.
2. If the harassment continues, or the school is unwilling to intervene, you, a parent, or a school staff member may wish to contact the police.

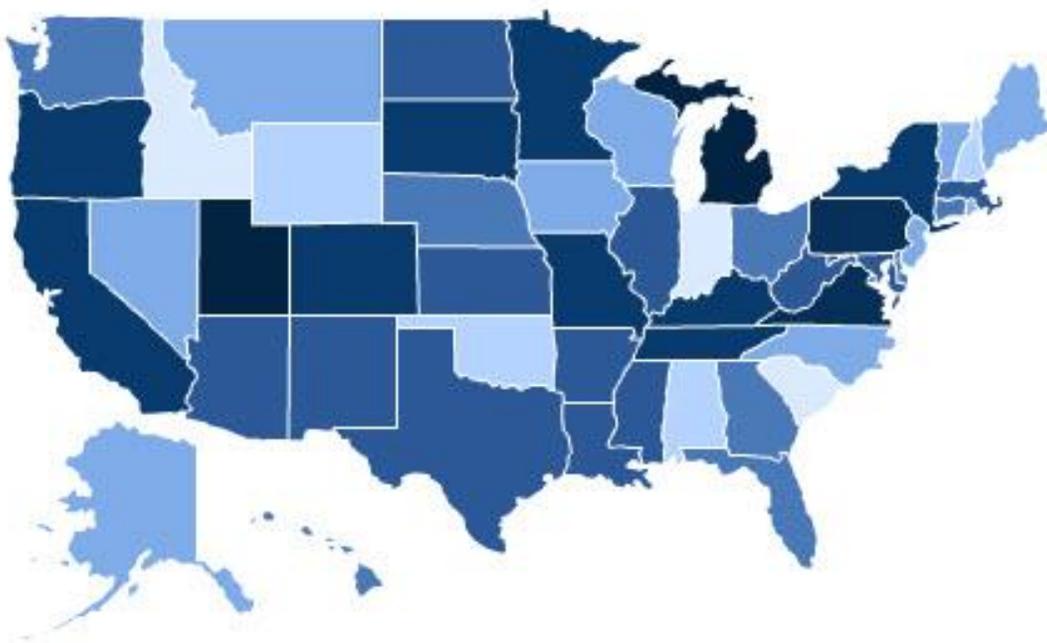
Public Intoxication

It is illegal in most places to appear in public under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. The laws regarding public intoxication are not covered here, but if a harasser is drinking or appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, you can report him/her for public intoxication and/or include this information in your report of some other crime. This may provide greater grounds for law enforcement to intervene.

Sexist Laws

Some of the state laws included in this toolkit are based on sexist constructs — most often the notion that women need to be excessively protected because they are inherently weaker or more delicate than men. This harms women by robbing them of agency, and it harms men by imposing upon them the roles of both protector and aggressor. We take issue with this framing, but the laws are included here because our objective is to make the relevant statutes accessible to everyone. While street harassment is most often directed at women by men, some men, especially transgender individuals and members of the LGBTQ community, experience harassment as well. The women authors of this guide are not advocating for laws that protect us as women — we're advocating for laws that protect everyone. If you find a law in your state that is problematic — or problematically enforced — we encourage you to take action to change it. You can [contact us](#) for help.

State-by-State Laws



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.

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.

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.

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.

- 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.

Alaska

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

Verbal Harassment

Alaska has four laws that address various types of verbal street harassment.

Assault in the Fourth Degree

[Alaska Stat. §11.41.230](#)

In Alaska, an incident of street harassment may constitute assault if the harasser does or says something that places you in fear of imminent physical injury or death.

If a harasser threatens you, either by word or action, to the degree that you feel your immediate safety is in danger, you can sue him or her for assault in the fourth degree.

Penalty: Assault in the fourth degree is a Class A misdemeanor and punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to a year in jail.

Disorderly Conduct

[Alaska Stat. §11.61.110](#)

Alaska's disorderly conduct law prohibits a variety of activities applicable to street harassment.

1. Unreasonably loud noise after being informed that such noise is disturbing others *or* if s/he has "the intent to disturb the peace and privacy of another." Noise is considered unreasonably loud when it involves "a gross deviation from the standard of conduct that a reasonable person would follow in the same situation."

If a street harasser continuously yells or shouts at you or otherwise makes unreasonably loud noise, especially after you have asked him or her to stop talking to you, you may be able to report that person for disorderly conduct.

2. Recklessly creating "a hazardous condition for others by an act which has no legal justification or excuse."

Some forms of street harassment may qualify. If, for example, someone is blocking your path on the sidewalk or several people are harassing you in a way that threatens your safety, this may be considered disorderly conduct.

3. Challenging another person to a fight or engaging in fighting other than for self defense.

This law may be most relevant if the harassment is based on race or sexual orientation (as street harassment based on sex rarely results in fighting). If a street harasser challenges you to a fight, you can report him or her for disorderly conduct.

4. Exposing one's buttocks or anus; this is discussed further below under [indecent exposure](#).

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 10 days in jail.

Harassment in the Second Degree

[Alaska Stat. §11.61.120](#)

The statute that prohibits harassment generally in Alaska includes some forms of verbal street harassment.

If a street harasser exhibits the intent to harass or annoy you or insults, taunts, or challenges you "in a manner likely to provoke an immediate violent response," you can report him/her.

"A manner likely to provoke an immediate violent response" part makes it a "[fighting words](#)" law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Harassment in the second degree is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 60 days in jail.

Prostitution

[Alaska Stat. §11.66.100](#)

Soliciting someone for the purposes of prostitution is illegal in Alaska.

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: Prostitution, or soliciting for prostitution, is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 60 days in jail.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Indecent Viewing or Photography

[Alaska Stat. §11.61.123](#)

It is illegal in Alaska for someone to knowingly view or produce a picture of your genitals, buttocks, or breasts (if you're female) without your knowledge or consent under circumstances in which you would reasonably believe you would not be photographed.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, such as in a private place like a restroom, locker room, or fitting room, you can report him or her for indecent viewing or photography.

Penalty: Indecent viewing or photography is a Class A misdemeanor if the person photographed is an adult, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to a year in jail. Indecent viewing or photography is a class C felony if the person photographed is a minor, punishable by a fine of up to \$50,000 and/or up to 2 years in prison.

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

[Alaska Stat. §11.41.270](#)

Stalking is illegal in Alaska. Stalking is defined as being when someone engages in repeated acts of nonconsensual contact that makes the person s/he is stalking fearful of physical injury or death.

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

Penalty: Stalking in the second degree is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to a year in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Disorderly Conduct

[Alaska Stat. §11.61.110](#)

It is illegal for a harasser to intentionally expose his or her "buttocks or anus to another with reckless disregard for the offensive or insulting effect the act may have on that person."

If a harasser exposes his/her butt to you, including through the prank "mooning," you can report that person for disorderly conduct.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class B misdemeanor in Alaska, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 10 days in jail.

Indecent Exposure

[Alaska Stat. §11.41.458-460](#)

It is illegal in Alaska for anyone to knowingly expose his or her genitals "in the presence of another person with reckless disregard for the offensive, insulting, or frightening effect the act may have."

If a harasser exposes him or herself to you or flashes you in a public place, such as a park, on public transportation, or in a store, you can report him or her for indecent exposure.

Penalty: Simply exposing oneself is indecent exposure in the second degree, a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 10 days in jail. If someone under 16 years old was present at the time of the incident, it is a Class A misdemeanor and punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to a year in jail. If the harasser knowingly masturbates while exposing him or herself to you, the charge and penalty rises.

Groping

Harassment in the First and Second Degree

[Alaska Stat. §11.61.118 & 120](#)

There are two degrees of the harassment law that apply to groping.

1. The statute harassment in **the first degree** prohibits anyone from touching your genitals, breasts, or buttocks through clothing or causing you to come in contact with "human or animal blood, mucus, saliva, semen, urine, vomitus, or feces."

If a street harasser touches you in an offensive way or causes you to come in contact with any bodily fluid, you can report him/her.

2. Alaska's statute against harassment in **the second degree** prohibits subjecting "another person to offensive physical contact."

If a street harasser makes any offensive physical contact with you, such as grabbing you by the arm, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Harassment in the second degree is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 10 days in jail. Harassment in the first degree is a Class A misdemeanor and punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to a year in jail.

Sexual Abuse of a Minor in the Third Degree

[Alaska Stat. §11.41.438](#)

It is illegal for someone who is 17 years or older to have sexual contact with a person who is 13-15 years old and at least four years younger than the perpetrator. Sexual contact is defined as someone knowingly touching your genitals, anus, or breasts, either under or over your clothing, or causing you to come in contact with his or her genitals, anus, or breasts.

If you or someone you know or care for is under 17 years old and an older person touches or grabs your crotch, buttocks, or breasts, or forces you to touch them, such as by rubbing up against you or putting your hand in his or her lap, you can report that person.

Penalty: Sexual abuse of a minor in the third degree is a Class C felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$50,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison.

Sexual Assault in the Second Degree

[Alaska Stat. §11.41.420](#)

Alaska's laws against sexual assault in the second degree prohibit nonconsensual sexual contact. Sexual contact is defined as someone knowingly touching your genitals, anus, or breasts, either under or over your clothing, or causing you to come in contact with his or her genitals, anus, or breasts.

If someone inappropriately touches or grabs your crotch, buttocks, or breasts, or forces you to touch them, such as by rubbing up against you or putting your hand in his or her lap, you can report that person for sexual assault.

Penalty: Sexual assault in the second degree range in degrees and penalties based on the severity of the incident and the age of the victim and the perpetrator. Fines may range from up to \$10,000 (a Class A misdemeanor) to up to \$100,000 (a Class B felony, usually if the assaulted person is under 18 years old). Prison sentences can range from 1 to 15 years, depending on the particular offense.

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 Juneau, this number is (907) 586-0600 and in Anchorage it is (907) 786-8500. In Fairbanks, it is (907) 450-6500 and in Sitka, it is (907) 747-8980. 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 in the Second Degree under [AS Law 11.61.120](#). 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. The Juneau Police Department, for example, has an [Online Tip Form](#) where you can report crimes like harassing phone calls, but not crimes against a person like assault or abuse.

- 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.

- Once you've reported a crime, if you've 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.

Arizona

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in Arizona, including obscene language, indecent exposure, 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 Arizona.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 13, Chap. 29 §2904](#)

Arizona's disorderly conduct law prohibits "abusive or offensive language or gestures," if they are "likely to provoke immediate physical retaliation" by the person they are directed at.

The "likely to provoke immediate physical retaliation" part makes it a "[fighting words](#)" law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Arizona's disorderly conduct law also prohibits:

- Unreasonable noise.
- Fighting, violent, or seriously disruptive 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/her.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Harassment

[Title 13, Chap. 29 §2921](#)

Under Arizona's harassment law it is illegal for anyone to communicate with you in a harassing manner or to repeatedly commit an act or acts that harass you. The statute defines harassment as "conduct that is directed at a specific person and that would cause a reasonable person to be seriously alarmed, annoyed or harassed *and* the conduct in fact seriously alarms, annoys or harasses the person."

This is a fairly broad law that should cover many types of street harassment. If someone is speaking to you or doing some other action that seriously alarms or annoys you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Harassment is a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Loitering

[Title 13, Chap. 29 §2905](#)

Two types of street harassment may be considered loitering in Arizona.

1. Loitering on or near school grounds if s/he does not have a custodial relationship with a student or a legitimate reason for being there.

If you see someone hanging out near school facilities and s/he is harassing you or other passersby, you can report this person to school officials. If s/he does not leave after being asked to do so by the school official, you can report him or her to the police for loitering on school grounds. If s/he does not have a legitimate reason to be there, the police will ask him or her to leave and, if s/he refuses, the police may make an arrest.

2. Be in a public place and solicit someone to engage in "any sexual offense" if the solicitation is done "in an offensive manner or in a manner likely to disturb the public peace."

If a street harasser is repeatedly making overtly sexual solicitations to you or to other passersby, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Loitering in general is a Class 3 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 30 days in jail. Loitering at a school is a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Public Nuisance

[Title 13, Chap. 29 §2917](#)

Arizona has a general law against "nuisances" that are injurious to health, indecent, offensive to the senses, or obstruct free use of property so as to "interfere with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property by an entire community or neighborhood, or by any considerable number of persons." It is also considered a public nuisance to "unlawfully obstruct the free passage or use [of any] any public park, square, street or highway."

Nuisance laws typically apply to one entity – either a person or organization – that causes a problem for a large part of the community. If you find that one individual or organization is consistently causing many people to be harassed, you may be able to report it under this law. For example:

- A person who routinely harasses many passersby on the same street corner every day, or who causes some other significant disruption that affects many people at once.
- A company whose employees regularly harass people while on the job, such as construction workers or delivery truck drivers. You might try going directly to the business owner first to file a complaint. But if the harassment doesn't stop, you could report the business as a nuisance.

Arizona law also specifies that "an act is no less a nuisance because the extent of the annoyance or damage inflicted is unequal." Lawmakers, law enforcement officials, or judges may try to trivialize street harassment, but it is okay to make the case for why it IS a public nuisance.

Penalty: Committing a public nuisance is a Class 2 misdemeanor in Arizona, punishable by a fine of up to \$750 and/or up to 4 months in jail.

Threatening or Intimidation

[Title 13, Chap. 12 §1202](#)

In Arizona, it is illegal for anyone to threaten, by word or action, to cause you physical injury or to damage your property.

If a street harasser is threatening you, you can call 911 as soon as you feel safe to do so and report him/her.

Penalty: Threatening or intimidation is a Class 1 misdemeanor in Arizona, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Voyeurism

[Title 13, Chap. 14 §1424](#)

In Arizona it is illegal for anyone:

- To photograph or otherwise record you without your consent or knowledge for the purpose of sexual stimulation when you should have a reasonable expectation to privacy (such as in a public bathroom, locker room, or within your own house).
- To photograph or record another person in a manner that directly or indirectly captures or allows the viewing of the person's genitalia, buttocks or breast (if female), whether clothed or unclothed, that is not otherwise visible to the public.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Voyeurism is a Class 5 felony punishable by up to 2.5 years in prison.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Title 13, Chap. 14 §1402](#)

In Arizona, it is illegal for a harasser to expose his or her genitals or anus or the areola or nipple of her breast to you and to be "reckless about whether [you], as reasonable person, would be offended or alarmed by the act."

If a harasser flashes or exposes her or himself to you in a public place, such as a park, on public transportation, or in a store, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Indecent exposure to a person 15 years or older is a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 6 months in jail. Indecent exposure to a person under 15 years of age is a Class 6 felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$150,000 and/or up to 2 years in prison.

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.

Harassment

Title 13, Chap. 29 §2921

Under Arizona's harassment law it is illegal for anyone to follow you "in or about a public place for no legitimate purpose after being asked to desist."

In order for the harassment law to apply, you must first ask the person to stop following you. Of course, only do this if you feel safe enough. Arizona's law uses the verb "ask," meaning that even a polite, non-confrontational request – if that's what you're most comfortable with – should be enough to establish your rights under the law. However, even if you do not feel safe enough to speak to the person, you can call 911 as soon as you are safe to do so.

Penalty: Harassment is a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Stalking

Title 13, Chap. 29 §2923

Stalking in Arizona is when a person intentionally or knowingly engages in a course of conduct that causes someone to fear for his or her safety or fear imminent death.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel afraid, you can report him/her for stalking.

Penalty: Stalking that causes someone to fear for his/her safety is a Class 5 felony, punishable by up to 1.5 years in prison. Stalking that causes someone to fear death is a Class 3 felony, punishable by up to 3.5 years in prison.

Groping

Assault

Title 13, Chap. 12 §1203

In Arizona, groping is considered assault. Arizona's assault law prohibits anyone from knowingly touching you "with the intent to injure, insult or provoke" you.

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

Penalty: This type of assault is a Class 3 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Molestation of a Child

Title 13, Chap. 14 §1410

Molestation of a child is any sexual contact with someone younger than 15 years of age, defined as “any direct or indirect touching, fondling or manipulating of any part of the genitals, anus or female breast by any part of the body or by any object or causing a person to engage in such contact.”

If you are younger than 15 years old or someone you know is and a harasser gropes or grabs you or that young person on an intimate area, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Molestation of a child is a Class 2 felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$150,000 and/or between 10 and 24 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 Phoenix, this number is (602) 262-6151.
 - In Tucson it’s (520) 791-4444.
 - In Mesa, it is (480) 644-2211.
 - In Yuma, it is (928) 783-4421.
- 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 including but not limited to obscene language in [AZ Law §13-2921](#). 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, [Tucson](#) and [Phoenix](#) have a Police Reporting Web form where you can report crimes like harassment and sexual assault.
- 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 Tucson, Mesa, and Phoenix you can do this by texting CRIMES or 274-637, and beginning the message with TUCSONPD, MesaPD or SILENT, respectively.
- In [Tucson](#), you can also submit a web tip anonymously, and there are [applications](#) that you can download to your iPhone or Android to expedite the process in Tucson and Mesa.
- Both [Phoenix](#) and [Mesa](#) also have a Silent Witness online form that allows you to report online anonymously. Yuma has an anonymous tip phone line: call 78-CRIME or 782-7463.
- 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.

Arkansas

A variety of street harassment actions are illegal in Arkansas, including offensive language, up-skirt photos, flashing, following, and groping. Here are the laws and reporting procedures you need to know.

Verbal Harassment

There are four laws that can apply to various types of verbal harassment in Arkansas.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 5, Subtitle 6, Chap. 71, §207](#)

In Arkansas, it is considered disorderly conduct for anyone “with the purpose to cause public inconvenience, annoyance, or alarm,” or recklessly creating a risk thereof, to:

- Make unreasonable or excessive noise.
- Engage in fighting or in "violent, threatening, or tumultuous behavior."
- Obstruct pedestrian traffic.
- Use abusive or obscene language or gestures in a public place "in a manner likely to provoke a violent or disorderly response."

If a harasser is shouting or making unreasonable or excessive noise, threatening you, either verbally or physically, obstructing your passage, or in some way doing any of the actions listed above, you can report him/her.

Note: The part of the law that says, “A manner likely to provoke a violent or disorderly response” is known as a “[fighting words](#)” law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class C misdemeanor in Arkansas, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Harassment

[Title 5, Subtitle 6, Chap. 71 §208](#)

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

- Strike, shove, kick, or otherwise touch you or subject you or try to subject you to offensive physical contact.
- Engage in conduct or repeatedly commit an act that alarms or seriously annoys you and that serves no legitimate purpose.
- Place you under surveillance by remaining outside your work, school, car, home, or any other place occupied by you.
- Direct obscene language to or make an obscene gesture at you in public “in a manner likely to provoke a violent or disorderly response.”

- Repeatedly insult, taunt, or challenge you in a public place “in a manner likely to provoke a violent or disorderly response.”

You can report anyone who makes overtly sexual references to you, obscene gestures or remarks, repeatedly taunts you, or does any of these other actions.

Note: Again, the part of the law that says, “A manner likely to provoke a violent or disorderly response” is known as a “[fighting words](#)” law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Harassment is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Loitering

[Title 5, Subtitle 6, Chap. 71 §213](#)

There are three ways that loitering may be applied to street harassment in Arkansas.

- Loitering or “prowling” in a public place under circumstances that cause reasonable alarm or concern for the safety of those nearby and, if after being asked by a law enforcement officer, s/he “refuses to identify himself or herself and give a reasonably credible account of his or her presence and purpose.” If you see someone hanging around an area who does anything that feels threatening, you can let the police know and the officer can talk to that person and potentially ask her/him to leave.
- Loitering “for the purpose of engaging or soliciting another person to engage in prostitution,” such as harassers who make overtly sexual comments to passersby.
- Loitering in or near a school building. If you see someone hanging out near school facilities and harassing you or other passersby, you can report him or her for loitering on school grounds.

In a case of loitering, the law instructs police officers to ask the person loitering “to identify himself or herself and explain his or her presence and conduct.”

- Unless the person flees, no one can be convicted of loitering unless the officer present gave the individual this opportunity to explain.
- Similarly, the individual(s) cannot be convicted if it is found in court that their explanation “would have dispelled the alarm.”

Given the general acceptance of street harassment as normal, officers may not find harassing behavior to be grounds for arrest. However, involving a police officer may be enough to clear a harasser from the street or sidewalk and/or deter harassers in the future.

Penalty: Loitering is a Class C misdemeanor in Arkansas, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Sexual Solicitation

[Title 5, Subtitle 6, Chap. 70 §103](#)

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: Sexual solicitation is a class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 90 days in jail.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Video Voyeurism

[Title 5, Subtitle 2, Chapter 16 §101](#)

Unlawful filming and photography is illegal in Arkansas.

- It is illegal for anyone to secretly film or record you without your consent if you are in a private area and out of public view, such as in a public restroom, dressing room, or tanning booth.
- It is also illegal for anyone to knowingly photograph or record parts of your body that are covered with clothing without your knowledge or consent when you should have a reasonable expectation of privacy. If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Filming or recording someone in a private location is a Class D felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to 6 years in prison. Filming or recording another person’s body parts is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 90 days in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Title 5, Subtitle 2, Chap. 14 §112](#)

It is illegal in Arkansas for anyone to expose his or her sex organs “with the purpose to arouse or gratify a sexual desire of himself or herself or of any other person” either in a public place, in public view, or “under circumstances in which the person knows the conduct is likely to cause affront or alarm.”

If a harasser exposes himself or herself to you in a public place, such as a park, on public transportation, or in a store, you can report him or her for indecent exposure.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a Class A misdemeanor in Arkansas, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Public Sexual Indecency

[Title 5, Subtitle 2, Chap. 14 §111](#)

It is illegal in Arkansas to engage in any act of sexual contact in a public place or in public view. Sexual contact is defined as any act of sexual gratification involving touching, directly or through clothing, the sex organs, buttocks, or anus of any person or the breast of a woman. The definition of sexual contact does not specify that the harasser must be touching *another person's* sex organs; therefore, masturbating in public would be considered public sexual indecency.

If a harasser makes sexual contact with you, you can report them for [groping](#). But if someone is masturbating in public or engaging in some other form of sexual conduct in a public place, you can report him/her for public sexual indecency.

Penalty: Public sexual indecency is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to a year in jail.

Sexual Indecency with a Child

[Title 5, Subtitle 2, Chap. 14 §110](#)

Exposing one's sex organs in public is a misdemeanor in general, but it's a felony if a harasser is exposing himself or herself to someone under the age of 15, or if s/he causes or coerces a person under 14 years old to expose his/her sex organs or breasts (if female).

If a harasser exposes himself or herself to you (and you're under 15) or to a young person you care for or know, *or* causes or coerces you (if you're under 14) or a young person you care or know to expose his/her sex organs or breasts (if female), you can report that person.

Penalty: Sexual indecency with a child is a Class D felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to 6 years in prison.

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.

Assault in the Third Degree

[Title 5, Subtitle 2, Chap. 13 §207](#)

In Arkansas, it is considered assault in the third degree to purposely create the "apprehension of imminent physical injury in another person."

If a street harasser is following you, threatening you, or otherwise makes you fear s/he will injure you, you can report him or her for assault.

Penalty: Assault in the third degree is a class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 90 days in jail.

Harassment

[Title 5, Subtitle 6, Chap. 71 §208](#)

In Arkansas, it is illegal for anyone, with the intent to harass, annoy, or alarm you, to follow you in or about a public place.

You can report anyone who follows you and harasses, annoys or alarms you.

Penalty: Harassment is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Stalking

[Title 5, Subtitle 6, Chap. 71 §229](#)

In Arkansas, stalking is when a person knowingly engages in a course of conduct that makes someone feel emotional distress and in fear of his/her safety.

If the same harasser follows and threatens you on two or more occasions – defined in Arkansas as being separated by at least 36 hours but within one year – you can report him/her.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class C felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000, and/or three to ten years in prison.

Groping

Harassment

[Title 5, Subtitle 6, Chap. 71 §208](#)

The crime of harassment in Arkansas covers a number of street harassment actions, including “offensive physical contact.”

If a harasser grabs or touches you in an offensive way on the street, in a park, on a bus, or some other public place, you can report him or her for harassment.

Penalty: Harassment is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Sexual Assault

[Title 5, Subtitle 2, Chap. 14 §125 – 127](#)

In Arkansas, groping falls under the sexual assault law. If a harasser subjects you to sexual contact, defined as "any act of sexual gratification" that involves touching your sex organs, buttocks, anus, or breasts, either directly or through clothing, either by force or if you are under 18 years old, it is sexual assault.

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

Penalty: Sexual assault in Arkansas ranges in degrees and penalties based on the severity of the incident, your age, and the age of the harasser. Penalties vary from a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 1 year in

jail (a Class A misdemeanor) to a fine of up to \$15,000 and/or between 5 and 20 years in prison (a Class B felony).

Sexual Indecency with a Child

[Title 5, Subtitle 2, Chap. 14 §110](#)

The crime of sexual indecency with a child applies to an adult (18 years or older) who engages in sexual contact with someone less than 15 years of age. Sexual contact is defined as "any act of sexual gratification" that involves touching your sex organs, buttocks, anus, or breasts, either directly or through clothing.

If you are under 15 years old, or you care for or know someone who is, and a harasser touches you or them in an inappropriate or offensive way, you can report that person.

Penalty: Sexual indecency with a child is a Class D felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to 6 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 Little Rock, this number is (501) 371-4829 and in Fort Smith it's (479) 785-4221. In Fayetteville, it is (479) 587-3520. 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 including but not limited to obscene language in [Arkansas Law §5-71-208](#). 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, [Fort Smith](#) and [Fayetteville](#) have a Police Reporting Web form where you can report crimes like harassment and sexual assault.

- 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

- 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.

California

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in California, including lewd comments, indecent exposure, obstructing paths, following, and groping. Here are the laws and reporting procedures you need to know.

Verbal Harassment

California has six laws that protect against different forms of verbal harassment.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 15, Chap. 2 §647](#)

If a harasser is doing any of the following, you can report him or her for disorderly conduct in California:

- Engaging in, or soliciting anyone else to engage in, “lewd or dissolute conduct” in a public place, such as explicit sexual comments or solicitations, or making obscene gestures.
- Loitering “in or about any toilet open to the public for the purpose of engaging in or soliciting any lewd or lascivious or any unlawful act.”
- Being intoxicated in a public place and, because she or he is under the influence, interfering with, obstructing, or preventing the free use of any street, sidewalk, or other public way.

If someone appears to be drunk or under the influence of drugs *or* is harassing you on the street by not letting you pass, you can call the police.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a misdemeanor in California, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail. Additionally, there is a subsection of California’s disorderly conduct code – [Section 647.6](#) – that stipulates that anyone “who annoys or molests any child under 18 years of age” shall be subject to a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail. The court may also order the harasser to seek counseling and may prohibit the harasser from having any further contact with the victim(s).

Harassment at Adult Education Schools

[Title 15, Chap. 2 §647b](#)

The California Education Code establishes a number of schools for adult education, and the California Penal Code prohibits loitering near these schools or annoying or molesting anyone in attendance.

If you are a student at a public institution offering adult education and you are harassed on or near the facility where you attend classes – whether by catcalls, whistling, or another form of street harassment – you can report the harasser to police.

Penalty: Anyone convicted under this section is subject to a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Harassment on Public Transportation

[Title 15, Chap. 2 §640](#)

California code identifies a number of “miscellaneous offenses” that can protect you from harassment on public transportation. It is unlawful to do any of the following on public transportation:

- Disturb another person by making loud or unreasonable noise.
- Willfully disturb others on or in a system facility or vehicle by engaging in boisterous or unruly behavior.
- Willfully block the free movement of another person.
- Expectorate (spit) upon a system facility or vehicle.

If a harasser is excessively boisterous or loud, such as shouting at you, blocks your path, or spits at you while you’re on public transportation, you can report him/her.

Penalty: These acts are considered infractions and may be punishable by a fine of up to \$400, up to 48 hours of community service, and/or up to 90 days in jail. Disturbing others with boisterous or unruly behavior and blocking the movement of others carry the harshest penalties.

Loitering At or Near a School (Vagrancy)

[Title 15, Chap. 2 §653b](#)

In California, it is illegal for a person without legitimate business at a school or another public place where children typically congregate to loiter at or near the premises.

When it comes to street harassment, this may be particularly relevant in large cities where schools and children’s parks are in dense public areas. If you see someone hanging out near one of these facilities and harassing you or other passersby, you can report him/her to the police or another administrator or official and that person can ask that person to leave.

Penalty: Loitering at a school is considered vagrancy in California and is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Public Nuisance

[Title 10, §370-372](#)

California has a general law against “nuisances” that are injurious to health, indecent, offensive to the senses, or obstruct free use of property “so as to interfere with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property by an entire community or neighborhood, or by any considerable number of persons.”

Nuisance laws typically apply to one entity – either a person or organization – that causes a problem for a large part of the community. If you find that one individual or organization is consistently causing many people to be harassed, you may be able to report it under this law. For example:

- A person who routinely harasses many passersby on the same street corner every day, or who causes some other significant disruption that affects many people at once.
- A company whose employees regularly harass people while on the job, such as construction workers or delivery truck drivers. You might try going directly to the business owner first to file a complaint. But if the harassment doesn’t stop, you could report the business as a nuisance.

California law also specifies that “an act which affects an entire community or neighborhood, or any considerable number of persons [...] is not less a nuisance because the extent of the annoyance or damage inflicted upon individuals is unequal.” Lawmakers, law enforcement officials, or judges may try to trivialize street harassment, but don’t let someone who isn’t affected by the problem tell you that it isn’t a public nuisance.

Penalty: A public nuisance is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Unlawful Assembly

[Title 11, §407-409](#)

California law stipulates “whenever two or more persons assemble together to do an unlawful act, or do a lawful act in a violent, boisterous, or tumultuous manner, such assembly is an unlawful assembly.” That means that if two or more individuals are harassing you, and their harassment *either* violates another California law *or* is being done in a “violent, boisterous, or tumultuous manner,” s/he may each be guilty of unlawful assembly.

It may be necessary to demonstrate that the individuals have assembled in a given place *for the purpose of* engaging in street harassment, but that would not be unheard of since there are men who have admitted to gathering on street corners to catcall women.

Penalty: Unlawful assembly is a misdemeanor in California, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail. Anyone who does not leave after being instructed to do so by a law enforcement officer may also face an additional misdemeanor charge.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Title 9, Chap. 8 §314](#)

In California, it is illegal for a harasser to expose his or her private parts in a public place, or in any place where there are others present who might be offended or annoyed.

If someone flashes or exposes him or herself to you, whether on the street, on public transportation, in a park, or in any other public place, you can report him or her for indecent exposure.

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

Obstructing Your Path

Obstructing Free Movement

[Title 15, Chap. 2 §647c](#)

Anyone who “willfully and maliciously obstructs the free movement of any person on any street, sidewalk, or other public place or on or in any place open to the public is guilty of a misdemeanor.”

If a harasser is preventing you from passing on a sidewalk, street, or other public place, such as in a park, you can report him or her for obstructing free movement. (Obstructing your free movement on public transportation is also illegal under §640).

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

Obstructing Business Operations

[Title 14, §602.1](#)

It is illegal in California for anyone to intentionally interfere with any lawful business operations or the operations of a public agency (like a post office) “by obstructing or intimidating those attempting to carry on business, or their customers” after having been asked to leave by the owner or owner’s agent.

This section applies if the harasser’s intent was to interfere with the operations of the business, and street harassment may have more to do with getting your attention than with whether or not you carry out your tasks. But if someone is harassing you while you are at, entering, or leaving a business open to the public or while you are working, and you feel it is interfering with the business being conducted, you have the right to tell him or her to stop. If you are an employee or business owner, you can either ask the person to leave yourself or ask your supervisor to do so; if you are a customer, ask an employee or manager of the business to ask the person to leave.

Penalty: Obstructing business operations is punishable by a fine of up to \$400 and/or up to 90 days 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

[Title 15, Chap. 2, §646.9](#)

In California, stalking is defined as “willfully, maliciously, and repeatedly” following or “willfully and maliciously” harassing someone *and* by making a credible threat to harm that person.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000, and/or imprisonment in a county jail for up to a year.

Groping

Sexual Battery

[Title 8, Chap. 9 §234.4\(e\)](#)

In California, groping someone falls under the sexual battery statute. Sexual battery is when someone touches a non-consenting person's intimate part/s for the specific purpose of sexual arousal, sexual gratification, or sexual abuse.

If someone touches you in a sexual or inappropriate way, including touching your groin, sexual organs, buttocks, or breasts, either under or over your clothing, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Sexual battery is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Hate Crimes

[Title 11.6, Chap. 2 §422.6](#)

In California, it is illegal for anyone, even a law enforcement officer or other representative of the state, to “willfully injure, intimidate, interfere with, oppress, or threaten” you or to limit your free exercise and enjoyment of the rights guaranteed to you by the State of California or the U.S. government because of your:

- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Race or ethnicity
- Nationality
- Religion
- Disability
- Association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics

If a street harasser threatens, intimidates, or injures you because of any of these characteristics – such as using a racial, homophobic, or gender-based slur in a threat – this harassment may be considered a hate crime in California. You can report any crime s/he has committed, as well as any indication of hate or bias, to the police. The California statute indicates that a hate crime does *not* consist of speech alone *unless* the harasser has threatened violence and appears able to carry out their threat.

An example of a hate crime in the context of street harassment would be someone following you and shouting something like, “Don’t you know you shouldn’t be here because you’re [a woman/gay/black/white/Latina/etc.]? I should [violent threat] so you’ll stay inside.” This threat would be considered a hate crime if the person attempts to or does carry it out.

If a court finds that someone has committed a hate crime against you, the judge will issue a protective order. A restraining order may also be issued for the duration of court proceedings (prior to a conviction) if deemed necessary for your safety

Penalty: A hate crime is punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000, up to a year in jail, required counseling, and/or up to 400 hours of community service. The penalties are harsher if the crime committed is a felony or if the crime escalates to violence or physical injury, property damage, was done in concert with

another person, or was a repeat offense. The court may also order that the harasser reimburse you for any reasonable expenses resulting from his or her actions, including any counseling you may need.

Victim's Rights in California

The state of California has particular legal provisions for the rights of victims of a crime, including the right to be notified of these rights. If you have been the victim of a crime, including those described here, you can find more information in the [Victim's Bill of Rights](#).

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 San Diego, this number is (619) 531-2000 and in San Francisco it's (415) 553-0123. 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 Indecent Exposure, [Title 9, Chap. 8 §314](#). 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 Oakland Police Department has an [Online Tip Form](#) where you can report crimes like harassment and sexual assault and you can even upload a photo of the perpetrator.

- 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 Los Angeles you can do this by texting "CRIMES (274637)" and begin your message with the letters LAPD.

- 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.

Colorado

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

Verbal Harassment

Colorado has four laws that can protect you from various forms of verbal street harassment.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 18, Article 9 §106](#)

Disorderly conduct in Colorado includes:

- Making unreasonable noise.
- Fighting in public.
- Making “a coarse and obviously offensive utterance, gesture, or display in a public place [that] tends to incite an immediate breach of the peace.”

If a harasser is shouting or making other loud noises while harassing you or starts fighting with you, you can report him/her.

Note: A breach of the peace usually means a violent or tumultuous reaction, making it a “[fighting words](#)” law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class 1 petty offense, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 6 months in jail. If disorderly conduct includes fighting in public, it is a Class 3 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$50 to \$750 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Harassment

[Title 18, Article 9, §111](#)

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

- Direct obscene language to or make an obscene gesture at you. Obscene means a description of or solicitation to commit sexual acts.
- Strike, shove, kick, or otherwise touch you or subject you to physical contact.
- Repeatedly insult, taunt, or challenge you or use offensive language “in a manner likely to provoke a violent or disorderly response.”

You can report street harassers who make overtly sexual references to you, obscene gestures or comments, or repeatedly taunt you for harassment.

Note: The prohibition on offensive language likely to provoke a violent response makes it a “[fighting words](#)” law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back,

these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Harassment in general is a Class 3 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$50 to \$750 and/or up to six months in jail.

If the harasser also had the intent to intimidate you because of your actual or perceived race, color, religion, ancestry, or national origin, it is a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$500 to \$5,000 and between six and 24 months in jail.

Soliciting for Prostitution

[Title 18, Article 7, §202](#)

Soliciting someone for the purposes of prostitution is illegal in Colorado. 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 for prostitution is a Class 3 misdemeanor in Colorado, punishable by a fine of \$50 to \$750 and/or up to six months in jail.

Unlawful Conduct on Public Property

[Title 18, Article 9, §117](#)

In Colorado, supervisors, managers, and administrators of public property and spaces have the power to proscribe the acceptable conduct within that public space. Their rules for the use of the space are enforceable by law if s/he are posted publicly, including rules that prohibit “activities or conduct within public buildings or on public property which may be reasonably expected to substantially interfere with the use and enjoyment of such places by others or which may constitute a general nuisance.”

Under this section of Colorado code, administrators of public parks, schools, libraries, hospitals, transportation, government buildings, and other public property can (and may already) prohibit acts of street harassment or establish and enforce Harassment Free Zones. Check the posted rules in public venues. If it is illegal, you can report it. If there are no rules against harassment, consider raising the issue with the owners/managers of public spaces.

Penalty: Unlawful conduct on public property is a Class 3 misdemeanor in Colorado, punishable by a fine of \$50 to \$750 and/or up to six months in jail.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Criminal Invasion of Privacy

[Title 18, Article 7, §801](#)

It is illegal for a person to knowingly take a photograph or other visual recording of the intimate parts of your body without your consent when you should have reasonable expectation of privacy.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise records or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him or her for criminal invasion of privacy.

Penalty: Criminal invasion of privacy is a Class 2 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 12 months in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Title 18, Article 7, §302](#)

These acts are considered indecent exposure in Colorado:

- Knowingly exposing one's genitals to another person in a way that is likely to cause affront or alarm to the other person with the intent to arouse or satisfy sexual desire.
- Knowingly performing an act of actual or simulated masturbation, either under or over one's clothing, in the view of another person and in a way that is likely to cause affront or alarm to the other person.

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 for indecent exposure.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of between \$500 and \$5,000 and/or between 6 and 18 months in jail.

Public Indecency

[Title 18, Article 7, §301](#)

In Colorado, it is illegal for anyone to have sex or to fondle another person in a public place, to expose one's breasts or buttocks with the intent to arouse or satisfy sexual desire, or to expose one's genitals to another person in a way that is likely to cause affront or alarm.

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, you can report that person.

Penalty: Public indecency is a Class 1 petty offense, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to six months in jail.

Following

Harassment

[Title 18, Article 9, §111](#)

In Colorado, the harassment law prohibits anyone from following another person in or about a public place.

You can report street harassers who follow you, make overtly sexual references to you, or repeatedly taunt you. This Colorado law is one of the best in the country for addressing harassers who follow people because it does not state that the following must be repeated for it to be a crime.

Penalty: Harassment in general is a Class 3 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$50 to \$750 and/or up to six months in jail.

Stalking

[Title 18, Article 3, §602](#)

Stalking is defined in Colorado as repeatedly following, approaching, or contacting or making a credible threat against someone and causing that person serious emotional distress.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened, unsafe, or suffer serious emotional distress as a result, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class 5 felony, punishable by a fine of \$1,000 to \$100,000, and/or 1-3 years in prison.

Groping

Unlawful Sexual Contact

[Title 18, Article 3, §404](#)

Sexual contact occurs when a harasser knowingly touches your breasts, buttocks, or groin area, or somehow causes you to touch his or hers, either over or under clothing, “for the purposes of sexual arousal, gratification, or abuse” without consent.

You can report anyone who knowingly subjects you to sexual contact without your consent – such as grabbing your breasts or your crotch – for unlawful sexual contact.

Unlawful sexual contact also includes sexual contact with anyone under the age of 18 *or* inducing or coercing anyone under the age of 18 to expose the intimate parts of his or her body for the harasser’s sexual gratification. If this happens to you or a young person you care for, you can report the harasser.

Penalty: Unlawful sexual contact is a Class 1 misdemeanor and falls into Colorado’s category of “extraordinary risk crime,” meaning that the maximum penalty is extended. Unlawful sexual contact in general is punishable by a fine of between \$500 and \$5,000 and/or between 6 and 24 months in jail. Unlawful sexual contact with a child *or* the use of force, intimidation, or threats is a Class 4 felony, punishable by a fine of between \$2,000 and \$500,000 and/or between 1 and 16 years in prison.

Hate Crimes

Bias Motivated Crimes

Title 18, Article 9, §121

A harasser commits a bias-motivated crime in Colorado if, with the intent to harass or intimidate you based on a (real or perceived) protected personal characteristic, s/he knowingly causes you bodily injury, knowingly damages your property, *or* knowingly causes you to fear bodily injury or property damage. The characteristics that are protected from bias-motivated crimes in Colorado are:

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- Ancestry
- National origin
- Physical or mental disability
- Sexual orientation, including heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, or transgender status

If a harasser threatens to or does harm you or your property and also states or implies some prejudice – such using a racial, homophobic, or transphobic slur – you can report him/her.

Penalty: Damaging your property or causing you to fear bodily injury or property damage because of one or more of the above characteristics is a Class 1 misdemeanor in Colorado, punishable by a fine of between \$500 and \$5,000 and/or between six and 18 months in jail. If a harasser actually causes you bodily injury, a bias-motivated crime is a Class 5 felony, punishable by a fine of \$1,000 to \$100,000 and/or between 1 and 3 years in prison.

Sentences may also include community service requirements and/or a restorative justice or alternative dispute resolution process. The law also states that these criminal penalties do not preclude you from seeking any other remedies, such as civil action, otherwise available under the law.

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 Denver this number is 720-913-2000 and in Colorado Springs it is 719-444-7000. 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).
 - A description of what happened.
 - It can be helpful to include the law the crime falls under, such as Unlawful Sexual Contact, Title 18, Article 3, §404. 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, in Fort Collins, you can do this via their [Crime Reporting Form](#).
- 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.
- 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.

Connecticut

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in Connecticut, including abusive language, flashing, following, groping, and hate crimes. Here are the laws and reporting procedures you need to know.

Verbal Harassment

In Connecticut, there are seven laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

Breach of the Peace

[Title 53a, Chap. 952 §53a-181](#)

It is considered a breach of the peace in Connecticut for anyone, “with the intent to cause inconvenience, annoyance or alarm, or recklessly creating a risk thereof,” to:

- Use abusive or obscene language or make an obscene gesture in a public place.
- Engage in fighting or in "violent, threatening, or tumultuous behavior."
- Assault or strike you.
- Threaten to commit any crime against you or your property.

If a street harasser uses obscene language or makes an obscene gesture to you, engages in tumultuous (noisy or uproarious) behavior, or threatens or assaults you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: This would be a breach of the peace in the second degree, which is a class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 52a, Chap. 952 §53a-182](#)

Connecticut’s law against disorderly conduct prohibits a variety of actions relevant to street harassment. It is illegal anyone, “with the intent to cause inconvenience, annoyance or alarm, or recklessly creating a risk thereof,” to:

- Annoy or interfere with another person by offensive or disorderly conduct.
- Make unreasonable noise.
- Engage in fighting or in "violent, threatening, or tumultuous behavior."
- Obstruct pedestrian traffic.
- Expose his or her private parts.

If a street harasser is interfering with your lawful activity (such as walking down the street), shouting or making unreasonable or excessive noise, threatening you (verbally or physically), obstructing your passage to get your attention or prevent you from leaving a space, or exposing him or herself to you, you can report him/her.

Connecticut also has a law against public disturbances ([§181a](#)) that has the same text prohibiting unreasonable noise, fighting, and offensive conduct but carries a milder penalty than disorderly conduct. Police may cite someone with either creating a public disturbance or with disorderly conduct, but in either case these actions are illegal.

Penalty: Creating a public disturbance is an infraction, punishable by a fine of approximately \$100. Disorderly conduct is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to three months in jail.

Intimidation Based on Bigotry or Bias

[Title 53a, Chap. 952 §53a-181k](#)

It is illegal in Connecticut for anyone, with the intent to harass you based on your actual or perceived race, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression, to:

- Threaten you.
- Have physical contact with you.
- Damage any of your property.

Gender identity or expression is defined in Connecticut as “a person’s gender-related identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that gender-related identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person’s assigned sex at birth.”

If anyone touches you, damages your things (such as your purse or your car), or threatens you (and there is reason to believe s/he will carry out the threat) and s/he also indicates that the harassment is based on one of the above categories – such as by using a racist, homophobic, or transphobic slur – you can report him/her.

Penalty: This is considered intimidation based on bigotry or bias in the second degree, and it is a Class D felony in Connecticut, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or between 1 and 5 years in prison.

Loitering on School Grounds

[Title 53a, Chap. 952 §53a-185](#)

Loitering near a school without a legitimate reason to be there is grounds for police to ask that person to leave.

If you see someone hanging out near school facilities and s/he is harassing you or other passerby, you can report him/her.

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

Patronizing a Prostitute

[Title 53a, Chap. 952 §53a-83](#)

Connecticut’s law against patronizing a prostitute includes soliciting or requesting that another person engage in sexual conduct in return for a fee. There is also a section that specifically prohibits patronizing a prostitute from a motor vehicle.

If a street harasser solicits sexual activity from you, including from a car or on the sidewalk, 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: Patronizing a prostitute is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Ridicule on Account of Creed, Religion, Color, Denomination, Nationality or Race

[Title 53a, Chap. 952 §53-37](#)

It is illegal in Connecticut for anyone to, "by his [or her] advertisement," ridicule or hold up to contempt another person or group of people based on creed, religion, color, denomination, nationality, or race.

If a street harasser is making racist or other inappropriate prejudicial comments about you based on any of these categories, you can report him or her for ridicule based race or religion.

Penalty: Ridicule on account of creed, religion, color, denomination, nationality or race is a class D misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$250 and/or 30 days in jail.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Voyeurism

[Title 53a, Chap. 952 § 189a](#)

Connecticut's Voyeurism law covers two types of unlawful filming/photographing.

1. It is unlawful for anyone to photograph or film someone without that person's consent when done with malice and under circumstances in which the person would have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

This includes filming and photographing in restrooms, dressing rooms, locker rooms, hotel rooms, and other locations.

2. The law also states that it is illegal for someone to take a photo or video of someone without that person's consent to arouse or satisfy sexual desire when that person is not in plain view and under circumstances when that person should reasonably expect privacy.

Although this law does not explicitly state that it is illegal to take up-skirt or down-blouse photos of you in a public place without your consent, it would be reasonable to expect that you have privacy under your clothing. You can report someone taking inappropriate photos of you in public. Even if a judge does not find up-skirt photos to be prohibited under this law, increased reporting may lead to it being prohibited.

Penalty: Voyeurism is a Class D felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or between 1 and 5 years in prison.

Indecent Exposure

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 52a, Chap. 952 §53a-182](#)

Exposing one's private parts in public, "with the intent to cause inconvenience, annoyance or alarm, or recklessly creating a risk thereof," is considered disorderly conduct.

If a street harasser flashes you or exposes him or herself to you, you can report that person.

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

Public Indecency

[Title 53a, Chap. 952 §53a-186](#)

It is illegal in Connecticut for anyone to lewdly expose his or her body with the intent to arouse or satisfy sexual desire *or* to lewdly fondle or caress the body of another person in a public place where s/he may reasonably expect to be viewed by others. The statute does not specify which body parts it is illegal to expose or fondle, but rather focuses on the lewd or sexual nature of the act.

If a harasser commits a sex act, flashes you, or otherwise exposes him or herself to you in a public place, such as a park, on public transportation, or in a store, you can report that person.

Penalty: Public indecency is a Class B misdemeanor in Connecticut, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 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 53a, Chap. 952 §53a-181d](#)

Stalking is illegal in Connecticut and it occurs when someone follows, lies in wait for, monitors, observes, threatens, or harasses another person at least two times and in such a way that a reasonable person would fear for his or her own safety.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to a year in jail.

Groping

Sexual Assault in the Fourth Degree

[Title 53a, Chap. 952, §53a-73a](#)

It is illegal for anyone to subject you to sexual contact – touching the intimate parts of your body or touching your body with the intimate parts of his or hers – without your consent.

If a harasser grabs your crotch, breasts, or butt, or rubs him or herself against you in a sexual or inappropriate way, you can report that person for sexual assault in the fourth degree.

Penalty: Sexual assault in the fourth degree against someone 16 years of age or older is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to a year in jail. Sexual assault in the fourth degree against someone under 16 years of age is a Class D felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or between 1 and 5 years in prison.

Hate Crime

Intimidation Based on Bigotry or Bias

[Title 53a-181b](#)

In Connecticut, a person commits the second degree crime if s/he acts maliciously and intends to intimidate or harass someone by:

1. Making physical contact with him/her.
2. Damaging, destroying or defacing property.
3. Threatening to do either of these things.

And the person's actions are motivated because of the victim's actual or perceived:

- Race
- Religion
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity or expression

Penalty: Second-degree bigotry or bias is a Class D felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or 1-5 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 Hartford, this number is (860) 757-4350 and in Bridgeport it's (203) 576-7671. For New Haven it is (203) 946-6316, and for Stamford, it is (203) 977-4444. 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 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 in the First or Second Degree, in [CT Law Section 53a-183 and 53a-182b](#), respectively. 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, in [Bridgeport](#), you can submit an online report through iWatchBridgeport, where you have the choice to leave your contact 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. Visit your local police department website for information.
 - In Bridgeport, you can do this by texting the number 27463 or CRIME, and beginning the message with 717 and a space or by completing a confidential tip form at [iWatchBridgeport](#). You can also download their [application](#) for your iPhone or Android.
 - In [Hartford](#), you can complete an anonymous tip form via web, or by phone by dialing 860-722-8477 (TIPS).
 - In New Haven, you can text the number 274637 or CRIMES, and begin the message with NHPD, or call the number 1-866-888-8477 (TIPS).
 - 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.

Delaware

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

Verbal Harassment

Delaware has ten laws that address various forms of verbal harassment.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 11, Chap. 5 §1301](#)

Delaware has a broad law against “disorderly conduct” that prohibits many forms of street harassment. The following actions are considered disorderly conduct in Delaware when done with the intent to cause public inconvenience, annoyance, or alarm:

- Fighting or engaging in violent, tumultuous, or threatening behavior.
- Making unreasonable noise or an offensive utterance, gesture or display.
- Addressing abusive language to anyone present.
- Obstructing pedestrian traffic.
- Congregating with a group in a public place and refusing to comply with a lawful police officer’s order to disperse.
- Creating a hazardous or physically offensive condition by an act that serves no legitimate purpose.

Examples of street harassment that might be considered disorderly conduct in Delaware include yelling, using obscene, offensive, or lewd language, or blocking your path on the sidewalk or in the street.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is an unclassified misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$575 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Harassment

[Title 11, Chap. 5 §1311](#)

Delaware's harassment law prohibits:

- Insulting
- Taunting
- Challenging you
- Engaging in any other alarming or disturbing course of conduct that serves no legitimate purpose and is likely to cause a reasonable person fear, alarm, or distress.

Delaware’s statute regarding harassment does not explicitly define a “course of conduct,” although in the context of Delaware’s [stalking statute](#), a course of conduct means “three or more separate incidents” in which a harasser “follows, monitors, observes, surveys, threatens, or communicates to or about [you], or interferes with, jeopardizes, damages, or disrupts [your] daily activities, property, employment, business, career, education, or medical care.” Some states use uniform definitions

throughout their laws, and others do not, so it is unclear if harassment in Delaware must happen three or more times.

However, if someone is insulting, taunting, or challenging you in a way that causes you fear, alarm or distress, you can report him or her to the police. Even if their actions do not constitute harassment, it's possible that they may fall under one of Delaware's other laws.

Penalty: Harassment is a Class A misdemeanor in Delaware, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,300 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Loitering

[Title 11, Chap. 5 §1320-1321](#)

Several of the provisions in Delaware's loitering laws apply to common street harassment behaviors.

1. Loitering in a public place for the purpose of "engaging or soliciting another person to engage in sexual intercourse or deviate sexual intercourse."

If a harasser appears to be loitering and makes explicitly sexual comments to you, you can report him or her for loitering.

2. Loitering or "prowling" in a public place at a time or in a manner unusual for law abiding citizens or that causes reasonable alarm or concern for the safety of those nearby. If someone is thought to be loitering or prowling at a time or in a manner that may not be "law abiding," police are instructed in the statute to give the individual the opportunity to dispel any alarm by asking for identification and an explanation of the person's presence or conduct.

Given the general acceptance of street harassment as normal, officers may not find harassing behavior to be grounds for arrest. However, involving a police officer may be enough to clear a harasser from the street or sidewalk and/or deter harassers in the future.

3. Failing or refusing to move on when lawfully ordered to do so by any police officer, or sitting, standing, or loitering on a sidewalk or other public way and obstructing the passage of others after being reasonably asked to move.

If a street harasser is obstructing your path, you have the right to ask him or her to move and to report him or her to the police if s/he does not.

4. Loitering on or around the premises of a school, college, or university without legitimate business can be grounds for school authorities or police to ask a person to leave.

If you see someone hanging out near one of these facilities and harassing you or other passerby, you can report him or her to the police for loitering.

Penalty: Loitering is a violation, punishable by a fine of up to \$345 and/or up to a year of probation.

Menacing

[Title 11, Chap. 5 §602](#)

In Delaware, it is illegal for anyone to intentionally place you in fear of imminent physical injury, either “by some movement of the body or [by] any instrument.”

If a street harasser does something to make you fear he or she may hurt you, such as following you or blocking your path, you can call 911. This may be considered menacing in Delaware.

Penalty: Menacing is an unclassified misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$575 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Patronizing a Prostitute

[Title 11, Chap. 5 §1343](#)

Soliciting someone for the purposes of prostitution is illegal in Delaware.

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: Patronizing a prostitute is a misdemeanor with a mandatory minimum fine of \$500. Other penalties may include up to 30 days in jail and/or seizure of any vehicle used in connection with the offense (if the harasser has a prior conviction). Additionally, the mandatory minimum fine is raised to \$1,000 if the act of patronizing a prostitute happens within 1,000 feet of a school, residence, or place of worship. It is no defense to say one did not know s/he was that close.

Sexual Extortion

[Title 11, Chap. 5 §774](#)

It is illegal in Delaware for anyone to threaten physically harm you, damage your property, or accuse you of a crime so that you will engage in sexual activity. There are a few cases of sexual extortion in the context of street harassment, especially in cases of harassment against transgender or gender nonconforming individuals.

If someone threatens you so you will engage in sexual activity, you can report that person, including if the person making the threat is a law enforcement officer.

Penalty: Sexual extortion is a Class E felony, punishable by up to 5 years in prison.

Sexual Harassment

[Title 11, Chap. 5 §763](#)

Delaware has a general sexual harassment law that covers some forms of verbal street harassment, including:

- Threatening to commit any sexual offense.
- Suggesting, soliciting, requesting, commanding, persistently asking, or otherwise attempting to induce someone to have sexual contact or sexual intercourse if the harasser knows that s/he is likely to cause that person annoyance, offense, or alarm.

If someone is making sexual comments or requests to you in a public place or worse – threatening to commit a sexual offense against you – you can report him/her.

Penalty: Sexual harassment is an unclassified misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$575 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Title 11, Chap. 5. §764-765](#)

It is illegal for someone to expose his or her genitals or buttocks, or her breasts in a way that s/he knows is likely to cause someone affront or alarm.

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: Indecent exposure in general is an unclassified misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$575 and/or up to 30 days in jail. Indecent exposure to a person who is less than 16 years of age is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,300 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Obstructing Your Path

Obstructing Public Passages

[Title 11, Chap. 5 §1323](#)

In Delaware, it is illegal for any person or group of people to “intentionally or recklessly render any public passage unreasonably inconvenient or hazardous to use.”

If a street harasser is intentionally making it unreasonably inconvenient for you to pass on a public street or sidewalk, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Obstructing a public passage is a violation, punishable by a fine of up to \$345 and/or up to a year of probation.

Obstructing Ingress or Egress from Public Buildings

[Title 11, Chap. 5 § 1324](#)

It is illegal in Delaware for a harasser to obstruct your entry to or exit from (ingress or egress) any public building. The law does not specify whether this applies only to publicly owned buildings or to any building open to the public.

If a harasser is obstructing your path while you are trying to enter or exit a public building, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Obstructing ingress to or egress from public buildings is an unclassified misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$575 and/or up to 30 days 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

[Title 11, Chap. 5 §1312](#)

Stalking is illegal in Delaware, and it occurs when a person knowingly engages in a course of conduct – including following – on at least three occasions when the conduct would cause a reasonable person to fear physical injury or suffer significant mental anguish or distress.

If the same harasser follows you at least three times and makes you fearful or very distressed, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is typically a Class G felony, punishable by up to two years in prison, but it can rise to a more severe class depending on the age of the victim.

Groping

Offensive Touching

[Title 11, Chap. 5 §601](#)

It is illegal in Delaware for anyone to intentionally:

- Touch another person, either with a part of his or her body or with some other instrument, in a way that s/he knows is likely to offend or alarm that person.
- Strike someone with saliva, urine, feces, or any other bodily fluid in a way that s/he knows is likely to offend or alarm that person.

If a street harasser grabs you, smacks or pinches your buttocks, spits at you – or causes you to come in contact with semen – you can report that person. Additionally, if a harasser causes you to come in contact with his or her bodily fluid, the law requires that s/he be tested for transmittable diseases at his or her own expense, and that you have the right to know the test results.

Penalty: Offensive touching is an unclassified misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$575 and/or up to 30 days in jail. Offensive touching that involves contact with a bodily fluid is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,300 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Unlawful Sexual Contact

[Title 11, Chap. 5 §767-768](#)

It is illegal in Delaware for anyone to have any sexual contact with another person either without that person's consent *or* in a way that the harasser knows will be offensive. Sexual contact is any touching of a person's anus, breasts, buttocks or genitalia over or under clothing when it is intended to be sexual in nature. This could be either by touching someone or by causing that person to touch him/her.

If someone touches you in a sexual way, rubs himself or herself against you, or somehow causes you to touch him or her in a sexual way against your will, you can report that person.

Penalty: Unlawful sexual contact in general is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,300 and/or up to 1 year in jail. Unlawful sexual contact with someone under the age of 18 is a class F felony, punishable by up to 3 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 Dover this number is (302) 736-7111 and in Wilmington it's (302) 654-5151. In Newark, it is (973) 733-6000 and in Middletown, it is (732) 615-2100. 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 including, but not limited to insults likely to provoke a violent response under [Delaware Law §1311](#). 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, [Newark](#) has an online reporting system where you can report crimes like harassment and sexual assault.
- 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 Dover and Wilmington, you can do this by calling their Crime Stoppers Tip Line at 1-800-847-3333. In Dover, you can also visit [this](#) website, which provides information regarding submitting web tips and text tips.
- In Wilmington, you can do this by texting the number 274637 and beginning the message with DCS, or submitting through [this](#) web form. Wilmington also has a direct crime tip hotline available by calling 1-866-945-6847.
- [Newark](#) has a confidential crime tip web 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.

District of Columbia

Washington D.C. has a variety of laws to protect you from street harassment, especially if you are under the age of 18, including verbal harassment, blocking paths, up-skirt photos, indecent exposure, following, groping, and hate crimes. Here are the laws and reporting procedures you need to know.

Verbal Harassment

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 22, Subtitle I, Chap. 13 §1321](#)

It is illegal in D.C. for anyone, in public, to:

- Act intentionally and recklessly in such a way that puts you in reasonable fear that you or your personal property are likely to be harmed or taken.
- Engage in loud, threatening, or abusive language, or disruptive conduct, that unreasonably impedes, disrupts, or disturbs your use of a public conveyance (public transportation or another bus, train, or transportation service).

If someone is harassing you on public transportation or, does something to make you fear for your personal safety in any public space, such as following or threatening you, you can also report him/her.

It is also illegal to:

- “Jostle” or “unnecessarily crowd” you, so as to incite a breach of the peace (a violent or tumultuous response).
- Direct abusive or offensive language or gestures to you in a manner likely to provoke an immediate violent response.
- Otherwise incite or provoke violence

“A manner likely to provoke an immediate violent response” part makes it a “[fighting words](#)” law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 90 days in jail.

Enticing A Child or Minor

[Title 22, Subtitle I, Chap. 30 §3010](#)

It is illegal in D.C. for anyone to attempt to seduce, entice, allure, convince, or persuade a minor to engage in sexual activity or to go with him or her to any place for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity.

If you (or a young person you care for) are under 18 years of age and a street harasser solicits you for sexual activity or attempts to persuade you to go somewhere with him or her, you can report that person for enticing a minor.

Penalty: Enticing a child or minor is punishable by a fine of up to \$50,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison.

Soliciting for Prostitution

[Title 22, Subtitle I, Chap. 27 §2701](#)

Soliciting for prostitution is illegal in D.C. 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 for prostitution is punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 90 days in jail.

Sexual Proposal to a Minor

[Title 22, Subtitle I, Chap. 13 §1312](#)

It is illegal in D.C. for anyone to make “an obscene or indecent sexual proposal to a minor.”

If you (or a young person you care for) are under 18 years of age and a street harasser speaks to you in a sexually explicit way and asks you to engage in sexual activity, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Making a sexual proposal to a minor is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 90 days in jail.

Unlawful Filming & Photography

Voyeurism

[Title 22, Subtitle I, Chap. 35 §3531](#)

There are two ways the D.C. law addresses unlawful filming and photographing.

1. It is illegal for anyone to surreptitiously observe or electronically record someone in any place where a person would reasonably expect privacy.

If a street harasser photographs or records you while you are using a restroom, undressed, or engaging in sexual activity, you can report him/her.

2. It is illegal for anyone to intentionally capture an image of a private area of a person’s body without his/her express consent under circumstances in which he/she has a reasonable expectation of privacy. The private area of a person’s body includes naked or undergarment-clad genitals, pubic area, butt, or breasts.
3. If a street harasser takes an “up-skirt” or “down-blouse” photo of you or observes or records you in a private place, you can report him or her for voyeurism.

Penalty: Voyeurism is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$2,500 and/or up to 1 year in jail. Anyone who distributes or disseminates illegally taken photographs or recordings, or attempts to do so, may be punished by a fine of up to \$12,500 and/or up to 5 years in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Lewd, Indecent, or Obscene Acts

[Title 22, Subtitle I, Chap. 13 §1312](#)

It is illegal in D.C. for anyone to “make an obscene or indecent exposure” of his or her genitals or anus, to masturbate, or to engage in a sexual act in a public place.

If a street harasser exposes him or herself to you or flashes you, masturbates in front of you, or does any other sexual act in public, you can report him/ her.

Penalty: A lewd, indecent, or obscene act is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 90 days in jail.

Misdemeanor Sexual Abuse of a Child or Minor

[Title 22, Subtitle I, Chap. 30 §3010.01](#)

The crime of lewd, indecent, or obscene acts covers indecent exposure generally, but if you are under 18 years of age, and a street harasser who is more than 4 years older, than you masturbates in front of you or engages in another sexual act in public, you can report him or her for the more serious charge of misdemeanor sexual abuse of a child or minor.

Penalty: Misdemeanor sexual abuse of a child or minor is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 180 days in jail.

[Back to the Top of the Page](#)

Obstructing Your Path

Blocking Passage

[Title 22, Subtitle I, Chap. 13 §1307](#)

It is illegal in D.C. for anyone to “crowd, obstruct, or incommode [inconvenience] the use of any street, avenue, alley, road, highway, or sidewalk, or the entrance of any public or private building or enclosure or the use of or passage through any public conveyance [public transportation],” after being told not to do so by a law enforcement officer.

If someone is obstructing your path, you can enlist a police officer to tell him or her to stop.

Penalty: Blocking passage after being told by a law enforcement officer not to do so is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 90 days 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

[Title 22, Subtitle I, Chap. 31A §3133](#)

D.C. law defines stalking as purposefully engaging in a course of conduct, targeted at a specific individual, that is *either* intended to cause that person emotional distress *or* that the harasser knows or should have known would cause a [reasonable person](#) to:

- Suffer emotional distress
- Feel seriously alarmed, disturbed or frightened
- Fear for one’s personal safety or the safety of another person.

“Engaging in a course of conduct” – i.e., the actions relevant to street harassment that constitute stalking – means to do any of the following on two or more occasions:

- Following, monitoring or surveilling you,
- Threatening you or communicating to or about you, and/or
- Interfering with, damaging, or taking your property.

If a street harasser commits two or more of the above acts and those acts make you feel scared or intimidated or cause you substantial emotional distress – such as verbally harassing you and/or following you – his or her actions may constitute stalking and you can report him/her.

Penalty: Stalking is punishable by fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 12 months in jail.

Groping

Attempt to Commit Sexual Offenses

[Title 22, Subtitle I, Chap. 30 §3018](#)

Attempting to commit a sexual crime is a punishable offense in D.C.

If a street harasser gropes or sexual assaults you, you can report him or her under the laws detailed below. If s/he *attempts* to have inappropriate sexual contact with you and doesn’t succeed, you can report him/her under this law.

Penalty: Attempt to commit sexual offenses is punishable by up to half of the fine and prison term of the offense attempted.

Misdemeanor Sexual Abuse & Second Degree Sexual Abuse

[Title 22, Subtitle I, Chap. 30 §3006](#)

It is illegal in D.C. for anyone to have sexual contact with someone if s/he should have known that the sexual contact was without consent. Sexual contact is defined as touching, either under or over clothing, your genitals, groin, inner thigh, butt, or breast with the intent to:

- Humiliate
- Harass
- Degrade
- Arouse or gratify sexual desire

If a street harasser touches or grabs you inappropriately or rubs up against you, you can report him or her for misdemeanor sexual abuse. If you are under 16 years of age, you can report groping as second degree sexual abuse.

Penalty: Misdemeanor sexual abuse is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or 180 days in jail. Engaging in sexual contact with a child younger than 16 years of age is second degree sexual abuse, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to 10 years in prison.

Hate Crimes

Bias-Related Crime

[Title 22, Subtitle II, Chap. 37, §400-4004](#)

In D.C., a hate crime is a crime that is committed against a person because of prejudice or bias, including because of a person's actual or perceived:

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- National origin
- Sex
- Age
- Marital status
- Personal appearance
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity or expression
- Family responsibility
- Homelessness
- Physical disability
- Matriculation
- Political affiliation

Penalty: A person who is charged with and found guilty of a bias-related crime shall be fined not more than 1 1/2 times the maximum fine authorized for the designated act and imprisoned for not more than 1 1/2 times the maximum term authorized for the designated act.

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, you can call 311, if within the city limits, and (202)737-4404 if not. 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 Lewd, Indecent, or Obscene Acts, [Title 22, Subtitle I, Chap. 13 §1312](#). 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, Metro Transit Police allow you to make reports about sexual harassment that take place on the Metro transportation system [via this online form](#).
- 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.
 - For example, you can call (202) 727-9099 for the anonymous tip line, or text your tip to the number 50411.
- 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.

Florida

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

Note: Florida has [a specific statute](#) stipulating that voluntary intoxication or use of alcohol or another controlled or nonprescription substance is not a defense for committing a crime. In other words, a harasser cannot use intoxication as a defense for saying s/he did not intend to do something like grope you or expose him or herself. S/he is still liable.

Verbal Harassment

There are four laws that prohibit some type of verbal harassment in Florida.

Breach of the Peace and Disorderly Conduct

[Title XLVI, Chap. 877 §3](#)

Florida's breach of peace and disorderly conduct law is quite broad and it includes acts that "outrage the sense of public decency," affect the peace and quiet of persons who may witness them, and constitute a breach of the peace or disorderly conduct.

Many examples of street harassment could fall into these categories, such as shouting, homophobic or transphobic slurs, or lewd or sexually explicit comments, and you can report that person.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct or a breach of the peace is a second-degree misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$500 and/or up to 60 days in jail.

Loitering and Prowling

[Title XLVI, Chap. 856 §21](#)

It is unlawful in Florida for individuals to loiter or "prowl" in a public place at a time or in a manner unusual for law abiding citizens or that causes reasonable alarm or concern for the safety of those nearby.

If a person is standing around, harassing people going by or makes you worried for your safety or the safety of others, you can report him/her.

The law instructs law enforcement officers to ask the person loitering "to identify himself or herself and explain his or her presence and conduct."

- Unless the person flees, no one can be convicted of loitering unless the officer present gave the individual this opportunity to explain.
- Similarly, the individual(s) cannot be convicted if it is found in court that his or her explanation "would have dispelled the alarm or immediate concern."

Some officers may not find street harassment behavior to be grounds for arrest. However, involving a police office may be enough to clear a harasser from the street or sidewalk and/or deter harassers in the future.

Penalty: Any person convicted of loitering or prowling is guilty of a second-degree misdemeanor and may face a fine of \$500 and/or up to 60 days in jail.

Additionally, anyone required to register as a sex offender or who has been convicted of certain crimes against children can face more serious penalties for loitering, especially if minors are present (see [§ 856.022](#)). This is not something you will know about a harasser ahead of time, but if someone is doing something clearly inappropriate and threatening, and there are children present, you may want to report it in the interest of preventing a more serious incident.

Nuisances

[Title XLVI, Chap. 823 §1](#)

Florida has a general law against “nuisances” that “tend to annoy the community, injure the health of the citizens in general, or corrupt the public morals.”

Nuisance laws typically apply to one entity – either a person or organization – that causes a problem for a large part of the community. If you find that one individual or organization is consistently causing many people to be harassed, you may be able to report it under this law. For example:

- A person who routinely harasses many passersby on the same street corner every day, or who causes some other significant disruption that affects many people at once.
- A company whose employees regularly harass people while on the job, such as construction workers or delivery truck drivers. You might try going directly to the business owner first to file a complaint. But if the harassment doesn’t stop, you could report the business as a nuisance.

Lawmakers, law enforcement officials, or judges may try to trivialize street harassment, but it is okay to make the case for why it IS a public nuisance.

Penalty: A nuisance is a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable by a fine of \$500.

Soliciting Prostitution

[Title XLVI, Chapter 796, §7](#)

In Florida, it is unlawful to ask someone to engage in prostitution or to offer to engage in prostitution. 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 or enticing someone to engage in prostitution is a second-degree misdemeanor in Florida, punishable by a fine of \$500 and/or up to 60 days in jail.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Video Voyeurism

[Title XLVI, Chap. 810 § 145](#)

In Florida, it is illegal for someone:

1. To photograph or film a non-consenting person with the intent of degrading or abusing the person or for his or her own amusement, sexual arousal or gratification if that person is dressing, undressing, or privately exposing his or her body in a place where s/he has a reasonable expectation of privacy.

If someone films or photographs you in public restrooms, dressing rooms, locker rooms, hotel rooms, and other locations, you can report him/her.

2. To take a photo or video of a non-consenting person under or through that person's clothing for the purpose of viewing that person's body or underwear and for the purpose of amusement, entertainment, or sexual arousal or gratification.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Video voyeurism is a first degree misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$1,000 and/or up to a year in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Exposure of Sexual Organs

[Title XLVI, Chap. 800 §3](#)

In Florida, it is illegal for a harasser to expose his or her sexual organs in a vulgar or indecent manner in public, in the private premises of another person, or near enough to the private premises of another person that the harasser may be seen. It is also illegal to be naked in public unless in a place specifically dedicated for nudity.

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, you can report that person for indecent exposure.

Penalty: Exposure of sexual organs is a first degree misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$1,000 and/or up to a year in jail.

Lewd or Lascivious Exhibition

[Title XLVI, Chap. 800 § 4\(7\)](#)

In Florida, any act of indecent exposure in front of a person under 16 years of age is considered "lewd and lascivious exhibition." The statute prohibiting lewd and lascivious exhibition includes masturbation, exposure of the genitals in a lewd or lascivious manner, or any other sexual act, including simulation of a sexual act that does not involve actual physical or sexual contact.

While Florida law does not specifically define “a lewd or lascivious manner,” in other states, it refers to something that is of an explicit and offensive sexual nature.

If a harasser exposes him or herself to you or masturbates in front of you and you are under 16 years of age, or someone else involved in the incident is under 16 years of age, you can report that person.

Penalty: Lewd and lascivious exhibition is a second-degree felony if committed by an adult, and is punishable by a fine of \$10,000 and/or up to 15 years in prison. If committed by someone under 18 years of age, it’s a third-degree felony, and punishable by a fine of \$5,000 and/or up to 5 years imprisonment.

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.

Assault

[Title XLVI, Chap. 784 § 11](#)

In Florida, a threat of violence, either by word or action, that makes you fear immediate violence is an assault. In order for a threat to be considered assault, there must be some reason to believe that the harasser has the ability and plans to commit an act of violence.

For example, if a harasser yells something at you as you walk away from them but doesn’t follow you, this is unlikely to be considered an assault, but if the harasser yells a threat at you, follows you down the sidewalk or corners you on the bus, and seems likely to commit an immediate act of violence, this is assault and you can report it.

Penalty: Assault is a second-degree misdemeanor in Florida, punishable by a fine of \$500 and/or up to 60 days in jail.

Stalking

[Title XLVI, Chap. 748 § 48](#)

If someone repeatedly and maliciously follows or harasses you, this is stalking. In Florida, “harass” means to commit a series of acts over time that serve no legitimate purpose and cause you substantial emotional distress. The statute does not specify that “repeatedly” or “over time” means on more than one day.

In Florida, a law enforcement officer can make an arrest immediately without a warrant if there is reason to believe that a person has committed stalking.

If the same person follows you or otherwise harasses you at least twice and makes you fearful or very distressed, you can report that person for stalking.

Penalty: Stalking is a first-degree misdemeanor in Florida, punishable by a fine of \$1,000 and/or up to a year in jail.

Groping

Battery

[Title XLVI, Chap. 784 §3](#)

In Florida, a harasser commits battery if s/he intentionally touches or strikes you against your will or intentionally causes you bodily harm.

If a harasser puts his or her hands on you, including groping your butt, groin, or breasts, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Battery is a first-degree misdemeanor in Florida, punishable by a fine of \$1,000 and/or up to a year in jail.

Battery of Child by Certain Fluids or Materials

[Title XLVI, Chap. 784 §85](#)

In Florida, it is unlawful for any adult who are 18 years or older to knowingly cause or attempt to cause a child to come into contact with bodily fluids - blood, seminal fluid, urine, or feces – by throwing, tossing, projecting, or expelling any bodily fluids or materials at or onto a child.

If this happens to you and you are under 18 years old, or someone you know or care for is, you can report the harasser.

Penalty: Battery of a child by fluids or materials is a third-degree felony, punishable by a fine of \$5,000 and/or up to 5 years imprisonment.

Lewd or Lascivious Molestation

[Title XLVI, Chap. 800 §4\(5\)](#)

It is illegal for someone to intentionally touch in a lewd or lascivious manner the breasts, genitals, genital area or buttock or a person who is younger than 16 years old, or to force or entice someone younger than 16 years old to touch him/her. Florida law does not specifically define the term “lewd or lascivious,” but in other states, it refers to something that is of an explicit and offensive sexual nature.

If you are under 16 years of age, or someone you care for or know is, and a harasser intentionally touches you or that person in a lewd or lascivious manner, you can report the harasser.

Penalty: The possible penalties vary based on your age and the age of the harasser and can range from third-degree felonies, punishable by a fine of \$5,000 and/or up to 5 years imprisonment, to second-degree felonies, punishable by a fine of \$10,000 and/or up to 15 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 Miami, this number is (305) 579-6111 and in Tampa it is (813) 231-6130. 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).
 - 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 Lewd or Lascivious Conduct, [Title XLVI, Chap. 800 §6](#). 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 Miami/Dade County Police Department has a thorough [Crime Stoppers reporting form](#) (available in English, [Español](#), and [Français](#)).
- 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 Clearwater, you can text your tip to 847411 using the keyword CWPD with your tip. They also have a tips app you can download from [iTunes](#) or the [Google Play Store](#).
- Once you have reported a crime, if you provided your contact information, you should receive a call with a police report or 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.

Georgia

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in Georgia, including abusive words, flashing, following, and groping. Here are the laws and reporting procedures you need to know.

Note: It is best to be cautious if you choose to confront street harassers (“don’t harass me,” “stop it now”), as Georgia’s law protects individuals that react violently to offensive or abusive language – meaning the law could protect a street harasser who retaliates against you if you use profanity, insults, or other fighting words.

Verbal Harassment

In Georgia, there are four laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 16, Chap. 11, Article 2 §39](#)

In Georgia, it is illegal to:

- Act in a violent or tumultuous (noisy or uproarious) way that places someone in reasonable fear for her or his safety.
- Without provocation, use obscene and vulgar or profane language in the presence of someone under the age of 14 years in a way that threatens an immediate breach of the peace.
- Without provocation, direct abusive words to someone or say them about someone in that person’s presence in way would “naturally tend to provoke violent resentment.”

If a street harasser yells at you to the degree that you fear for your safety or uses vulgar language when someone younger than 14 is present, you can report him/her.

Note: The “provoke violent resentment” part makes it a “[fighting words](#)” law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up \$1,000 and/or up to 12 months in jail.

Loitering or Prowling

[Title 16, Chap. 11, Article 2 §36](#)

It is illegal in Georgia for individuals to loiter or “prowl” in a public place at a time or in a manner unusual for law abiding citizens or that causes reasonable alarm or concern for the safety of those nearby.

Law enforcement officers must ask the person loitering to identify him or herself and explain his or her presence and conduct.

- Unless the person flees, no one can be convicted of loitering unless the officer present gave the individual this opportunity to explain.
- Similarly, the individual(s) cannot be convicted if it is found in court that his or her explanation “would have dispelled the alarm or immediate concern.”

Given the general acceptance of street harassment as normal, officers may not find harassing behavior to be grounds for arrest. However, involving a police officer may be enough to clear a harasser from the street or sidewalk and/or deter harassers in the future.

If a street harasser is hanging out in a public place and harassing you or other passersby, you may be able to report him or her for loitering if his or her behavior causes you reasonable alarm or concern for your safety.

Penalty: Loitering and prowling is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 12 months in jail.

Pandering

[Title 16, Chap. 6 §12](#)

In Georgia, it is illegal for anyone to solicit a person to perform an act of prostitution. 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: Pandering is a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 12 months in jail.

Simple Assault

[Title 16, Chap. 5, Article 2 §20](#)

In Georgia, anyone who uses violence against another person or who places another person in reasonable fear of immediate violence is guilty of simple assault.

If someone is threatening you and you believe s/he may become violent, you can call the police.

If you believe someone may become violent, you should be very cautious about engaging with him or her in Georgia. The statute § 16-5-25 protects a person from the charge of simple assault if s/he reacts violently to offensive or abusive language. If you yell at, curse, or threaten a harasser (which is not behavior we suggest doing anyway), and s/he reacts violently, the courts may side with the harasser.

If you feel threatened by someone, or if s/he threatens to or does physically harm you, try to get away from that person to safety and you can call the police.

Penalty: Simple assault in general is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 12 months in jail. The penalty may be more severe for assault committed on a public transit vehicle (or

in a public transportation station), against someone 65 or older, against a public school system employee, or against a pregnant woman.

Indecent Exposure

Public Indecency

[Title 16, Chap. 6 §8](#)

In Georgia, it is illegal for anyone to lewdly expose his or her sexual organs, lewdly appear in a state of partial or complete nudity, or lewdly fondle another person while in a public place.

If a harasser flashes you or exposes him or herself to you, or does any of the other acts described, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Public indecency is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up \$1,000 and/or up to 12 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

[Title 16, Chap. 5, Article 7](#)

Stalking in Georgia is defined as someone following, placing under surveillance, or contacting a non-consenting person for the purpose of harassing or intimidating that person.

Note, contacting includes communication in person or by telephone, mail, computer, or an electronic device.

If someone follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person. Unlike many other states, under this stalking law it is a crime the first time it happens.

Penalty: Stalking is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up \$1,000 and/or up to 12 months in jail.

Groping

Simple Battery

[Title 16, Chap. 5, Article 2 §23](#)

Simple battery applies when a street harasser intentionally makes physical contact with you that is “of an insulting or provoking nature” or intentionally causes physical harm to you.

If someone grabs or gropes you in an insulting or inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Simple battery is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up \$1,000 and/or up to 12 months in jail.

Sexual Battery

[Title 16, Chap. 6 §22.1](#)

Sexual battery applies when a street harasser intentionally makes physical contact with your genital area, anus, groin, inner thighs, buttocks or breasts without your consent.

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

Penalty: Sexual battery is a misdemeanor in Georgia, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 12 months in jail. Sexual battery of someone under the age of 16 is a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 12 months 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
 - 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 Atlanta this number is (404) 614-6544 and in Columbus it's (706) 225-4055, or (706) 225-4064. In Augusta, it is (706) 592-6255 and in Macon, it is (478) 751-7500. 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 Stalking, [Georgia Law O.C.G.A. §16-5-90](#). 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 by which you can submit the same information listed in #2.

- 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 Atlanta, you can do this by calling 404-577-8477, by texting the number 274637 and beginning the message with CSA Tip, or by submitting it online at this [website](#).

- In Columbus, you can do this by calling 706-653-3188, by texting the number 274637 and beginning your message with VACS, or by submitting it online at this [website](#).
- There are also directions at this [website](#) on how to submit tips with your smartphone. In Macon, you can do this by calling the tip line at either 478-742-2330 or 1-877-68CRIME.
- 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.

Hawaii

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

Verbal Harassment

Hawai'i has three laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 37 §711-1101](#)

Hawai'i has a broad law against "disorderly conduct" that prohibits the following actions when done with the intent to cause physical inconvenience or alarm:

- Fighting, threatening, or engaging in violent or tumultuous behavior.
- Making unreasonable noise.
- Creating a hazardous or physically offensive condition by an act performed without a license or permit.
- Subject another person to offensively coarse behavior or abusive language which is likely to provoke a violent response.

If a street harasser uses obscene, offensive, or lewd language, or loudly shouts at you, you can report him/her.

Note: The "likely to provoke a violent response" part makes it a "[fighting words](#)" law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it if a street harasser uses abusive language or coarse behavior – such as an obscene gesture. If enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a violation, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000.

Harassment

[Title 37 §711-1106](#)

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

- Repeatedly communicate with you after you have told him or her to stop.
- Insult, taunt, or challenge you, or use offensive language toward you in way that makes you reasonably believe the harasser will cause you bodily harm.
- Strike, shove, kick, or otherwise touch you in an offensive way or subject you to offensive physical contact.

You can report street harassers who threaten you, use inappropriate language, physically touch you, or repeatedly ask for your name/number or to go out with you after you have told the person to stop.

Penalty: Harassment is a petty misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Prostitution

[Title 37 §712-1200](#)

Paying, agreeing to pay or offering to pay a fee for sexual conduct is illegal in Hawai'i. 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: Prostitution is a petty misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of between \$500 and \$1,000 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Violation of Privacy in the Second Degree

[Title 37 § 711-1111](#)

In Hawai'i, the following is illegal:

1. Photograph or film a person without his/her consent if that person is partially or fully undressed or engaged in sexual activity in a private place.

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

2. Photograph or film the intimate areas of a person's body underneath his/her clothing while the person is in a public place.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Violation of privacy in the second degree is a petty misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of between \$500 and \$1,000 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Title 37 §707-734](#)

It is illegal for someone to expose his or her genitals to another person "under circumstances in which the actor's conduct is likely to cause affront."

If a harasser flashes or exposes her or himself to you in a public place, such as a park, on public transportation, or in a store, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a petty misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of between \$500 and \$1,000 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Sexual Assault in the Fourth Degree

[Title 37 §707-733](#)

Hawai'i's sexual assault law addresses severe instances of indecent exposure that happen "under circumstances in which the actor's conduct is likely to alarm [you] or put [you] in fear of bodily injury."

If a harasser not only knowingly exposes him or herself, but also approaches you or takes some other action that makes you fear an assault, you can report that person.

Penalty: Sexual assault in the fourth degree is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to a year 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.

Harassment by Stalking

[Title 37 §711-1106.5](#)

Hawai'i's stalking law prohibits people from following, surveilling, or contacting another person without consent on more than one occasion and with the intent to harass, annoy, or alarm that person.

If you experience street harassment from the same person on more than one occasion and you feel annoyed or alarmed, you can report that person.

Penalty: Harassment by stalking is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or 30 days in jail.

Groping

Harassment

[Title 37 §711-1106](#)

It is illegal to touch someone in an offensive way or to subject that person to "offensive physical contact."

If a street harasser gropes you, grabs you, or rubs up against you, you can report him or her for harassment in Hawai'i.

Penalty: Harassment is a petty misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or 30 days in jail.

Sexual Assault in the Fourth Degree

[Title 37 §707-733](#)

It is illegal for someone to touch another person in a sexual way “by compulsion,” or by force.

If a harasser grabs you forcefully or does something to make it difficult for you to reject his or her advances or move away– like grabbing your hand and putting it on his or her crotch or trapping you in a small space, like a bus seat – you can report him/her.

Penalty: Sexual assault in the fourth degree is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to a year 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
 - 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 Honolulu this number is (404) 614-6544 and in Pearl City it’s (808) 723-8800. In Hilo, it is 935-3311, and in Maui it is (808) 244-6400. 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 Harassment, [Hawaii Law Haw. Rev. Stat. §711-1106](#). 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 by which you can submit the same information listed in #2.
- 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 Honolulu, you can do this by filing out an online [tip form](#), or by calling *CRIME or 808-955-8300.
 - In East Hawaii, you can do this by calling 808-961-8300,.
 - In West Hawaii, the number is 808-329-8181.

- 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.

Idaho

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in Idaho, including vulgar language, indecent exposure, following, and groping. Here are the laws and reporting procedures you need to know.

Verbal Harassment

Idaho has four laws that prohibit different forms of verbal harassment.

Assault

[Title 18 §901](#)

It is illegal for someone to threaten another person or attempt to use violence against another person.

If a street harasser threatens you or either attempts to or indicates that s/he will use violence against you, you can report him/her. (Actually making physical contact with you or injuring you is considered battery, see below for information on it.)

Penalty: Assault is punishable by fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 3 months in jail. If someone is convicted of assaulting you, you have the right to a court-issued no contact order against that person.

Disturbing the Peace

[Title 18 §6409](#)

It is illegal in Idaho for anyone to “maliciously and willfully” disturb another person or “the peace or quiet of any neighborhood, [...] in a loud and boisterous manner” by doing any of the following:

- Making loud or unusual noise.
- Engaging in tumultuous or offensive conduct.
- Threatening you, “trading” (speaking ill of you), quarreling, or challenging you to a fight,
- Fighting.
- Using vulgar, profane or indecent language within the presence or hearing of children.

Many examples of street harassment could fall into these categories, such as shouting or using lewd or explicit language. If a harasser does anything that falls into these categories, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disturbing the peace is a misdemeanor in Idaho, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Patronizing a Prostitute

[Title 18 §5614](#)

Soliciting someone for the purposes of prostitution is illegal in Idaho. 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: Patronizing a prostitute is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Public Nuisances

[Title 18 §5901](#)

Idaho has a general law against “nuisances” that are injurious to health, indecent, offensive to the senses, obstruct free passage or use on streets or in public parks or plazas, or obstruct free use of property “so as to interfere with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property by an entire community or neighborhood, or by any considerable number of persons.”

Nuisance laws typically apply to one entity – either a person or organization – that causes a problem for a large part of the community. If you find that one individual or organization is consistently causing many people to be harassed, you may be able to report it under this law. For example:

- A person who routinely harasses many passersby on the same street corner every day, or who causes some other significant disruption that affects many people at once.
- A company whose employees regularly harass people while on the job, such as construction workers or delivery truck drivers. You might try going directly to the business owner first to file a complaint. But if the harassment doesn’t stop, you could report the business as a nuisance.

Idaho law also states that “an act which affects an entire community or neighborhood, or any considerable number of persons [...] is not less a nuisance because the extent of the annoyance or damage inflicted upon individuals is unequal.” Lawmakers, law enforcement officials, or judges may try to trivialize street harassment, but it is okay to make the case for why it IS a public nuisance.

Penalty: A public nuisance is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Title 18, §4116](#)

In Idaho, it is illegal for anyone to willfully and lewdly expose his or her genitals in a public place where there are others who are offended or annoyed by the act.

If a harasser flashes you or otherwise exposes him or herself to you in a public place, such as a park, on public transportation, or in a store, you can report that person.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a misdemeanor in Idaho, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 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 18 §7906

Stalking is illegal in Idaho. Stalking in the second degree is defined as engaging in a course of conduct that seriously alarms, annoys, or harasses you or puts you in fear of death or physical injury.

A “course of conduct” means repeated acts of “nonconsensual contact,” including (but not limited to) those listed above when done without your consent. The law covers actions that are made “in disregard of the victim's expressed desire that the contact be avoided or discontinued” as one form of nonconsensual contact. This means that, *if you feel safe to do so*, you have the right to tell a harasser to stop.

If a harasser repeatedly follows you in your neighborhood, where you work, near your school, or any place at all, and “seriously alarms” you or gives you reason to fear bodily harm, including sexual assault, you can report it to the police.

Penalty: Stalking in the second degree is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to a year in jail. If the person being stalked is under 16 years old, the penalty is harsher. If someone is convicted of stalking you, you have the right to a court-issued no contact order against that person.

Groping

Battery

Title 18 §903

In Idaho, battery is when someone uses violence against another person, intentionally touches or strikes a person against his or her will, or intentionally causes a person bodily harm.

If a harasser puts his or her hands on you, including by groping your butt, groin, or breasts, without your consent, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Battery is a misdemeanor in Idaho, punishable by a fine of \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail. If someone is convicted of battering you, you have the right to a court-issued no contact order against that person.

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 Boise this number is (208) 377-6790 and in Nampa it’s (208)-465-2257. In Meridian, it is (208) 888-6678 and in Idaho Falls it is (208) 529-1200. 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 malicious harassment, [Idaho Law 18-7902](#). 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, [Idaho Falls](#) has an online form that allows you to report crime tips or harassing phone calls.
 - 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 the Boise area, you can do this by submitting a [confidential tip form](#), by calling 343-COPS, by calling 1-800-222-TIPS to report the crime, or by texting the number 274637 and beginning your message with Tip236.
 - These services also apply to Nampa and Meridian.
 - 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.

Illinois

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

Verbal Harassment

In Illinois, harassment laws refer specifically to harassing communications in writing or by phone. But there are other laws you can use to report verbal harassment in public places.

Disorderly Conduct

[Chapter 720, § 5-26-1](#)

Some types of harassment in public fall under disorderly conduct.

- A person exhibits disorderly conduct when s/he knowingly commits an act in such an unreasonable manner that it alarms or disturbs another or provokes a breach of the peace.
- Disorderly conduct can include verbal acts, such as shouting or cursing.

The “provokes a breach of the peace” part makes it a “fighting words” law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a misdemeanor in Illinois, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,500 and/or up to 30 days in jail. Disorderly conduct convictions also require between 30 and 120 hours of community service in counties where appropriate programs exist.

Intimidation

[Chapter 720, §5-12-6, §5-12-9](#)

Illinois law specifically protects you from threats made to intimidate you into doing or not doing something.

If a harasser makes a threat that includes any kind of ultimatum like “if you do/don’t do this, I will...” you can report him/her.

Penalty: Intimidation is a felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$25,000 and/or between 2 and 10 years imprisonment. If the intimidation is related to your attempt to report a crime, the charge may be increased to aggravated intimidation, which has a harsher penalty.

Soliciting A Sexual Act

[Chapter 720, § 5-11-14.1](#)

Soliciting someone for the purposes of prostitution is illegal in Illinois. 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 a sexual act is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 1 year in jail. If the person being solicited is a minor or has a severe intellectual disability, soliciting a sexual act is a felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$25,000 and between 1 and 3 years in prison.

Make Change Chicago

The City of Chicago has a specific Chapter in the legal code – Chapter 8, Title 10 – called “Use of Public Ways and Places.”

At the time of writing, this chapter guarantees quiet areas around schools and hospitals, provides rules for public events like parades and festivals, and protects against excessive sales and solicitation. This section of the law seems like the perfect place for a Safe Spaces ordinance.

A Safe Spaces Ordinance could define the actions that constitute street harassment in Chicago and prescribe a penalty for those committing them. Such an ordinance would deter harassing behavior, provide greater protection for women and other groups, and give us a tool for reporting, prosecuting, and preventing street harassment in Chicago and, potentially, nationwide.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Unauthorized Video Recording and Live Video Transmission

Chapter 720, §5-26-4

In Illinois, the following is illegal:

1. Photographing or recording another person in a restroom, tanning bed, tanning salon, locker room, changing room, or hotel bedroom without that person's consent.
2. Photographing or recording a non-consenting person's underwear or photographing or recording through that person's clothing.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Unauthorized video recording is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to one year in prison.

Indecent Exposure

Public Indecency

Chapter 720, § 5-11-30

Public indecency covers any act of sexual conduct or any lewd exposure done with the intent of sexual arousal or satisfaction in a public place.

If a harasser flashes you, otherwise exposes him or herself to you, or masturbates in a public place, such as a park, on public transportation, or in a store, you can report that person.

Penalty: Public indecency is a misdemeanor in Illinois, and carries a possible penalty of up to one year in prison, a fine of up to \$2,500, and/or up to two years probation.

Indecent Exposure (Chicago)

Title 8, Chapter 8, §080, Municipal Code of Chicago

The City of Chicago has a slightly more specific definition of indecent exposure, and uses that term directly. Any person who appears in public with his or her genitals, genital area, buttocks, or the lower half of female breasts exposed or not covered by an opaque covering commits indecent exposure in Chicago.

If someone exposes himself or herself to you in this way, you can report him or her for public indecency statewide and for indecent exposure in Chicago.

Penalty: Violations of indecent exposure in Chicago carry a fine of between \$20 and \$200 dollars.

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.

Assault

Chapter 720, § 5-12-1

In Illinois, a person commits assault when s/he places another person in reasonable fear of receiving a battery - any bodily harm or any physical contact of an insulting or provoking nature.

If someone is committing some action that makes you fear s/he will immediately hurt you, such as raising their hand to you, you can report them for assault.

Penalty: Assault is a misdemeanor in Illinois, punishable by 30 to 120 hours of community service, a fine of up to \$1,500, and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Stalking

[Chapter 720, § 5-12-7.3](#)

Stalking is illegal in Illinois. Stalking is defined as a “course of conduct” – two or more acts – that would cause a reasonable person emotional distress or fear for his or her safety or the safety of another person.

If a harasser repeatedly follows you in your neighborhood, where you work, near your school, or any place at all, and gives you reason to fear bodily harm or sexual assault, you can report him or her for stalking in Illinois. Similarly, if s/he repeatedly contacts you without your consent, and especially if s/he issues any threats, this also constitutes stalking.

Penalty: Stalking is a felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$25,000 and/or between 1 and 3 years in prison.

Groping

Battery

[Chapter 720, § 5-12-3](#)

Battery in Illinois is defined as bodily harm *or* any physical contact of an insulting or provoking nature.

If a harasser puts his or her hands on you – whether s/he grabs your arm, your breasts, your crotch, or your butt – you can report that person.

Penalty: Battery is a misdemeanor in Illinois, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Criminal Sexual Abuse

[Chapter 720, § 5-11-1.5](#)

It is illegal in Illinois to commit sexual conduct with another person by force, by threat of force, or if the other person cannot give consent or is younger than 17 years old. Sexual conduct is defined as any touching or fondling, either directly or through clothing, of the sex organs, anus, or breast of the harasser or the person being abused.

If someone purposely touches or grabs you in a sexual way, either over or under your clothing, while you are someplace like on the bus, on the street, or in a club, and you did not give consent, you can report that person.

Penalty: Criminal sexual abuse is a felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$25,000 and/or between 1 and 3 years in prison.

Hate Crimes

[Chapter 720, §5-12-7.1](#)

In Illinois, a number of crimes – including disorderly conduct, assault, and battery – are considered hate crimes when they are motivated by a bias against someone’s actual or perceived race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or national origin.

Demonstrating that the crime was committed because of the offender's bias is the key element in determining if something was a hate crime. If a harasser indicates that s/he is committing an act against you – such as following you, threatening you, or putting his or her hands on you – because of your gender, race, orientation, or another protected characteristic, you can report his or her crime and the indication of hate to the police.

An example of a hate crime in the context of street harassment would be someone following you and shouting something like, “Don’t you know you shouldn’t be here because you’re [a woman/gay/black/white/latina/etc.]? I should [violent threat] so you’ll stay inside.”

When reporting a hate crime, report the crime that was committed – assault, battery, etc. – and the indication that the crime was motivated by bias.

Penalty: A hate crime is a felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$25,000 and/or between 1 and 3 years in prison. Penalties may also include retribution to the victim(s). In addition to criminal charges, you may bring civil charges against a harasser who commits a hate crime if you experience damage to your property or physical harm. In a civil case, a judge may award actual or punitive damages, including damages for emotional distress and/or legal fees.

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 Chicago, this number is (312) 746-6000. 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 Public Indecency, section 5-11-30. 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 Chicago Police Department has a [Citizens Online Police Reporting System](#).

- Some police departments also allow you to anonymously text a tip about a crime, for example if you see a group of people routinely harassing passersby at the same location. Visit your local police department website for information.
 - For example, the Evanston Police Department allows you to text a tip to CRIMES (274637) – start your message with EPDTIP.

- 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.

Indiana

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

Indiana Criminal Code Changes:

HB 1006, passed during the 2013 legislative session, makes significant changes to the Indiana criminal code in order to improve sentencing and reduce the high costs of incarceration in the state. Most of the changes take effect on July 1, 2014. As such, the laws below and the possible sentences for violating them may include notes about changes effective July 1, 2014.

Verbal Harassment

The general harassment statute in Indiana only prohibits communications by phone or in writing, but there are five other laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

Disorderly Conduct

[Ind. Code §35-45-1-3](#)

If a harasser intentionally engages in “tumultuous conduct” or makes unreasonable noise after being asked to stop, you can report him or her for disorderly conduct in Indiana. “Tumultuous” can mean noisy or uproarious.

If a street harasser yells at you loudly or makes a scene – especially if you’ve asked him or her to stop – you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class B misdemeanor in Indiana, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 180 days in jail.

Interference with Reporting a Crime

[Ind. Code §35-45-2-5](#)

It is illegal in Indiana for anyone to intentionally prevent you from or interfere with your reporting a crime.

If you try to call 911 or report street harassment to a law enforcement officer and the harasser intentionally prevents you from doing so, such as by grabbing your cell phone or intervening in some other way, s/he may be guilty of interference with reporting of a crime.

Penalty: Interference with the reporting of a crime is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to a year in jail.

Intimidation

[Ind. Code §35-42-2-1](#)

Indiana law specifically prohibits threats made to intimidate someone into doing or not doing something, or threats that make someone fear any retaliation for a lawful act.

If a street harasser makes a threat that comes with any kind of ultimatum like, “if you do/don’t do this, I will...” that is intimidation and you can report him/her.

Penalty: Intimidation is a Class A misdemeanor in Indiana, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to a year in jail. Effective July 1, 2014, if the threat is commit a forcible felony, the charge rises to a Level 6 felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or between 6 months and 2 and a half years in jail.

Patronizing a Prostitute

[Ind. Code §35-45-4-3](#)

Patronizing a prostitute is illegal in Indiana. 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: Patronizing a prostitute is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to a year in jail.

Provocation

[Ind. Code §35-42-2-3](#)

Indiana law prohibits anyone from “recklessly, knowingly, or intentionally” engaging in conduct that is likely to provoke a reasonable person to respond with violence.

This is what is known as a “[fighting words](#)” law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Provocation is a Class C infraction, punishable by a fine of up to \$500.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Voyeurism & Public Voyeurism

[Ind. Code §35-45-4-5](#)

In Indiana, it is illegal for anyone to “peep” – to look in a “clandestine, surreptitious, prying, or secretive nature” – without consent into any place where people may reasonably expect to undress privately, including a restroom, shower, or dressing room. It carries a harsher penalty if the person uses a camera.

It is also illegal for anyone, in a public place, to record an image of a private area of your body, meaning your genitals, pubic area, or butt, either naked or clothed. (The law does not specify that it is illegal to photograph a woman’s breasts.)

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

- Note: The law says that it is a defense to public voyeurism if the person being photographed deliberately exposed him or herself to the photographer. This means that if someone exposes him or herself to you, you do have the right to record him or her on your cell phone or camera to submit with a police report or share on social media. This can be an effective tactic for stopping street harassers.

Penalty: Voyeurism is a Class B misdemeanor in Indiana, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 180 days in jail. Public voyeurism is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to a year in jail. Public voyeurism carries a harsher penalty if the harasser disseminates the image(s).

Indecent Exposure

Public Indecency

[Ind. Code §35-45-4-1](#)

In Indiana, it's illegal to engage in a sex act, fondle the genitals of another person, masturbate, or appear in a state of nudity with the intent of arousing sexual desire in a public place. Additionally, this law specifically prohibits anyone over the age 18 from appearing nude in a public place with the intent that s/he be seen by a child less than 16 years of age.

If a harasser is engaging in sexual conduct, masturbating, or flashing or exposing him or herself to you, you can report him or her for public indecency.

Penalty: Public indecency is a class A misdemeanor in Indiana, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Public Nudity

[Ind. Code §35-45-4-1.5](#)

Indiana law also prohibits appearing nude in public without the stipulation that a person's intent be to arouse sexual desire. Nudity in this context is defined as showing one's genitals or the nipple of the female breast without or through less than a fully opaque covering, or showing a discernably erect penis with or without clothing.

This law specifically prohibits public nudity on school grounds, in a public park, or if the harasser does intend to arouse sexual desire, in any Department of Natural Resources property.

Penalty: Public nudity is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 60 days in jail. If the harasser is over the age of 18 and intended for a child under the age of 16 to see him or her, the charge is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 180 days in jail. If the nudity is on school grounds, in a public park, or on property owned or managed by the Department of Natural Resources, the charge is a Class A misdemeanor in Indiana, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Obstructing Paths

Obstruction of Traffic

[Ind. Code §35-42-2-4](#)

In Indiana, it is illegal for anyone to “recklessly, knowingly, or intentionally,” obstruct pedestrian traffic.

If a street harasser obstructs your path in order to get your attention or prevent you from leaving a space, you can report him/her.

Note: This law is only effective until July 1, 2014, after which it is repealed.

Penalty: Obstruction of traffic is a Class B misdemeanor in Indiana, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 180 days 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

[Ind. Code §35-45-10-1](#)

Stalking is illegal in Indiana and is defined as an intentional course of conduct involving repeated or continuing harassment or contact that causes the person to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated, or threatened.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened, frightened, and unsafe, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class D felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000, and/or 6 months to 3 years in prison.

Groping

Battery & Battery by Body Waste

[Ind. Code §35-42-2-1, 6](#)

It is illegal in Indiana for anyone to touch another person in a rude, insolent, or angry manner.

If someone does so, you can report him/her. If this action includes causing you to come in contact with any bodily fluid or waste, including blood, semen, urine, or feces, this is considered battery by body waste.

- Note: Until July 1, 2014, battery and battery by body waste are separate crimes in Indiana. After July 1, 2014, §35-42-2-6, the law prohibiting battery by body waste will be repealed and §35-42-2-1 will prohibit both battery and battery by body waste under one law.

Penalty: Through July 1, 2014, battery is a class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 180 days in jail. Battery by body waste or a regular battery resulting in bodily injury is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to a year in jail. After July 1, 2014,

battery, including battery by body waste, is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 180 days in jail.

Sexual Battery

[Ind. Code §25-42-4-8](#)

In Indiana, it is illegal for anyone, with the intent to arouse or satisfy sexual desire, to touch another person when that person is compelled by force to submit to the touching *or* to touch the assailant's genitals, pubic area, butt, or breasts when the person is unaware that the touching is occurring.

If someone touches you in a sexual or inappropriate way without your knowledge or consent, whether on public transportation, in a park, on the street, or in any public place, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Through July 1, 2014, sexual battery is a Class D felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or between 6 months and 3 years in jail. After July 1, 2014, sexual battery is a Level 6 felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or between 6 months and 2 and a half 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
 - 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 Indianapolis this number is, (317) 327-6300 and in Fort Wayne it's (260) 427-1222. In Evansville, it is (812) 436-7896 and in South Bend, it is (574) 235-9201.. 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 intimidation, [IC 35-45-2-1](#). 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 the Metropolitan Indianapolis area, you can do this by calling 327-6682.
 - In Fort Wayne, you can do this by visiting this [website](#), or by calling 1-800-237-STOP.

- In Evansville, you can call (812) 435-6194. In South Bend, you can do this by submitting a [web tip](#) online form, or by calling (574) 288-STOP.
- 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 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.

Iowa

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

Verbal Harassment

In Iowa, there are four laws that prohibit some forms of verbal street harassment.

Assault

[Title XVI, Subtitle 1, Chap. 708 §708.1](#)

Iowa's assault statute protects you against injurious or offensive physical contact – covered under [groping](#) – as well as the *threat* of injurious or offensive physical contact.

If a street harasser takes any action that is *either* intended to cause you pain, injury, or offensive physical contact, *or* that is intended to cause you *fear of* pain, injury, or offensive physical contact, and you think that s/he is in fact able to touch you or hurt you, you can report the harasser for assault in Iowa. Such threatening actions might include verbal threats, following you, or other actions.

If you believe that someone is following you or will attempt to hurt you, you can call 911 as soon as you are safe to do so.

Penalty: An assault that does not result in injury is a simple misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of between \$65 and \$625 and/or up to 30 days in jail. Assault with intent to commit sexual abuse – meaning that the harasser intended to have sexual contact with you or commit a sex act without your consent – is an aggravated misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of between \$625 and \$6,250 and/or up to 2 years in prison. An assault that does result in some bodily injury to you can range from an aggravated misdemeanor to a class C felony, with penalties as high as a fine of \$10,000 and/or 10 years in prison.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title XVI, Subtitle 1, Chap. 723 §723.4](#)

In Iowa, it's illegal to:

- Engage in any fighting or violent behavior in public.
- Obstruct any sidewalk, street, or other public way in order to prevent its lawful use by others.
- Direct abusive epithets against someone (say abusive or insulting things about the person) or make any threatening gesture to the person that is likely to cause a violent reaction.

If a street harasser insults you, uses abusive language to or about you, does anything that indicates s/he may become violent, or obstructs your path on the sidewalk, you can report him/her.

Note: The “likely to cause a violent reaction” part makes it a “[fighting words](#)” law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a simple misdemeanor in Iowa, punishable by a fine of between \$65 and \$625 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Harassment

[Title XVI, Subtitle 1, Chap. 708 §708.7](#)

Iowa law prohibits an encounter “in which two or more people are in visual or physical proximity to each other” and one person, “purposefully and without legitimate purpose,” intentionally threatens, intimidates, or alarms the other person.

A threatening, intimidating, or alarming action could include:

- Verbal harassment
 - Insults
 - Obscene or explicit language
 - Racial, homophobic, or transphobic slurs
- Other nonverbal actions such as following you or obstructing pathways.

If a street harasser does something that is clearly threatening, intimidating, or alarming, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Harassment in the third degree is a simple misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of between \$65 and \$625 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Prostitution

[Title XVI, Subtitle 1, Chap. 725 §725.1](#)

Offering to pay someone for prostitution is illegal in Iowa. 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: Prostitution is an aggravated misdemeanor in Iowa, punishable by a fine of between \$625 and \$6,250 and/or up to 2 years in prison.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Invasion of Privacy – Nudity

[Title XVI, Subtitle 1, Chap. 709 § 709.21](#)

In Iowa, it is illegal for someone to photograph or film a non-consenting person if that person is fully or partially nude and has a reasonable expectation of privacy.

If a harasser films or photographs you while you are in a public restroom, dressing room, locker room, hotel room, or a similar location, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Invasion of privacy – nudity is a serious misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of between \$315 and \$1,875 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Title XVI, Subtitle 1, Chap. 709 §709.9](#)

It is illegal in Iowa for anyone to expose his or her genitals for the purpose of arousing or satisfying sexual desires when that person knows that his or her act will be offensive to the viewer.

If a street harasser intentionally flashes or exposes his or her genitals to you in public, such as on public transportation, in a public park, or in any other public place, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a serious misdemeanor in Iowa, punishable by a fine of between \$315 and \$1,875 and/or up to 1 year 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

[Title XVI, Subtitle 1, Chap. 708 §708.11](#)

Stalking is illegal in Iowa. The actions that constitute stalking in Iowa are similar to those that constitute harassment, but the harassment must be repeated and intentional, must cause you fear of bodily injury (or injury to a member of your family), and must be something that the harasser knows or should reasonably know will cause you such fear.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is an aggravated misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of between \$625 and \$6,250 and/or up to 2 years in prison.

Groping

Assault

[Title XVI, Subtitle 1, Chap. 708 §708.1](#)

Iowa's assault statute outlaws any physical contact that is insulting or offensive.

If a street harasser does touch you in an offensive way – such as grabbing or touching your crotch, butt, or breasts – or does something to make you fear that s/he intends to touch you in a sexual or offensive way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Assault without injury in general is a simple misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of between \$65 and \$625 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Indecent Contact with a Child

[Title XVI, Subtitle 1, Chap. 709 §709.12](#)

It is illegal in Iowa for anyone over the age of 18 to fondle or touch, either over or under clothing, the inner thigh, groin, buttock, anus, or breast of anyone under the age of 18.

If you are under 18 years old and a street harasser gropes you or grabs you in any way, or if this happens to a young person you care for, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Indecent contact with a child is an aggravated misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of between \$625 and \$6,250 and/or up to 2 years in prison.

Hate Crimes

[Title XVI, Subtitle 1, Chap. 729 §729A.1](#)

Iowa provides particular protections from crimes committed because of bias or prejudice. The statute on individual rights and hate crimes contains the following: “Persons within the state of Iowa have the right to be free from any violence, or intimidation by threat of violence, committed against their persons or property because of their race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, political affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability.”

If a street harasser assaults you because of your sex, race, sexual orientation, or another protected category, this harassment may be considered a hate crime. You can report any crime the person has committed, as well as any indication of hate or bias – such as using a racial, homophobic, or gender-based slur – to the police.

Penalty: An assault in violation of individual rights – a hate crime – is a serious misdemeanor if no injury results from it. A serious misdemeanor is punishable by a fine of between \$315 and \$1,875 and/or up to 1 year in jail. If the assault results in injury to you, or the harasser uses or displays a weapon, the charges range from an aggravated misdemeanor to a Class D felony, with penalties as high as a fine of \$7,500 and/or 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 Des Moines, this number is (515) 283-4811 and in Cedar Rapids it’s (319) 286-5491. In Davenport, it is (563) 326-7979 and in Iowa City, it is (319) 356-5275. 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 Harassment, [Iowa Code § 708.7](#). 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 in Iowa City, you can report crimes like harassing phone calls by completing this [online webform](#).
 - 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 Des Moines, you can do this by completing the [online tip form](#), by calling 515-223-1400, or by texting the number 274637 and beginning the message with PCCS.
 - In Cedar Rapids, you can do this by texting the number 274637 and beginning the message with 5227.
 - In Iowa City, you can do this by calling (319) 358-TIPS.
 - 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.

Kansas

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

Verbal Harassment

In Kansas, the general harassment law refers specifically to harassing communications in writing or by phone. But you can report some forms of verbal street harassment under two other laws: assault or disorderly conduct.

Assault

[Chap. 21, Article 54 §5412](#)

In Kansas, knowingly putting someone in fear of immediate bodily harm is an assault. (Actually touching or harming someone is battery.)

If someone is doing some action that makes you fear s/he will immediately hurt you, such as raising his or her hand to you or threatening you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Assault is a Class C person misdemeanor in Kansas, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 1 month in jail.

Disorderly Conduct

[Chap. 21, Article 62 §6203](#)

Disorderly conduct prohibits behavior “the person knows or should know will alarm, anger or disturb others or provoke an assault or other breach of the peace.” This includes:

- Using fighting words.
- Engaging in noisy conduct that would reasonably arouse alarm, anger, or resentment in others.

If a harasser tries to pick a fight with you by insulting you or uses a very loud voice while harassing you, you can report him/her.

- Note: Fighting words are defined in Kansas as “words that by their very utterance inflict injury or tend to incite the listener to an immediate breach of the peace,” or, a violent reaction. It a [“fighting words”](#) law.
 - Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

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

Unlawful Filming/Photography

Breach of Privacy

Chap. 21, Article 61, §6101

It is illegal in Kansas for anyone to film or photograph a non-consenting person for the purpose of viewing the person's body or undergarments or with the intent to invade the person's privacy:

- Under or through his/her clothing.
- When the person is in a state of undress and under circumstances in which the person should have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

This means that "up-skirt" photos, or photos taken in a dressing room, locker room, or other similar place are illegal and you have the right to report a harasser who does or who attempts to film or photograph you. It is also illegal for him or her to disseminate any such video or photograph.

Penalty: A breach of privacy by taking illegal video or photographs of you is a level 8 person felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$100,000 and/or between 7 and 9 months in jail. A breach of privacy that consists of disseminating a video, photo, film, or other image obtained in violation of this law is a level 5 person felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$300,000 and/or between 31 and 34 months in prison.

Indecent Exposure

Lewd and Lascivious Behavior

Chap. 21, Article 55 §5513

The state of Kansas uses the term "lewd and lascivious behavior" for any public sex act or public exposure of a sex organ. Public exposure of a sex organ is illegal in Kansas when done with the intent to arouse or gratify sexual desires and in the presence of someone who is not the offender's spouse and who has not consented to the act.

If a street harasser flashes or exposes him or herself to you, in a public place, such as a park, on public transportation, or in a store, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Lewd and lascivious behavior is a Class B misdemeanor if committed in the presence of someone 16 years or older, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail. If the act is committed in the presence of someone younger than 16 years old, lewd and lascivious behavior is a severity level 9 person felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$100,000 and/or between 5 and 7 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

Chap. 21, Article 54, §5427

Stalking is defined as "engaging in a course of conduct targeted at a specific person" which satisfies one of two requirements:

- The person knows his or her actions will cause the other person to fear for his/her safety.
- Those actions would cause a reasonable person to fear for his or her safety and do in fact cause someone to be afraid.

A course of conduct means “two or more acts over a period of time, however short, which evidence a continuity of purpose.” The statute includes following and unwanted communications as examples of the actions that constitute a prohibited course of conduct.

If a street harasser follows you, harasses you repeatedly, or does any *two actions* that make you fear for your safety, you can report him or her for stalking.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class A person misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 1 year in prison.

Groping

Battery

[Chap. 21, Article 54 §5413](#)

Battery in Kansas is “knowingly or recklessly causing bodily harm to another person, *or* knowingly causing physical contact with another person when done in a rude, insulting or angry manner.”

If a street harasser touches you in an offensive way – including groping you – or is violent toward you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Battery is a Class B person misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 5 months in jail.

Sexual Battery

[Chapter 21, Article 55 §5505](#)

Sexual battery is the touching of someone without his or her consent and with the intent to arouse or satisfy sexual desire. The law is quite broad – it does not specify particular parts of the body or whether the touching must be without clothes.

If someone touches you in a sexual or inappropriate way, even through your clothing or his or hers, you can report that person.

Penalty: Sexual battery is a Class A person misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 1 year 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 Wichita, this number is (316) 268-4221 and in Overland Park it's (913) 895-6300. In Kansas City, it is (816) 234-5111 and in Topeka, it is (785) 368-9551. 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 Harassment, [K.S.A. § 21-4113](#). 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.
 - In Overland Park, you can report crimes like harassing phone calls using this [webform](#).
 - In Kansas City, you can use this [webform](#).
 - In Topeka, you can report using this [webform](#).
- 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 Wichita, you can do this by calling either 316-267-2111 or 1-800-222-TIPS. You can also text the number 274637 and begin the message with TIP217, or complete this [webform](#).
 - In Kansas City, you can do this by calling 816-474-8477 or texting the number 247637 and beginning the message with TIP452.
- 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.

Kentucky

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in Kentucky, 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 three laws that can apply to various types of verbal harassment in Kentucky.

Disorderly Conduct in the Second Degree

[KRS Chapter 525, §60](#)

Kentucky's disorderly conduct law prohibits a person from being in a public place and engaging in threatening behavior or making unreasonable noise with the intent to cause a public inconvenience, annoyance, or alarm.

If a harasser is saying anything that makes you fear s/he will follow or harm you, or if the harasser is shouting and otherwise making loud noises, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$250, imprisonment for up to 90 days, or both.

Harassment

[KRS Chapter 525, §70](#)

Under Kentucky's harassment law, it is illegal for anyone to threaten or intimidate, harass, annoy, or alarm someone in a public place by making an offensively "coarse" statement, gesture, or display or by using abusive language.

If you're on the street, in a park, on a bus, or in another public place and someone makes a sexually explicit or inappropriate comment, vulgar gesture, or uses abusive language, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Harassment is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$250, imprisonment for up to 90 days, or both.

Loitering

[KRS Chapter 525, §90](#)

It is illegal for anyone to loiter in or around school, college, or university buildings or grounds without having a legitimate reason to be there and without having responsibility for a student at the institution.

If you see an adult hanging around school grounds, harassing students or others, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Loitering is a violation, punishable by a fine.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Voyeurism

[KRS Chapter 531 §90](#)

In Kentucky, it is illegal for a person to photograph or record a non-consenting person's genitals or breasts if that person is in a place where s/he should reasonably expect that those body parts won't be recorded.

While the law does not specify examples of places, it seems broad enough to incorporate public places. So, for example, if a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Voyeurism is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500, imprisonment for up to a year, or both.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure in the First Degree

[KRS Chapter 510 §148](#)

In Kentucky, it is illegal for a harasser to intentionally expose his or her genitals when s/he should know that doing so is likely to alarm a person who is younger than 18 years old.

If a harasser flashes you or exposes her or himself to you in a public place and you are younger than 18, or someone you care for or know is, you can report that person.

Penalty: Indecent exposure in the first degree is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$250 and/or up to 90 days in jail.

Indecent Exposure in the Second Degree

[KRS Chapter 510, §150](#)

In Kentucky, it is illegal for a harasser to intentionally expose his or her genitals when s/he should know that doing so is likely to alarm a person who is 18 years old or older.

If a harasser flashes you or exposes her or himself to you in a public place and you are at least 18 years old, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Indecent exposure in the second degree is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$250 and/or up to 90 days 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.

Harassment

[KRS Chapter 525, §70](#)

Under Kentucky's harassment law, it is illegal for someone to follow another person around in a public place with the intent to intimidate, harass, annoy, or alarm that person. Unlike nearly every other state, this only has to happen once before it is a crime.

The first time a street harasser follows you and you feel harassed, annoyed or alarmed, you can report that person using this law.

Penalty: Harassment is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$250, imprisonment for up to 90 days, or both.

Groping

Sexual Abuse in the First Degree

[KRS Chapter 510 §110](#)

In Kentucky, groping is considered sexual abuse in the first degree. This law prohibits anyone from subjecting another person to sexual contact by force without that person's consent. The law also prohibits sexual contact with a person who is unable to give consent due to their young age or a disability.

If a harasser touches or grabs you on an intimate or private part of your body using physical force, or physically forces you to touch him or her on a private part of his or her body, you can report him or her for sexual abuse in the first degree.

Penalty: Sexual abuse in the first degree is a Class D felony, punishable by between 1 and 5 years in prison. If the person assaulted is younger than 12 years old, sexual abuse in the first degree is a Class C Felony, punishable by between 5 and 10 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 Louisville, this number is (502) 574-7111 and in Lexington it's (859) 258-3600. In Bowling Green, it is (270) 393-4000 and in Owensboro, it is (270) 687-8888. 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 Harassment, [KRS § 525.070](#). 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, in Lexington, you can report things such as harassing communications via [webform](#).
- 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 Louisville, you can do this by calling 502-574-5673, by texting the number 274637 and beginning the message with LMPD, or by submitting via [webform](#).
 - In Lexington, you can do this 877-970-2020, by texting the number 274637 and beginning the message with Tips2020, or by submitting via [webform](#).
 - In South Central Kentucky, you can do this by calling either 781-CLUE or 866-842-CLUE. You can also submit a tip via [webform](#).
 - In Owensboro, you can call 270-687-8484.
- 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.

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.

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.

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, 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.

Maine

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

Verbal Harassment

In Maine, there are three laws that may apply to some forms of verbal street harassment. Maine's harassment law requires the involvement of a law enforcement officer to establish criminal liability; however you can report first-time harassment as disorderly conduct. Engaging a law enforcement officer can help prevent future harassment and potentially establish liability if the harassment is repeated.

Criminal Threatening

[Title 17-A, Chap 9. §209](#)

Maine has a law against threatening defined as, "intentionally or knowingly [placing] another person in fear of imminent bodily injury."

If a street harasser threatens you, and you believe s/he will actually harm you, you can call 911 as soon as you are safe to do so.

Penalty: Criminal threatening is a Class D crime, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 17-A, Chap. 21 §501-A](#)

Maine's law against disorderly conduct prohibits someone from:

- Making loud and unreasonable noise in a public place.
- Engaging in fighting.
- Accosting, insulting, taunting, or challenging another person "with offensive, derisive, or annoying words, or by gestures or other physical conduct" that would be likely to illicit a violent response from an ordinary person in the same situation.

If a street harasser insults you, taunts you, or accosts you, or loudly harasses you, you can report the injurious language or harassment to the police.

- Note: This statute is what is commonly known as a "[fighting words](#)" law based on the "[reasonable man](#)" standard. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class E crime, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Harassment

[Article 17-A, Chap. 21, §506-A](#)

The crime of harassment applies in Maine when someone continues to harass, torment, or threaten another person after being instructed by a law enforcement officer, in writing or otherwise, not to do so. This harassment law is narrow and in order for charges to be brought against a harasser:

- You must report harassment when it first happens.
- A police officer must determine it is appropriate to issue a warning to the harasser.
- The harasser must further engage in a “course of conduct with the intent to harass, torment or threaten.” (A course of conduct usually means 2 or more acts.)

If you find you are repeatedly being harassed by the same person – whether on your commute to work, near your school, or any place at all – you can take the necessary steps to hold that person accountable for harassment. These are the steps:

1. Report the initial incident(s) as harassing actions or as any of the other applicable crimes listed in our toolkit.
2. Police will need to identify the harasser, so provide any identifying information that you can – a description of the harasser, the location of the incident, and even a picture on your camera phone can help.
3. If police issue the harasser a warning to cease his or her behavior, ask for that warning to be put in writing and request a copy.
4. If you experience further harassment, continue to report it.
5. After someone has violated a warning from a police officer, s/he may be charged with the crime of harassment.

Penalty: Harassment is a Class E crime, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Violation of Privacy

[Title 17-A, Chap. 21 §511](#)

It is considered a violation of privacy in Maine for someone to use any device (including a mirror or a cell phone) for observing, recording, or photographing a non-consenting person:

- In a private place where one should reasonably expect to be free from surveillance.

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

- In a place where a person should expect the private part of his or her body to be concealed and “safe from surveillance.”

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs or records your private areas in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Violation of privacy is a Class D crime, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Conduct

[Title 17-A, Chap. 15 §854](#)

It is illegal in Maine for anyone to engage in a sexual act in a public place or to expose his or her genitals under circumstances that s/he knows are likely to cause affront or alarm in:

- A public place, including a motor vehicle.
- A private place, such as at a party, in an office, or in a school hallway.

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 for indecent exposure.

Penalty: Indecent conduct is a Class E crime, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Obstructing Your Path

Obstructing Public Ways

[Title 17-1, Chap. §505](#)

It is illegal in Maine for anyone to unreasonably obstruct pedestrian traffic on any public sidewalk or any public way and to refuse to cease the obstruction when told to do so by a law enforcement officer.

If a harasser obstructs your path in order to get your attention or to prevent you from leaving a space, you have the right to report him/her to a law enforcement officer.

Penalty: Obstructing public ways is a Class E crime, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 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.

Criminal Threatening

[Title 17-A, Chap 9. §209](#)

Criminal threatening is simply defined as “intentionally or knowingly [placing] another person in fear of imminent bodily injury.”

If a harasser does something that makes you fear imminent injury, you can report him/her.

- Note: Although the most common street harassment action that might make you fear imminent bodily injury is someone following you, it's unclear whether following would violate the criminal threatening law.

Penalty: Criminal threatening is a Class D crime, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Stalking

[Title 17-A, Chap. 9 §210-A](#)

Stalking is defined as someone knowingly or intentionally engaging in a course of conduct – two or more acts – that would cause a reasonable person:

- To “suffer serious inconvenience or emotional distress.”
- To fear bodily injury, death, harm to a family member, or damage to one’s property or pet(s).

A serious inconvenience is defined in the law as occurring when a person “significantly [modifies] actions or routines in an attempt to avoid the actor or because of the actor’s course of conduct,” such as “moving from an established residence, changing daily routines, changing routes to and from work, changing employment or work schedule or losing time from work or a job.”

If repeated harassment from a single person causes you a serious inconvenience, you can report that person for stalking.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class D crime, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Groping

Unlawful Sexual Touching

[Title 17-A, Chap. 11 §260](#)

It is illegal in Maine for anyone to touch a non-consenting person’s breasts, buttocks, groin, or inner thigh, directly or through clothing, and for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire.

If someone touches you in this way, you can report it to the police if:

- You have not “expressly or impliedly acquiesced in the sexual touching.”
- You are unconscious at the time.
- You submit to the sexual touching as a result of compulsion.
- You are younger than 14 years old.

It’s important to note that the law includes, but does not define, the phrase “impliedly acquiesced.” It should be the responsibility of the person initiating sexual contact to get consent from you, not your responsibility to demonstrate lack of consent. But, unfortunately, it’s important to be wary of phrases in the law that could allow a police officer or a judge to put the burden of consent on you rather than the harasser.

- If someone is touching you inappropriately *and you feel safe to do so*, the best way to communicate your lack of consent is to say clearly, “Stop touching me.”
- The law does not state that you must verbally reject the sexual touching; you might also demonstrate your lack of consent by moving away from the harasser or by some other action.

Either way, remember that street harassment is never your fault, and there is no “right” way to respond. If someone is touching you without your consent, you can report him/her to the police if you want.

Penalty: Unlawful sexual touching is a Class D crime, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 1 year 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
 - 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 Augusta, this number is (207) 626-2370 and in Portland it’s (207) 874-8575. In Auburn, it’s (207) 333-6601. 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 Harassment, [17-A M.R. § 506-A](#). 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, both [Portland](#) and [Auburn](#) have an online reporting form where you can report crimes like harassment and sexual assault and you can even upload a photo of the perpetrator.
- 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 Augusta, you can do this by calling 207-620-8009. You can also do this by using the [Augusta Crime Stopper Web form](#) where you can report crimes.
 - Portland also allows you to submit an anonymous [web tip](#), call (207) 874-8584, or text the letters “GOTCHA” to 274637 (CRIMES).

- 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.

Maryland

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in Maryland, 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 three laws in Maryland that prohibit some form of verbal harassment.

Disturbing the Peace and Disorderly Conduct

[Md. Criminal Law, Title 10, Subtitle 2 §201](#)

Maryland has a broad law against “disturbing the peace and disorderly conduct” that prohibits a number of actions, including:

- “Willfully and without lawful purpose obstruct[ing] or hinder[ing] the free passage of another in a public place or on a public conveyance” (any form of public transportation).
- Acting “in a disorderly manner that disturbs the public peace.”
- Failing “to obey a reasonable and lawful order that a law enforcement officer makes to prevent a disturbance to the public peace.”

The statute does not define “a disorderly manner” or a disturbance of the public peace, but these phrases generally refer to things like using offensive language and fighting. If a street harasser is yelling at you, insulting you, using obscene language, or otherwise making a scene, you can report him or her for disturbing the peace and disorderly conduct.

Penalty: Disturbing the public peace and disorderly conduct is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 60 days in jail.

Harassment

[Md. Criminal Law, Title 3, Subtitle 8 §803](#)

Maryland’s harassment addresses people who, with the intent to harass, alarm or annoy,

- Follow you “in or about a public place,” such as following you down the sidewalk or through a park.
- “Maliciously engage in a course of conduct that alarms or seriously annoys.”

If a street harasser follows you or repeatedly annoys or alarms you with what s/he is saying, you can report him/her.

- Note: Under this statute, you must first tell him or her to stop bothering you via a “reasonable warning or request.” This could be a simple request to leave you alone, a clear, “Stop harassing me!” or a warning that if s/he does not leave, you will call the police. However you choose to handle the situation, know that if someone continues to follow or purposefully annoy you after being told to stop, you can report him/him.

Penalty: Harassment is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 90 days in jail.

Soliciting Prostitution

[Md. Criminal Law, Title 11, Subtitle 3 §306a\(5\)](#)

Soliciting or offering to solicit for prostitution is illegal in Maryland under a law entitled “house of prostitution.” 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 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Unlawful Filming/Photography:

Visual Surveillance with Prurient Intent

[Md. Criminal Law, Title 3, Subtitle 9 §902](#)

It is illegal in Maryland for anyone to:

1. Observe a non-consenting person – including surveillance by direct sight, by mirror, or by camera – in a private place where that person should reasonably expect privacy while changing or disrobing.

If a harasser records you while you are in a private place like your own home or public restrooms, dressing rooms, or locker rooms, you can report him/her.

2. Observe any private area of a non-consenting person’s body via a camera and “under circumstances in which a reasonable person would believe that the private area of the individual would not be visible to the public, regardless of whether the individual is in a public or private place.”

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him or her to the police for visual surveillance with prurient intent. (Prurient means of an excessive sexual interest.)

Penalty: Visual surveillance with prurient interest is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or up to 1 year in jail. In addition, the statute states that anyone who is illegally surveilled has a cause of action for a civil suit and may seek damages in court.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Md. Criminal Law, Title 11, Subtitle 1 §107](#)

Maryland's indecent exposure law is quite vague, stating simply that, "a person convicted of indecent exposure is guilty of a misdemeanor." Indecent exposure is usually defined as the exposing one's genitals or buttocks in a public place, under circumstances that are likely to offend or alarm others.

If a street harasser flashes you or exposes him or herself to you in Maryland, you can report that person for indecent exposure.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or 3 years in prison.

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

[Md. Criminal Code, Title 3, Subtitle 8 §802](#)

Stalking is defined as "a malicious course of conduct that includes approaching or pursuing another" in which the harasser knows or reasonably should know that his or her conduct will create the fear of serious bodily injury, assault, rape, kidnapping, or death. A course of conduct is defined as "a persistent pattern of conduct, composed of a series of acts over time that show a continuity of purpose."

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison.

Groping

Sexual Offense in the Fourth Degree

[Md. Criminal Code, Title 3, Subtitle 3 §308](#)

Sexual contact is intentionally touching a non-consenting person's "genital, anal, or other intimate area for sexual arousal or gratification," or for abuse.

If a street harasser grabs your crotch, butt, or breasts – whether on the street, in a store, on public transportation, or any place at all – you can report him/her.

Penalty: A sexual offense in the fourth degree is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year 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
 - 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 Annapolis, this number is (410) 222-8610 and in Baltimore it's 311, or (443) 236-2220 if you're outside of the city. In Columbia, it's (410) 313-2200. 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 Harassment, [Md. Criminal law Code Ann. § 3-803](#). 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, in [Annapolis](#), you can use this form to report crimes like disorderly conduct. In [Columbia](#), you can use this form to report things like harassing phone calls.
- 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 Baltimore, you can do this by calling 410-276-8888 or by submitting their [web form](#).
 - In Annapolis or Columbia, you can do this submitting a [web form](#), as well.
 - You can also text the number 274637 (CRIMES) and begin the message with "MCS" for all three cities.
- 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.

Massachusetts

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

Note: Many statutes throughout the Massachusetts Code name crimes and their penalties, but they don't define the prohibited acts. When this happens, we include the definitions and descriptions of each crime from information found in the juror instruction sheets published [here](#) by the Massachusetts Court System.

Verbal Harassment

There are five laws in Massachusetts that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

- Note: Massachusetts' law also contains another statute that is relevant to street harassment but is vaguely written and poorly defined. It is Chapter 272: Crimes Against Chastity, Morality, Decency, and Good Order, includes Section 53, titled "Penalty for certain offenses."
 - Section 53 of the statute prescribes a penalty for accosting and annoying persons of the opposite sex, wanton and lewd speech or behavior, indecent exposure, disorderly conduct, and disturbing the peace.
 - None of these offenses are defined in the statute.

Accosting or Annoying a Person of the Opposite Sex

[Chap. 272 §53\(a\)](#)

Massachusetts law prescribes a penalty for persons who:

"With offensive and disorderly acts or language accost or annoy persons of the opposite sex."

This law wouldn't protect against all street harassment, but it may be useful in cases of egregious verbal harassment by a man against a woman (or vice versa).

In order for a court to find someone guilty of accosting or annoying a person of the opposite sex, that person must be of the opposite sex from you and have knowingly engaged in an offensive and disorderly act(s) or language, clearly directed at you, that would be offensive to a reasonable person.

Disorderly acts or language means the harasser's words or actions must involve at least one of the following:

- Threatening
- Fighting
- Violent or tumultuous behavior
- Creating a hazardous condition
- Creating a physically offensive condition that amounts to an invasion of privacy.

Disorderly conduct also can include sexually explicit language in Massachusetts as such language “may be inherently threatening when it is directed at particular individuals in settings in which such communications are inappropriate and likely to cause severe distress.”

If a person of the opposite sex is directing sexually explicit language toward you to the degree that it is threatening, or doing something else that meets the requirements above, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Accosting and annoying a person of the opposite sex is punishable by a fine up to \$200 and/or up to six months in jail.

Disorderly Conduct & Disturbing the Peace

[Chap. 272 §53\(b\)](#)

In the same statute titled “Penalties for certain offenses,” Massachusetts law prescribes a Penalty for “disorderly persons and disturbers of the peace.”

Disorderly acts or language are those that involve:

- Fighting
- Violent or tumultuous behavior
- Creating hazardous conditions
- Creating a physically offensive condition that amounts to an invasion of privacy
- Threats.

The juror instructions for “accosting and annoying a person of the opposite sex” state that disorderly conduct can include sexual explicit language that is inherently threatening; however the juror instructions for disorderly conduct do not include this specification.

Given that the statute and the supporting court documents for “accosting and annoying a person of the opposite sex” cover disorderly conduct, it may be the best one to use if you are harassed by someone of the opposite sex.

If someone of the same sex harasses you – especially if the harassment involves a threat or any violent or tumultuous behavior – you can report the harasser for disorderly conduct. (“Tumultuous” can mean noisy or uproarious, and so a street harasser that is yelling at you or making a scene may be engaging in tumultuous behavior.)

Penalty: Disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace is punishable by a fine up to \$150.

Disorderliness in Public Conveyances & Disturbance of Travelers

[Title 1, Chap. 272 §43](#)

Massachusetts law prohibits disorderly conduct and disturbing or annoying passengers by using “profane, obscene or indecent language, or by indecent behavior” on public transportation and “conveyances” in general that are open to the public.

If someone is harassing you on public transportation, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disorderliness in public conveyances and disturbance of travelers is punishable by 1 month in jail.

Enticement of a Child Under Age 16

[Title I, Chap. 265 §26C](#)

It is illegal in Massachusetts for anyone to entice a teenager or child under the age of 16 to “enter, exit or remain within any vehicle, dwelling, building, or other outdoor space” with the intent to commit a crime (such as indecent assault).

If you are 15 years of age or younger, or someone you care for or know is, and a street harasser tries to entice you to either leave, go into, or stay in any space – whether a vehicle, house, building, or other outdoor space, and you fear s/he plans to hurt you in some way or otherwise commit a crime, you can report that person to the police.

Penalty: Enticing a child under the age of 16 is punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison.

Soliciting for a Prostitute

[Part IV, Title I, Chap. 272 §8](#)

Soliciting for a prostitute is illegal in Massachusetts. 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 for a prostitute is punishable by a fine of between \$1,000 and \$5,000 and/or up to 2 and a half years in prison.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Photographing, Videotaping, or Electronically Surveiling a Nude Person

[Title I, Chap. 272 §105](#)

It is illegal in Massachusetts for anyone to secretly photograph, videotape, or “electronically surveil” the private areas of your body when and where you should have a reasonable expectation of privacy from being photographed.

- This applies to any place you might use to undress or change clothes, including your home and public places like restrooms, locker rooms, tanning booths, dressing rooms or similar spaces.
- This may also apply to “up-skirt,” “down-blouse,” or other inappropriate photographs, as one would reasonably expect to have a measure of privacy under one’s clothing.

If someone is inappropriately photographing or recording you, you can report him/her.

- Note: This statute gives law enforcement officers the right to arrest without a warrant anyone s/he reasonably believes has broken this law. It also states that any such photos or tapes shall only be made available to court and law enforcement personnel – not to the general public.

Penalty: Photographing, videotaping, or electronically surveiling a nude person is punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 2 and a half years in prison. Disseminating such photo(s) or recording(s) is punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Part IV, Title I, Chap. 272 §53\(a\)](#)

In the “Penalties for certain offenses” statute, Massachusetts law prescribes a penalty for “indecent exposure.” The juror instruction form for indecent exposure defines three elements of the crime: that the person exposed his or her genitals to one or more persons, that s/he did so intentionally, and that one or more persons were offended by the exposure.

If someone intentionally exposes him or herself to you or flashes you and you are offended by the action, you can report him/him.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is punishable by a fine of up to \$200 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Open and Gross Lewdness and Lascivious Behavior

[Part IV, Title I, Chap. 272 §16](#)

Open and gross lewdness and lascivious behavior occurs when someone openly and intentionally exposes his or her genitals, butt, or breasts, or masturbates in public, so as to (and actually does) shock or alarm one or more other people.

The juror instruction form for open and gross lewdness and lascivious behavior states that such an act is of a more serious nature than the crime of indecent exposure (such as occurring in the presence of a child) and “must actually produce alarm or shock that is a serious negative emotional experience, and not just nervousness and offense.”

If a street harasser exposes him or herself to you or to others in a way that is shocking and alarming, you can report that person.

Penalty: Open and gross lewdness and lascivious behavior is punishable by a fine of up to \$3,000 and/or up to 3 years in prison.

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.

Criminal Harassment

[Chap. 265 §43A](#)

Harassment in Massachusetts is defined as “willfully and maliciously [engaging] in a knowing pattern of conduct or series of acts over a period of time” that are directed at you specifically, that seriously alarm you, and that would cause a reasonable person substantial emotional distress. This includes being followed.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person. You have the right to file for court protection from harassment – see the section below on how to do that.

Note: The criminal harassment law is an example of a “[reasonable man](#)” law, and some law enforcement officers and judicial officials don’t consider street harassment to be what would cause a reasonable person substantial emotional distress. But you do have the right to report repeated street harassment, especially if the harasser uses offensive or sexually explicit language, threatens you, or escalates his or her behavior (such as yelling at you or following you).

Penalty: Criminal harassment is punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 2 and a half years in prison.

Stalking

[Title I, Chap. 265 §43](#)

The crime of stalking in Massachusetts occurs when someone willfully and maliciously engages in a series of 3 or more acts which would cause a reasonable person substantial emotional distress and are directed at a specific person, seriously alarm or annoy that person, and include a threat that makes that person fear imminent bodily injury or death.

If the same person, on at least three occasions, follows you or harasses you and threatens you at least once, and you feel threatened, emotionally distressed, or alarmed, you can report that person.

Penalty: The penalty for stalking is a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 5 years in the state prison.

Groping

Indecent Assault and Battery

[Title I, Chap. 265, § 13H](#)

In Massachusetts, assault and battery is an intentional touching either without consent or that causes bodily harm. An assault and battery is indecent – i.e., groping – when the physical contact is “fundamentally offensive to contemporary standards of decency.” This might include grabbing someone’s crotch, butt, or breasts, rubbing against someone in a sexual way, or some other sexualized or vulgar physical contact.

If a street harasser intentionally touches your private areas without your consent, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Indecent assault and battery is punishable by up to 5 years in prison. Indecent assault and battery on a child under 14 years of age is punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

Complaint for Protection from Harassment – 258E Form

If the same person repeatedly harasses you, you may file for a court-issued protective order to prevent future harassment. You must submit a 258E Form, a Complaint for Protection from Harassment, accessible [here](#).

The form's instructions state the following:

“Under Massachusetts General Laws chapter 258E, people who have suffered harassment may ask a judge to issue an Order to protect them from further harassment or abuse. These Orders will be recorded and enforced by law enforcement agencies. S/he are commonly called “Harassment Prevention Orders” or “Restraining Orders” or “258E Orders.” In any emergency that occurs after court hours or on weekends, you may ask your local police to put you in contact with a judge.”

You can file for a protective order when someone has committed:

- Criminal harassment
- Indecent assault and battery
- Assault with intent to rape
- Sexually assault
- “Three or more acts of willful and malicious conduct aimed [directly at you] which were committed with the intent to cause fear, intimidation, abuse or damage to property and did in fact cause fear, intimidation, abuse or damage to property.”

You will need to include a statement (on the form) that details the harasser's actions. You will also need to complete a Plaintiff Confidential Information Form, in which you detail your contact information, and a Defendant Information Form with as much information about the person that harassed you as you can provide. The first Complaint Form has instructions for this additional paperwork.

If you feel that a street harasser has violated any of the provisions mentioned above, you have the right to seek this legal protection.

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 Boston, the number is 617-343-4200 and in Cambridge, it is 617-349-3300. In Salem, it is 978-744-1212. 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 harassment requiring repeated conduct, [ALM GL ch. 265, § 43A](#). 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 by which you can submit the same information listed in #2. Visit or call your local police department for more information. In [Salem](#), you can use a web form to report crimes such as harassing phone calls.
 - 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 Boston, you can do this by calling 1-800-494-8477 (TIPS), or texting the number 27463 and beginning the message with the word "TIP."
 - In Cambridge, you can call 617-349-3359, text the number 847411 and begin the message with "Tip650" or submit it via [email](#).
 - 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.

Michigan

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

Verbal Harassment

In Michigan, there are six laws that may apply to prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

Cursing and Swearing

§750.103

Cursing in public is illegal in Michigan.

If a street harasser is using foul language or calling you swear words, you can report him/her.

Note: The law states that a prosecution can only be sustained if it is commenced within 5 days of the incident, so if you intend to report someone for cursing and swearing, you'll want to do so right away.

Penalty: Cursing and swearing is a misdemeanor in Michigan, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 90 days in jail.

Disorderly Person

§750.167

Michigan addresses disorderly conduct by defining who is considered a "disorderly person." The list of "disorderly persons" includes a range of offenses, but those relevant to street harassment are:

- Window peeping.
- Engaging in indecent or obscene conduct in a public place.
- Being intoxicated in a public place and either endangering the safety of another or causing a public disturbance.
- Loitering in or about a place where illegal business is being conducted (this might be someone buying or selling illegal substances, vending on the street without a permit, or soliciting prostitution).

The city of Detroit prohibits the same acts under its own disorderly conduct ordinance.

If a street harasser uses indecent or obscene language or gestures, or harasses you while intoxicated or loitering around a place where illegal activity is taking place, you can report him/her.

Note: If a harasser is hanging out in a place where illegal business is being conducted and also harassing you or other passersby, even if his or her street harassment is not expressly illegal, but you can still report him or her for loitering. (It is also considered disorderly conduct, and a felony, to engage in illegal business.)

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a misdemeanor in Michigan, punishable by a fine of up to by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 90 days in jail.

Improper Language in the Presence of Women and Children

[§750.337](#)

It is illegal in Michigan to "use any indecent, immoral, obscene, vulgar or insulting language in the presence or hearing of any woman or child." This law is rather [sexist](#), but it's a law on the books.

If you're a woman or a minor and a street harasser is using this kind of language toward you or in your presence - whether cursing, insulting you, or making obscene or vulgar comments - you can report him/her.

Penalty: Using improper language in the presence of women and children is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 90 days in jail.

Loitering – Detroit

[Part III, Chap. 38, Article I, §3](#)

In Detroit, it is illegal "for any person to loiter on any street, sidewalks, overpass or public place." Loitering is defined as "the act of standing or idling in or about any street, sidewalk, overpass or public place so as to hinder or impede or tend to hinder or impede the passage of pedestrians or vehicles."

If someone is hanging out on the street and harassing you or other passersby so as to impede your passage – either because he or she is blocking the path or because it feels uncomfortable or unsafe to pass by – you can report him or her for loitering in the city of Detroit.

Penalty: Loitering is a civil fraction in Detroit and punishable by a fine of up to \$100.

Profanity – Detroit

[Part III, Chap. 38, Article VII, §3](#)

In the city of Detroit, it's illegal to use "profane, indecent or immoral language or indulge in indecent or immoral conduct" in or adjacent to a school.

If a street harasser is catcalling at you, using vulgar language, or otherwise harassing you near your school, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Using profanity on any property adjacent to a school is punishable by a fine.

Soliciting Prostitution

[§750.448](#)

Soliciting, inviting, or accosting another person to engage in prostitution is illegal in Michigan (as well as by ordinance in the city of Detroit). 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: Throughout Michigan, soliciting prostitution is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 93 days in jail. In Detroit, the penalty for soliciting prostitution is a fine of \$500 and between 45 and 90 days in jail.

Undesired and Unwelcome Accosting – Detroit

Part III, Chap. 38, Article IX, §6

In the city of Detroit, it's illegal for anyone to continue to accost someone after that person has asked him or her to stop or has reasonably and clearly communicated that continuing to accost him/her is undesired and unwelcome.

The city law defines accosting as “the act of approaching and communicating, by word, gesture, or any other means, with another person or persons without having been communicated to first.”

If a street harasser approaches you and speaks to you, and you do not want him or her to, you have the right to tell him or her to stop and to report him or her for accosting you if s/he does not stop. *If you feel safe to do so*, you can say clearly to the harasser “Stop harassing me,” “Stop talking to me,” or make it known in some other way that his or her attention is undesired. If the harassment does not stop, you have the right to report it to the police.

Penalty: Undesired and unwelcome accosting is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 90 days in jail.

Unlawful Filming/Photography

Surveillance of an Individual Having Reasonable Expectation of Privacy

§750.539j

It is illegal in Michigan for a harasser to surveil, photograph, or otherwise record or capture an image, and/or disseminate or share that image, of you in your underwear, of your underwear, or of your unclad genitalia, butt, or breasts under circumstances in which you have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

The Michigan statute doesn't define what the circumstances under which you can reasonably expect privacy are, but those circumstances usually include being in:

- Your home or another private place
- A dressing room
- A locker room
- A restroom

It also usually includes the private areas of your body that are covered by clothing.

If a harasser peeps on you, take an up-skirt or other inappropriate photograph, or records you inappropriately, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Surveillance of or photographing or recording an individual having a reasonable expectation of privacy is a felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

§750.335a

Michigan law prohibits knowingly making an open or indecent exposure of one's person or the person of another. That means it is illegal for anyone to flash or expose him or herself and it is illegal to expose a non-consenting person's body, for example by lifting up a woman's skirt.

If someone flashes you or exposes him or herself to you, or exposes you in some way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail. If the harasser was also fondling his or her genitals, pubic area, buttocks, or, if female, breasts at the time of the incident, the penalty rises to a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 2 years in prison.

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.

Attempt to Commit Crime

§750.92

Michigan has a provision that holds any person accountable that attempts to commit a crime, even if s/he doesn't succeed.

If you are being harassed or followed and you think the harasser may try to commit a crime - such as sexually assaulting you - you can report him or her to the police. That person will be held accountable in proportion to the crime s/he intended to commit. This applies whether the person was apprehended in the process or simply fails to complete the crime.

Penalty: The penalty for attempting to commit a crime is proportional the crime that was attempted. For example, if it is found that a harasser attempted to commit criminal sexual conduct in the fourth degree (**groping**), the penalty for his or her attempt would be up to half of the penalty for that crime: a fine of up to \$250 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Stalking

§750.411h

Stalking is illegal in Michigan. It is defined as "a series of two or more separate noncontinuous acts," such as repeatedly contacting you, following you, or appearing at your home or workplace, that cause you to feel "terrorized, frightened, intimidated, threatened, harassed, or molested." If the same harasser follows you at least two times and makes you fearful or very distressed, you can report that person under this law.

Groping

Criminal Sexual Conduct in the Fourth Degree

§750.520e

Criminal sexual conduct in the fourth degree prohibits sexual contact with a non-consenting person.

Sexual contact in Michigan is defined as intentionally touching “intimate parts” or the clothing immediately covering intimate parts, or a causing another person to touch the perpetrator’s intimate parts or the clothing covering his or her intimate parts, if that touching “can be reasonably construed as being:

- For the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- Done for a sexual purpose
- Done in a sexual manner for revenge, to inflict humiliation, or out of anger.”

To establish liability for criminal sexual conduct in the fourth degree (in the context of street harassment), the state of Michigan will look for one of the following circumstances:

- You are 13, 14, or 15 years of age and the harasser is 5 or more years older than you.
- Force or coercion, including a threat, was used to accomplish the sexual contact.
- The harasser used “concealment or the element of surprise” to have sexual contact with you.

Most groping in a public place would fall under concealment or surprise, and so, in Michigan, you can report a street harasser who touches an intimate part of your body for criminal sexual conduct.

Penalty: Criminal sexual conduct in the fourth degree is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 2 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 Detroit, the number is 313-267-4600 and in Ann Arbor, it is (734) 994-2911. In Lansing, it is 517-483-4600. 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, [MCLS § 750.411](#). 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, in [Lansing](#) and [Ann Arbor](#), you can use this online form to report crimes such as harassing communication.
- 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.
 - Lansing Crimestoppers allows you to [submit a web tip](#), or call 517-483-STOP (7867).
 - In Detroit, you can do this by calling 1-800-SPEAK-UP.
 - Michigan also accepts state-wide tips through their Crimestoppers [webform](#).
- 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.

Minnesota

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

Note: For more information on your rights as the victim of a crime in Minnesota, in addition to what we've included here, check out the Minnesota [Victim's Rights Statute](#).

Verbal Harassment

There are three laws in Minnesota that encompass some forms of verbal harassment.

Minnesota also has a process for obtaining a restraining order that can protect you from repeated harassment from the same person, and the law provides a number of protections for you – including the right to take time off of work to file a petition and the option to have your court costs covered by the state if you can't afford them.

Disorderly Conduct

§609.72

In Minnesota, it is considered disorderly conduct for anyone, “in a public or private place, including on a school bus,” to:

- Brawl
- Fight
- Engage in offensive, obscene, abusive, boisterous, or noisy conduct
- Use offensive, obscene, or abusive language if s/he knows or should know that his or her actions or language will alarm, anger, or disturb others, arouse resentment, or provoke a violent response.

If a harasser is engaging in offensive, boisterous or noisy conduct – such as yelling at you, following you, blocking your path, or making a scene –on the street, public transportation, or even on a school bus, you can report him/her.

If a street harasser is using offensive language toward you, his or her words may be considered disorderly conduct if the same language would “reasonably ... arouse alarm, anger, or resentment” in others under the same circumstances. This is what is known as a “[fighting words](#)” law.

Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 90 days in jail.

Prostitution in Public – Patrons

[§609.324 Subd. 2](#)

Soliciting someone for the purposes of prostitution is illegal in Minnesota. 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: Patronizing a prostitute in public is a gross misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of between \$1,500 and \$3,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Solicitation of Children to Engage in Sexual Activity

[§609.352](#)

It is illegal in Minnesota for anyone over the age of 18 to solicit someone 15 years of age or younger to engage in sexual conduct if the harasser actually intends to engage in such activity.

If you (or a young person you care for) are 15 years old or younger and a street harasser says or does something to try to get you to engage in sexual activity – such as making vulgar comments to you and/or asking you to get in his or her car – you can report him/her.

Penalty: Solicitation of a child to engage in sexual activity is a felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 3 years in prison.

Unlawful Filming & Photography

Interference with Privacy

[§609.746](#)

Minnesota law prohibits anyone from either peeping or using a device or camera (that includes a mirror or a cell phone) to observe, photograph, or record the intimate parts of a person’s body, whether clothed or unclothed, under circumstances in which that person should have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

The law specifically addresses an intrusion upon a private place, such as your home, a hotel room, a tanning booth, or another place “where a reasonable person would have an expectation of privacy and has exposed or is likely to expose their intimate parts,” like a restroom, locker room, or dressing room. If a harasser is intruding upon your privacy in this way, you can report him/her.

One could also argue that you have a reasonable expectation to privacy under your skirt or blouse, and, while the law doesn’t specifically address this kind of violation, at least [one](#) street harasser in Minnesota has been charged under this law for taking up-skirt photos of women in public.

If someone is taking a photograph up your dress or skirt or down your shirt, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Interference with privacy is a gross misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$3,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

§617.23

It is illegal in Minnesota for anyone to lewdly expose his or her body or genitals in public, pay another person to expose his or her genitals in public, engage in any “open or gross lewdness or lascivious behavior, or any public indecency other than behavior specified [here].”

If a street harasser flashes you or exposes his or her body to you in a sexual way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Indecent exposure can be a misdemeanor, gross misdemeanor, or a felony depending on the circumstances. As a misdemeanor, it is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or 90 days in jail.

Criminal Sexual Conduct in the Fifth Degree

§609.3451

It is illegal in Minnesota for anyone to masturbate or to lewdly and knowingly exhibit his or her genitals in the presence of a minor under the age of 16.

If you are under 16 years old and a street harasser exposes him or herself to you, or this happens to a young person you care for, you can report the harasser.

Penalty: Criminal Sexual conduct in the fifth degree is punishable by a fine of up to \$3,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Following

If you think someone is following you, you can call 911 right away – you do not have to wait for that person to commit a crime.

Stalking

§609.749

Stalking is illegal in Minnesota. The law defines stalking as conduct which causes another to feel frightened, threatened, oppressed, persecuted, or intimidated. Then it specifies the acts that, when done under these circumstances, constitute the crime of stalking. One of the included acts is following, monitoring, or pursuing another person. The law also specifies that it is not necessary to prove that the actor intended to cause you to feel scared or intimidated, but only that s/he did so, and it does not state that the stalking actions need to be repeated to constitute a crime.

If the same person follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person. You may also have the right to a restraining order to prevent future harassment.

Penalty: Stalking in itself is a gross misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$3,000. Any act of stalking that is based on your “actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, [disability], age, or national origin,” or that is committed when you (or a young person you care for) is under the age of 18 is considered a felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison.

Groping

Criminal Sexual Conduct in the Fifth Degree

§609.3451

It is illegal in Minnesota for anyone to have sexual contact with a non-consenting person. Sexual contact is defined as someone:

- Intentionally touching a person’s “intimate parts” (“primary genital area, area, groin, inner thigh, buttocks, or breast”).
- Intentionally touching a person’s clothing that is covering any of these parts of the body (except for the butt).
- Attempting to or actually removing a non-consenting person’s clothing.
- Causing someone to come in contact with his or her intimate parts.
- Causing someone to come in contact with semen.

If a street harasser touches or grabs your crotch, inner thigh, or breasts, grabs your butt underneath your clothing, rubs against you or otherwise causes you to touch him or her sexually, or ejaculates onto you, you can report him/her. You may also have the right to a restraining order to prevent future harassment.

Penalty: Criminal Sexual conduct in the fifth degree is punishable by a fine of up to \$3,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Right to a Restraining Order to Protect Against Harassment

§609.748

The specific harassment crimes in Minnesota generally address harassment by phone or mail, but there is a statute that establishes your right to a restraining order that could apply in the context of street harassment.

If a street harasser has physically or sexually assaulted you *or* the same person has repeatedly verbally harassed you, such that the harassment has a “a substantial adverse effect on [your] safety, security, or privacy,” you (or your parent or guardian) have the right to a restraining order from your district court that orders the person who has harassed you to either stop the harassing actions or to have no further contact with you at all.

If you need immediate protection from repeated harassment or threats of violence, you can call 911 or go directly to a courthouse to file for a restraining order. If you intend to pursue this option, you should read the [full statute](#) to understand the process and all of your rights under the law.

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 Saint Paul, the number is (651) 291-1111 and in Minneapolis, it's 311, or (612) 673-3000 for people calling from outside of the city. In Duluth, it's (218) 730-5400. 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, [Stat. § 609.749](#). 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 or call your local police department for more 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. Visit your local police department website for information.
 - CRIMESTOPPERS Minnesota allows for citizens to report crimes anonymously, statewide, through several different methods. You can text the number 274637 (CRIMES) and begin the message with "TIP 647." You can also call 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS) or submit your tip via [web](#).
- 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.

Mississippi

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in Mississippi, 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 six laws that prohibit some form verbal street harassment in Mississippi.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 97, Chap. 35 §9](#)

It is illegal in Mississippi for anyone to “disturb the peace of any family or person” by any tumultuous or offensive conduct. “Tumultuous” can mean noisy or uproarious.

If a street harasser yells or shouts at you or engages in other boisterous and offensive actions you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is punishable by a fine of up to \$100 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Disorderly Conduct on Buses

[Title 97, Chap. 35 §5](#)

Mississippi law prohibits disorderly conduct, a breach of the peace, or the use of any obscene, profane or vulgar language on any passenger bus or coach in the state. (It is also illegal to drink intoxicating liquors or smoke a cigar or pipe on a bus in Mississippi.)

If a street harasser is using obscene language or causing a scene on a public bus, you can report him or her to the bus driver or the police. The law gives the bus driver the right to stop the bus and eject the offending passenger, “using only such force as may be necessary to accomplish the removal,” enlisting the aid of other passengers in the removal if necessary.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct on a bus is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Disorderly Conduct: Interference with Business

[Title 97, Chap. 35 §5](#)

It is illegal in Mississippi for anyone to prevent, seek to prevent, interfere with, or seek to interfere with the owner, operator, employees, or customers of a lawful place of business.

If someone is harassing you while you are at, entering, or leaving a business open to the public or while you are working, and you feel it is interfering with the business being conducted, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct and interference with business is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Disturbance and Breach of the Peace

[Title 97, Chap. 35 §13 & 15](#)

Mississippi has two statutes that address disturbing the peace.

1. It is illegal for anyone to create a disturbance or breach of the peace in any public place via loud and offensive talk, making threats, attempting to intimidate others, or other conduct that causes a disturbance.
2. It is illegal to disturb the public peace or the peace of others by engaging in violent, loud, insulting, profane, indecent, offensive, or boisterous conduct or language.

If a street harasser is doing any of these things – such as yelling at you, using profane or obscene language, threatening you, or being otherwise loud or boisterous – you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disturbance and breach of the peace is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Procuring the Service of a Prostitute

[Title 97, Chap. 29 §51](#)

Offering to pay for sexual conduct is illegal in Mississippi. 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: Procuring the service of a prostitute is a misdemeanor, punishable a fine of up to \$200 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Profanity in Public

[Title 97, Chap. 29 §47](#)

It is illegal in Mississippi for anyone to “profanely swear or curse, or use vulgar and indecent language, or be drunk in any public place, in the presence of two or more persons.”

If a street harasser is swearing at you or using vulgar or obscene language (or appears to be drunk) in a public place, you can report him/her. This law would apply to cases in which a street harasser verbally harasses you in a place where others are present or harasses you while you are with someone else.

Penalty: Profanity in public is punishable by a fine of up to \$100 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Unlawful Filming & Photography

Photographing or Filming Another without Permission

[Title 97, Chap. 29 §63](#)

It’s illegal in Mississippi for anyone to secretly photograph, film, tape, record, or otherwise reproduce the image of a non-consenting person when done with lewd, licentious, or indecent intent and in a place where one would intend to be undressed under a reasonable expectation of privacy.

If someone is inappropriately photographing you or recording you in a restroom, tanning booth, dressing room, or locker room, you can report him/her.

Although one would think you have a reasonable expectation to privacy when the intimate parts of your body are covered by clothing, this law does not specifically address up-skirt and down-blouse photos.

If someone is taking a photograph under your skirt or dress, down your shirt, or in some other inappropriate way, you can still report him or her to the police, but note that the law does not specifically address this situation.

Penalty: Photographing or filming another without permission is a felony, punishable by a fine \$5,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison. If the person being photographed or filmed is under 16 years of age, the prison time rises to up to 10 years.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Title 97, Chap. 29 §31](#)

It is illegal in Mississippi for anyone to “willfully and lewdly” expose his or her private parts, or persuade or cause someone else to do so, in a public place or in any place where others are present.

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

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Obstructing Your Path

Obstructing Public Streets

[Title 97, Chap. 35 §23](#)

It is illegal in Mississippi for anyone to intentionally obstruct or interfere with the free use and passage of pedestrians on any public sidewalk.

If a street harasser is blocking your path on the sidewalk to get your attention or prevent you from leaving a space, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Obstructing public streets is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$400 and/or up to 4 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.

Attempt to Commit Offense

Title 97, Chap. 1 §7

Mississippi has a provision that holds accountable any person that attempts to commit a crime, even if s/he doesn't succeed.

If you are being harassed or followed and you think the harasser may try to commit a crime - such as sexually assaulting you - you can report him or her to the police. That person will be held accountable in proportion to the crime s/he intended to commit. This applies whether the person was apprehended in the process or simply fails to complete the crime.

Penalty: Sentencing for attempting to commit a crime is based on the crime attempted, and cannot exceed the prescribed penalty for that crime.

Stalking

Title 97, Chap. 3 §107

Stalking is defined as engaging in a course of conduct – a series of at least two acts – directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for his or her safety. The actions that might make up a course of conduct include, but aren't limited to, following or confronting you in a public place and making a credible threat to cause you harm.

If a street harasser repeatedly follows you, threatens you, or does anything else to make you fear for your safety, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Stalking is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Groping

Simple Assault

Title 97, Chap. 3 §7

Any act that causes you bodily injury or puts you in fear of imminent and serious bodily harm is an assault in Mississippi.

If someone makes unwanted physical contact with you or does something that put you in immediate fear of physical injury, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Simple assault is punishable by a fine of \$500 and/or up to 6 months 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

- 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 Jackson, the number is (601) 960-1234 and in Biloxi, it is (228) 435-6100. In Gulfport, it is (228) 868-5959. 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 unconsented conduct, [Miss. Code Ann. § 97-3-107](#). 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's website.
- 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 Northeast Mississippi, you can do this by calling 1-800-773-Tips (8477), submitting this [webform](#), or by texting the number 274637 (CRIMES) and beginning your message with the words "TIPINFO."
 - Gulfport and the Mississippi coast can do this by texting the number 274637 (CRIMES) and beginning the message with "CSTIP" or by calling 1-877-787-5898. You can also submit your tip via [webform](#).
- 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.

Missouri

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

Verbal Harassment

Missouri has four laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

Harassment

§565.090

Missouri's general harassment law prohibits several actions, many of which are relevant to street harassment, including:

- Knowingly communicates a threat to commit any felony and in so doing frightens, intimidates, or causes someone emotional distress.
- Using coarse or offensive language that makes someone reasonably fear offensive physical contact or harm.
- Knowingly communicates with someone 17 years old or younger in a way that recklessly frightens or intimidates him/her, or causes him/her emotional distress.
- Knowingly makes repeated unwanted communication.
- Without good cause engages in any other act that is either intended to or does frighten or intimidate the person, or cause the person emotional distress.

If a street harasser threatens you, uses offensive language, repeatedly talks to you when you have made it clear you want to be left alone, or otherwise acts in a way that intimidates or distresses you, you can report him/her.

Note: This statute includes several "[reasonable person](#)" clauses, meaning that a person's actions will be deemed harassment in court if they would cause the average person in the same situation to also be frightened, intimidated, or distressed.

Penalty: Harassment is a class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail. If the actor is 21 years of age or older and the person s/he harassed is 17 years old or younger, harassment is a class D felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 4 years in prison.

Peace Disturbance

§574.010

A peace disturbance occurs when someone "unreasonably and knowingly disturbs or alarms another person or persons by... offensive language addressed in a face-to-face manner to a specific individual and uttered under circumstances which are likely to produce an immediate violent response from a reasonable recipient, *and* threatening to commit a felonious act against any person under circumstances which are likely to cause a reasonable person to fear that such threat may be carried out."

If a street harasser is threatening you or using offensive language toward you, you can report him or her for a peace disturbance.

Note: The clause that governs offensive language is what is known as a “[fighting words](#)” law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Peace disturbance is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Sexual Misconduct in the Second Degree

[§566.095](#)

It is illegal in Missouri for anyone to solicit or request that you engage in sexual conduct under circumstances in which s/he knows that such request or solicitation is likely to cause affront or alarm.

If a street harasser is asking you to engage in sexual conduct with him or her in a way that is alarming – using vulgar language, following you, or some other alarming action – you can report him/her.

Penalty: Sexual misconduct in the second degree is a class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$300 and/or up to 15 days in jail.

Vulgar or Profane Language on a Bus

[§578.315](#)

Missouri law prohibits anyone from “threatening a breach of the peace” or using any obscene, profane or vulgar language on a bus or at a bus terminal or on bus company property. It is also illegal to drink intoxicating liquors or to be under the influence on a bus in Missouri.

If a street harasser is using obscene language or causing a scene on a public bus, you can report him or her to the bus driver or the police. The law gives the bus driver the right to stop and require that the person leave the bus wherever the driver deems appropriate.

Penalty: Using vulgar or profane language on a bus in Missouri is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$300 and/or up to 15 days in jail.

Unlawful Filming & Photography

Invasion of Privacy in the Second Degree

[§565.253](#)

It is illegal in Missouri for anyone to secretly view, photograph, or film you without your consent either in a state of undress when you have a reasonable expectation of privacy or under or through your clothing.

The charge rises to invasion of privacy in the first degree if the person disseminates the photo or recording or uploads the image(s) to a computer.

If a street harasser peeps on you in a dressing room, locker room, restroom, or similar space or takes an up-skirt, down-blouse, or other inappropriate photo of you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Invasion of privacy in the second degree is a Class A misdemeanor if one person is illegally observed, recorded, or photographed; a Class A misdemeanor is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail. Invasion of privacy in the second degree is a Class D felony if the harasser observes, records, or photographs more than one person in a single course of conduct *or* if the harasser has already pled guilty or been found guilty of invasion of privacy; a Class D felony is punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 4 years in prison.

Indecent Exposure

Sexual Misconduct in the First Degree

§566.093

It is illegal in Missouri for anyone to expose his or her genitals “under circumstances in which s/he knows that his or her conduct is likely to cause affront or alarm” or to engage in sexual conduct in public.

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

Penalty: Sexual misconduct in the first degree is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Obstructing Your Path

Peace Disturbance

§574.010

It is considered a peace disturbance in Missouri when someone purposefully and unreasonably physically obstructs pedestrian traffic or free ingress or egress (entry and exit) to or from any public or private place.

If a street harasser is blocking your path to get your attention or prevent you from leaving a space – and especially if s/he is using obscene language while doing so – you can report him/her.

Penalty: Peace disturbance is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 6 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

§565.225

Stalking is defined as engaging in a course of conduct to intentionally harass—or follow with the intent to harass—another person.

- A course of conduct is two or more acts, including communication, over a period of time that demonstrates continuity of purpose.
- To harass means “to engage in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that serves no legitimate purpose, that would cause a reasonable person under the circumstances to be frightened, intimidated, or emotionally distressed.”

If a street harasser commits two or more acts make you feel scared or intimidated – such as verbally harassing you and/or following you – you can report him/her.

- Note: This law also gives a law enforcement office the right to make an arrest without a warrant if there is probable cause to believe someone has committed stalking.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail. The penalty increases if the harassed person is younger than 18 years old.

Groping

Sexual Abuse in the Second Degree

§566.101

It is illegal in Missouri for anyone to subject a non-consenting person to sexual contact.

Sexual contact is defined as “any touching of another person with the genitals or any touching of the genitals or anus of another person, or the breast of a female person, or such touching through the clothing, for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire of any person.”

If a street harasser touches your genitals or breasts, either over or under your clothing, or causes you to come in contact with his or her genitals – for example, by rubbing against you or putting your hand in his or her lap – you can report him/her.

Penalty: Sexual abuse in the second degree is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Hate Crimes

Hate Crimes

§557.035

In Missouri, hate crimes are those which are motivated by the following bias:

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- National origin
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Disability

If the state believes a crime was motivated by one of these biases, the state may charge the penalty for that crime and this one.

Penalty: Hate crime is a Class C felony, punishable by up to 7 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 St. Louis, the number is (314) 231-1212 and in Kansas City, it is 816-234- 5111. In Jefferson City, it is (573) 634-6400. 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 Harassment, [R.S.Mo. § 565.090](#). 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's website.

- 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.
 - Jefferson City Area Crimestoppers allow you to do this by calling (573) 659-8477 (TIPS) or by submitting a [webform](#).
 - St. Louis also allows you to submit tips via [webform](#), by calling 1-866-371-TIPS or by texting the number 274637 and beginning it with the message "STL."

- 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.

Montana

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

Verbal Harassment

In Montana, there are four laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

Disorderly Conduct

§45-8-101

Montana law prohibits a number of acts as disorderly conduct, including:

- Quarreling
- Challenging someone to a fight
- Fighting
- Making loud or unusual noises
- Using threatening, profane, or abusive language

If a street harasser uses threatening or abusive language, loudly shouts at you, or tries to fight with you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is punishable by a fine of up to \$100 and/or up to 10 days in jail.

Intimidation

§45-5-203

Montana law prohibits threats made to intimidate someone into doing or not doing something, or threats that make someone fear any retaliation for a lawful act.

An actual act of violence is considered assault, but if a street harasser makes a serious threat of violence that comes with any kind of ultimatum like, “if you do/don’t do this, I will...,” you can report him/her.

Penalty: Intimidation in Montana is punishable by a fine of up to \$50,000 and/or up to 10 years in prison.

Malicious Intimidation or Harassment Relating to Civil or Human Rights

§45-5-221

It is illegal to cause someone “reasonable apprehension of bodily injury,” actual bodily injury, or damage to one’s property “with the intent to terrify, intimidate, threaten, harass, annoy, or offend” because of a prejudice against the person’s:

- Race
- Creed
- Religion
- Color
- National origin
- Involvement in civil rights or human rights activities

Take note of any racial or religious slurs that a street harasser uses against you as you have the right to report this malicious harassment to the police.

Unfortunately, this law is incomplete in that it does not protect against harassment based on sex, gender, gender representation, or sexual orientation. But it can still protect you in cases of racial, cultural, or religious discrimination and from retaliation for human rights work, such as organizing to ensure safe spaces for women and LGBTQ individuals.

Penalty: Malicious intimidation or harassment relating to civil or human rights is punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison.

Prostitution

[§ 45-5-601](#)

Offering or agreeing to hire a prostitute is illegal in Montana. 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: Patronizing a prostitute is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Unlawful Filming & Photography

Surreptitious Visual Observation or Recordation

[§45-5-223](#)

It is illegal in Montana for anyone to secretly observe or photograph a non-consenting person in a private residence or for any landlord or owner, manager, or employee of a business to surreptitiously record a visual image of another person in a private place used to undress, such as a restroom, locker room, dressing room or bedroom.

If you discover that someone has done any of these things, you can report him/her to the police.

Unfortunately, the law does not specifically prohibit members of the public from recording someone in these settings and it does not address “up-skirt” or other inappropriate photos taken under clothing.

Penalty: Surreptitious visual observation or recordation in a place of residence is punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or 6 months in jail. Surreptitious visual recordation in a public establishment is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

§45-5-504

Indecent exposure in Montana is defined as knowingly and purposefully exposing one's genitals under circumstances likely to cause affront or alarm others in order to:

- Abuse
- Humiliate
- Harass
- Degrade another person
- Arouse or gratify the sexual response or desire of any person.

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

Penalty: Indecent exposure is punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or 6 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

§45-5-220

In Montana, stalking is when someone knowingly and repeatedly follows another person or harasses, threatens, or intimidates that person, causing that person "emotional distress or reasonable apprehension of bodily injury or death."

If you experience street harassment from the same person on more than one occasion and to the degree that it causes you emotional distress, you can report him/her.

You also have the right to tell the harasser not to approach, follow, or communicate with you, and your having done so establishes further evidence of his or her stalking if the harassment continues. If a judge is presented with credible evidence that stalking has occurred, s/he may issue a restraining order to prevent future harassment.

Penalty: Stalking is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Groping

Sexual Assault

§45-5-502

It is illegal for someone to force a non-consenting person to have sexual contact.

Sexual contact is defined as the touching of sexual or other intimate parts of another person directly or through clothing (meaning if the person touches you over your clothes) with the intent of causing that person bodily injury or to humiliate, harass or degrade that person, or for the harasser's sexual gratification.

If anyone touches you in a sexual way against your will in a public place, such as on the street, at a bus stop, or in a bar, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Sexual assault is punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 6 months 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
 - 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 Helena, it is (406) 442-3233 or (406) 447-8461 and in Missoula, it is 406-552-6300. In Billings, it is (406) 657-8460. 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 involving a threat, [Mont. Code Ann. § 45-5-220](#). 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 by which you can submit the same information listed in #2. For example, [Billings](#) and [Missoula](#) have an online crime form where you can report things like suspicious activity.

- 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 Billings and Yellowstone County, you can do this by calling (406) 245-6660. You can also text the number "CRIMES" (274637) using "BPDTIP" as a keyword followed by a description and location of the crime tip.
 - In Laurel, you can do this by calling (406) 628-8424.
 - Helena allows you to call either (866) 534-5541 or (406) 443-2000.
 - You can also submit via [webform](#). [TipSubmit](#) is also available via webform in 13 cities and counties in the state.

- 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.

Nebraska

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

Verbal Harassment

There are two laws in Nebraska that some forms of verbal street harassment may fall under.

Disturbing the Peace

[Neb. Rev. Stat. § 28-1322](#)

Nebraska has a law that prohibits the disturbance of the peace and may apply to particularly egregious instances of verbal street harassment. Nebraska's law simply says that no one "shall intentionally disturb the peace and quiet of any person, family, or neighborhood," without elaborating further.

In other states, disturbing the peace usually refers to loud or unusual noises, tumultuous and offensive conduct, threatening, or fighting.

If a street harasser is using offensive language or gestures, speaking badly about you, causing a scene, threatening you or others or challenging you to a fight, or otherwise disturbing the peace, you can report him or her for a breach of the peace.

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

Soliciting of Prostitution

[Neb. Rev. Stat. § 28-801.01](#)

Soliciting of prostitution is illegal in Nebraska. 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 of prostitution is a Class I misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of between \$250 and \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail. If the person being solicited is under 18 years of age, soliciting of prostitution is a Class IV felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison.

Unlawful Filming & Photography

Unlawful Intrusion

[Neb. Rev. Stat. § 28-311.08](#)

It is illegal in Nebraska for anyone to view, photograph, or record a non-consenting person in a state of undress, in a place where the person should have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

If someone is viewing or recording you in an inappropriate way in a location like a restroom, tanning booth, locker room, fitting room, or dressing room, you can report him/her.

Unfortunately, the law does not address inappropriate photographs in public, such as up-skirt or down-blouse photos.

Penalty: Unlawful intrusion in the form of inappropriately viewing someone is a Class I misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of between \$250 and \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail. Unlawful intrusion via inappropriately photographing or recording someone is a Class IV felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison. Penalties are even higher if the person viewed or recorded is under 18 years of age or if the image(s) is disseminated.

Indecent Exposure

Public Indecency

[Neb. Rev. Stat. § 28-806](#)

It is illegal in Nebraska for anyone to perform a sex act in public or to expose his or her genitals with the intent to affront or alarm any person in public.

If a street harasser exposes him or herself to you, flashes you, or is engaging in a sexual act with another person in public, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Public indecency is a Class II misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 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

[Neb. Rev. Stat. § 28-311.03-4](#)

If you experience repeated harassment from the same person, his or her actions may constitute the crime of stalking. Stalking in Nebraska is defined as repeated, knowing, and willful harassment with the intent to injure, terrify, threaten, or intimidate the harassed person.

The law looks for a harasser's course of conduct, meaning "a pattern of conduct composed of a series of acts over a period of time, however short, evidencing a continuity of purpose" and actions that seriously terrify, threaten, or intimidate the person being stalked and which serve no legitimate purpose. The acts which might constitute a course of stalking conduct include following, detaining, restraining the personal liberty of, telephoning, contacting, or otherwise communicating with the person being harassed.

If the same person repeatedly follows you, communicates with you without your consent, threatens you, or otherwise harasses you, you can report him or her for stalking in Nebraska. You also have the right to ask the court for a [protective order](#) to prevent further harassment. The law specifies that you

will not be charged any court fees for filing a petition for a protective order (unless the court finds your claims of stalking to be false or made in bad faith). [Find more information](#) on stalking in Nebraska.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class I misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail. If the person being harassed is under 16 years of age, stalking is a Class IV felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to 5 years in prison.

Groping

Sexual Assault in the Third Degree

[Neb. Rev. Stat. § 28-320](#)

It is illegal to make sexual contact with non-consenting person.

Sexual contact is defined as intentionally touching the sexual or intimate parts of a person's body, either under or over clothing, or causing someone to come in contact with the harasser's sexual or intimate parts.

"Without consent" in Nebraska means that you have expressed your lack of consent in some way, whether by word or action. You can best protect yourself under Nebraska's law by making your lack of consent clear, such as by moving away from someone who is touching you sexually, if you can, or by saying clearly "Stop touching me," if you feel safe to do so. If you're unable to say or do these things, you can still report it.

If someone grabs your crotch, butt, or breasts, rubbing up against you, or puts your hand in his or her lap, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Sexual assault in the third degree is a Class I misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year 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
 - 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 Omaha, it is (402) 444-5600 and in Lincoln, it is (402) 441-6000. In Grand Island, it is 308-385-5400. 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.
 - It can be helpful to include the law the crime falls under, such as unconsented contact) [R.R.S. Neb. § 28-311.03](#). 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 by which you can submit the same information listed in #2. For example, [Omaha](#) has an online reporting form that allows you to report crimes like harassment.
- 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.
 - Omaha has a Crimestoppers reporting page that allows you to submit a tip by calling (402) 444-STOP, texting the number 274637 (CRIMES) and beginning your message with "OPD" or via [webform](#).
 - Lincoln also allows you to submit tips by calling (402) 475-3600, texting the number 274637 (CRIMES) and beginning the message with "LNK402" or via [webform](#).
 - Grand Island allows you to submit tips by calling (308) 381-8822, by texting (308) 381-8822, or by emailing gicrime@gmail.com.
- 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.

Nevada

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in Nevada, 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 nine laws in Nevada that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

Assembling to Disturb the Peace or to Commit an Unlawful Act

[§203.020](#)

If two or more people “assemble for the purpose of disturbing the public peace, or committing any unlawful act,” such as engaging in street harassment, a law enforcement officer has the right to order them to disperse.

If two or more people are harassing you, you can report them for assembling to disturb the peace and enlist the aid of a police officer in asking them to disperse.

Penalty: Assembling to disturb the peace and failing to disperse upon the order of a law enforcement officer is a misdemeanor in Nevada, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Breach of Peace

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 203.010](#)

It is illegal in Nevada for anyone to “maliciously and willfully disturb the peace or quiet” of any neighborhood, person, or family by:

- Loud or unusual noises
- Tumultuous and offensive conduct
- Threatening
- Traducing (speaking badly of or telling lies about someone so as to damage his/her reputation)
- Quarreling
- Challenging to fight
- Fighting

If a street harasser is using offensive language or gestures, speaking badly about you, causing a scene, threatening you or others or challenging you to a fight, or otherwise disturbing the peace, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Breach of the peace is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Coercion

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 207.190](#)

Nevada law specifically protects people from threats made to coerce him/her into doing or not doing something, or threats that make the person fear any retaliation for a lawful act.

An actual act of violence is considered assault, but if a street harasser makes a serious threat of violence that comes with any kind of ultimatum – “if you do/don’t do this, I will...” – you can report him/her.

Penalty: Coercion is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail. If a harasser uses or threatens physical force, coercion is a category B felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or between 1 and 6 years in prison.

Harassment

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 200.571](#)

The general harassment law in Nevada covers any threat to cause bodily injury, property damage, “physical confinement or restraint” of the person threatened, or some other act that will cause substantial harm to the person’s physical or mental health or safety.

If a street harasser makes a threat against you – such as threatening rape or sexual assault – and his/her words or actions put you in reasonable fear that the threat will be carried out, you can report him/her.

If you believe someone has committed either the crime of harassment or stalking against you, you have the right to ask the court for a restraining order to prevent further harassment.

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

Loitering about School or Public Place Where Children Congregate

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 207.270](#)

In Nevada, it is illegal for a person who has no legitimate business to be there to loiter at or near the premises of schools or other public places where children congregate, like parks.

If you see someone hanging out near one of these facilities and s/he is harassing you or other passersby, you can report that person.

Penalty: Loitering about a school or public place where children congregate is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Offenses in Public Conveyances

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 203.100](#)

It is illegal in Nevada for anyone to “use profane, offensive or indecent language or engage in any quarrel in any public conveyance, or interfere with or annoy any passenger therein.”

If someone is using inappropriate language or harassing you on public transportation or on any bus, railroad, or other conveyance open to the public, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Offenses in a public conveyance are a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Provoking a Commission of Breach of the Peace

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 203.030](#)

It is illegal in Nevada for anyone to “willfully provoke, or attempt to provoke, another person to commit a breach of the peace,” by word, sign or gesture.

This is what’s known as a “[fighting words](#)” law, and it prohibits language or conduct likely to illicit an immediate violent response. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Provoking a commission of breach of the peace is a misdemeanor, a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Solicitation for Prostitution

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 201.354](#)

Soliciting for prostitution is illegal in Nevada everywhere except in a licensed house of prostitution. 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 for prostitution is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Unlawful Contact with Child or Person with Mental Illness

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 207.260](#)

It is illegal in Nevada for anyone to repeatedly harass a person under the age of 16 in a way “which would cause a reasonable child of like age to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated or harassed.”

A course of conduct means “a series of acts over time that evidences a continuity of purpose directed at a specific person.”

If you (or a young person you care for) are 15 years of age or younger and a street harasser makes you feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated or harassed by following you, making repeated sexually explicit comments, threatening you, or through other inappropriate behaviors, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Unlawful contact with a child is a gross misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 364 days in jail.

Unlawful Filming/Photography

Capturing an Image of the Private Area of Another Person

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 200.604](#)

It is illegal in Nevada for anyone to “knowingly and intentionally capture an image” of the private area of a non-consenting person’s body when that person should have a reasonable expectation of privacy.

The private area of one’s body means “the naked or undergarment clad genitals, pubic area, buttocks or female breast [below the top of the areola].”

If a street harasser takes an “up-skirt” or “down-blouse” photo of you, or surreptitiously photographs you in a dressing room, locker room, restroom, or other place where you can typically expect privacy, you can report him/her.

It is also illegal for anyone to “distribute, disclose, display, transmit or publish” an image that was taken in violation of this law. If a street harasser takes an inappropriate photo of you and is charged with that crime, the law stipulates that any photo(s) contained in court records or other similar data shall not be released to or examined by the general public.

Penalty: Capturing an image of the private area of another person is a gross misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 364 days in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent or Obscene Exposure

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 201.220](#)

It is illegal in Nevada for anyone to make “any open and indecent or obscene exposure of his or her person, or of the person of another.”

An indecent or obscene exposure is not defined in the statute, but usually means exposing one’s genitals, buttocks, pubic area, or breasts.

If a street harasser exposes him or herself to you or flashes you, attempts to expose you, such as by lifting your skirt or dress, you can report that person.

Penalty: Indecent or obscene exposure is a gross misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 364 days in jail.

Open or Gross Lewdness

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 201.210](#)

In Nevada, the law against open and gross lewdness prohibits any sexual contact in public. The statute doesn’t specifically define open and gross lewdness, but in other states, it usually means any public sex act.

You likely can use this law to report a street harasser for masturbating in a public place.

Penalty: Open and gross lewdness is a category D felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or between 1 and 4 years in prison.

Following

If you think someone is following you, you can call 911 right away – you do not have to wait for that person to commit a crime.

Stalking

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 200.575](#)

Stalking in Nevada is defined as “willfully or maliciously [engaging] in a course of conduct that would cause a reasonable person to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated, harassed or fearful for the immediate safety of a family or household member,” and that does cause those feelings.

A course of conduct means “a pattern of conduct which consists of a series of acts over time that evidences a continuity of purpose directed at a specific person.”

If the same person repeatedly follows you, communicates with you without your consent, threatens you, or otherwise harasses you, you can report him/her.

If you believe someone has committed either the crime of stalking or harassment against you, you have the right to ask the court for a restraining order to prevent further harassment.

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

Groping

Open or Gross Lewdness

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 201.210](#)

In Nevada, the law against open and gross lewdness prohibits any sexual contact in public.

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

Penalty: Open and gross lewdness is a Category D felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or between 1 and 4 years in prison.

Lewdness with Child Under 14

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 201.230](#)

It is illegal in Nevada for anyone to commit any lewd or lascivious act upon a child under the age of 14.

If you (or a young person you care for) are 13 years old or younger and a street harasser touches you in a sexual or inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Lewdness with a child under 14 is a category A felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or between 10 years and life in prison.

Hate Crimes

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 207.185](#)

If an act of street harassment that qualifies as:

- A breach of the peace
- Assembling to disturb the peace
- Provoking a breach of the peace
- An offense on a public conveyance
- Harassment
- Stalking

is committed because of your “actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation,” the charge is elevated to a gross misdemeanor.

Take note of any racial, religious, or homophobic slurs or other forms of hate that a street harasser uses, as you can report that information to the police as well as the crime committed.

Penalty: A gross misdemeanor in Nevada is punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 364 days 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
 - 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 Carson City, it is (775) 887-2013 and in Las Vegas, it is 311, within the city limits. In Reno, it is (775) 334-2121. 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 harassment requiring a threat, [Nev. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 200.571](#). 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 by which you can submit the same information listed in #2. For example, [Reno](#) allows you to file a report online, for crimes such as harassment or disturbing the peace.
- 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 Las Vegas, you can do this by calling Crime Stoppers Tip Line (702) 385-5555 or by

texting “CRIMENV” + your tip info to CRIMES (274637).

- The entire state of Nevada allows you to submit your tip via [webform](#).

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.

New Hampshire

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

Verbal Harassment

In New Hampshire, there are three laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

Disorderly Conduct

§644:2

New Hampshire's disorderly conduct law prohibits a wide range of offensive acts. Those that are relevant to street harassment include:

- Knowingly or purposely creating a hazardous condition in a public place by any action that serves no legitimate purpose.
- Engaging in fighting or in violent, tumultuous or threatening behavior in a public place. ("Tumultuous" can mean noisy or uproarious, and so New Hampshire's disorderly conduct law may protect you from a street harasser yelling at you or otherwise causing a scene.)
- Directing obscene, derisive, or offensive words at another person in a public place. This is a "[fighting words](#)" clause and applies to speech that is "likely to provoke a violent reaction on the part of an ordinary person."
- Obstructing vehicular or pedestrian traffic on any public street or sidewalk or the entrance to any public building.
- Purposely causing or recklessly creating the risk of a breach of the peace, public inconvenience, annoyance or alarm by:
 - Making loud or unreasonable noises which would disturb a person of average sensibilities.
 - Disrupting the orderly conduct of business in any public or governmental facility.
 - Disrupting any lawful assembly or meeting of persons without lawful authority.

If a street harasser is yelling at you, using obscene, derisive, or offensive words, threatening you, or blocking your path on a sidewalk or in front of a public building to either get your attention or prevent you from entering/leaving a space, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a violation, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000, unless the offense continues after a request by any person to desist. You have the right to ask a street harasser to stop his or her offensive behavior, and if s/he does not do so, disorderly conduct is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,200.

Harassment

[§644:4](#)

New Hampshire's general harassment law prohibits various forms of harassing communications. Those relevant to street harassment include:

- Repeatedly communicating with you at extremely inconvenient hours. (This likely applies to telephone calls, but could potentially include inappropriate in-person communications at night.)
- Repeatedly using offensively coarse language with the intent to annoy or alarm you.
- Insulting, taunting, or challenging you "in a manner likely to provoke a violent or disorderly response." This is a "[fighting words](#)" clause – click through for more information on fighting words and street harassment.
- Continuing to communicate with you with the intent to annoy or alarm you, for no lawful or constitutionally protected purpose, after you have asked the person to stop.

You have the right in New Hampshire to tell a street harasser that you do not want him/her to communicate with you. If a street harasser uses offensive language toward you, taunts, challenges, or insults you, or continues to speak to you after you have asked him or her not to, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Harassment in New Hampshire is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,200.

Prostitution

[§645:2](#)

Offering to pay for sexual contact is illegal in New Hampshire. 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: Prostitution is a misdemeanor in New Hampshire, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,200.

Unlawful Filming & Photography

Violation of Privacy

[§644:9](#)

It is illegal in New Hampshire for anyone to observe, photograph, or record the private parts of a non-consenting person's body either underneath clothing, or in a private place where one should reasonably expect privacy.

The law states that the private parts of your body include "the genitalia, buttocks, or female breasts, or a person's body underneath that person's clothing."

If a harasser films or photographs you someplace like public restrooms, dressing rooms, locker rooms, and hotel rooms, and/or if a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Violation of privacy (in the manner described here) is a class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure and Lewdness

§645:1

In New Hampshire, it is illegal for anyone to expose his or her genitals, engage in fornication (usually defined as sex between two people not married to each other), or to perform “any other act of gross lewdness,” under circumstances that will likely cause affront or alarm to others – i.e., in a public place.

The statute doesn’t define an act of gross lewdness, but this might include masturbating or committing some other sex act in public.

If a street harasser exposes him or herself to you, is masturbating in public, or does some other inappropriate and overtly sexual act, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Indecent exposure and lewdness is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000. If the harasser commits an act of sexual contact (including masturbation) in the presence of a child under 16 years of age, indecent exposure and lewdness is a class B felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 7 years in prison.

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

§633:3

New Hampshire law defines stalking as purposefully or recklessly engaging in a course of conduct, targeted at a specific individual, that *either* the harasser knows will cause the person to fear for his/her personal safety (or that of an immediate family member) *or* that is *likely* to cause a person to fear for his/her personal safety and actually does cause that fear.

A course of conduct means “2 or more acts over a period of time, however short, which evidences a continuity of purpose,” and may include:

- Threatening you
- Following you
- Approaching you
- Confronting you
- Appearing near your home, school, or job
- Communicating with you without your consent

If a street harasser commits two or more acts that make you feel scared or intimidated – such as verbally harassing you and/or following you – his/her actions may constitute stalking and you can report him or her to the police.

This law provides that you have the right to a protective order against the harasser to prevent further stalking, and also gives a law enforcement office the right to make an arrest without a warrant if there is probable cause to believe someone has committed stalking.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Groping

Sexual Assault

§632-A:4

It is illegal to subject a non-consenting person to sexual contact “through concealment or by the element of surprise,” before the person has an adequate opportunity to “flee or resist.”

Sexual contact means “the intentional touching whether directly, through clothing, or otherwise, of the victim's or actor's sexual or intimate parts, including emissions, tongue, anus, breasts, and buttocks.”

If a street harasser grabs your crotch, butt, or breasts, kisses or licks you inappropriately, rubs against you, or ejaculates on you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Sexual assault is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or up to 1 year 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
 - 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 Concord, it is (603) 225-8600 but in Nashua, it’s (603) 594-3500. In Portsmouth, it is (603) 427-1500. 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 harassment, [N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 644:4](#). 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 website for more 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. Visit your local police department website for information.
 - In the Seacoast area, which encompasses more than 13 communities, including Portsmouth, you can submit a tip by calling (603) 431-1199 or (207) 439-1199. You can also submit via [webform](#).
 - For the state of New Hampshire, you can do this by calling either (603) 223-3860 or (800) NAB-DOPE, or emailing isb@dos.nh.gov
- 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.

New Jersey

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

Verbal Harassment

There are three laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment in New Jersey.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 2C, Chap. 33 §2](#)

It is considered disorderly conduct in New Jersey for anyone to purposefully “offend the sensibilities of the hearer” by addressing “unreasonably loud and offensively coarse or abusive language” at a specific person in a public place.

New Jersey’s disorderly conduct law also prohibits:

- Fighting
- Making threats
- Engaging in violent or tumultuous (noisy or uproarious) behavior
- Creating a hazardous or physically dangerous condition in a public place with the intent to “cause public inconvenience, annoyance or alarm”

If a street harasser is yelling at you, threatening you, using offensive or abusive language, or otherwise making a scene, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a petty disorderly persons offense in New Jersey, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Harassment

[Title 2C, Chap. 33 §4](#)

New Jersey’s law against general harassment prohibits:

- Communicating with another person using offensively coarse language.
- Subjecting someone to offensive physical contact, striking or kicking, or threatens to do so.
- Engaging in another course of conduct meant to alarm or seriously annoy the person.

If a street harasser uses sexually explicit language, follows you, threatens you, touches you in an offensive way, blocks your path or tries to keep you from leaving a space, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Harassment is a petty disorderly persons offense in New Jersey, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Maintaining a Nuisance

[Title 2C, Chap. 33 §12](#)

New Jersey has a law against “nuisances” that facilitate unlawful activity or “endanger the safety and health of a considerable number of persons.”

Nuisance laws typically apply to one entity – either a person or organization – that causes a problem for a large part of the community. New Jersey’s nuisance law probably won’t help if many people in your community are being harassed by a variety of people, but if you find that one individual or organization is consistently causing many people to be harassed, you may be able to report it under this law. For example:

- A person who routinely harasses many passersby on the same street corner every day, or who causes some other significant disruption that affects many people at once.
- A company whose employees regularly harass people while on the job, such as construction workers or delivery truck drivers. You might try going directly to the business owner first to file a complaint. But if the harassment doesn’t stop, you could report the business as a nuisance.

Lawmakers, law enforcement officials, or judges may try to trivialize street harassment, but it is okay to make the case for why it IS a public nuisance.

Penalty: Maintaining a nuisance is a disorderly persons offense, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Unlawful Filming & Photography

Invasion of Privacy

[Title 2C, Chap. 14 §9](#)

It is illegal in New Jersey for anyone to, “knowing that he [or she] is not licensed or privileged to do so,” observe, photograph, film, videotape, or record another person “whose intimate parts are exposed or who is engaged in an act of sexual penetration or sexual contact, without that person’s consent and under circumstances in which a reasonable person would not expect to be observed.”

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

The law does not expressly address surreptitiously photographing someone under his or her clothing, so it is unclear whether a judge would interpret this law to be an express prohibition of “up-skirt,” “down-blouse,” or other inappropriate photographs in the context of street harassment. We feel it would violate the spirit of this law and reporting it may help it to be interpreted this way.

Penalty: Invasion of privacy via observing another person is a crime of the fourth degree, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to 18 months in prison. Invasion of privacy via illegal photograph(s), filming, or other recording(s) is a crime of the third degree, punishable by a fine of up to \$15,000 and/or between 3 and 5 years in prison.

Indecent Exposure

Lewdness

[Title 2C, Chap. 14 §4](#)

New Jersey's law against lewdness prohibits the exposing of one's genitals or intimate parts in public for the purpose of gratifying sexual desire.

If a harasser flashes or exposes her or himself to you in a public place, such as a park, on public transportation, or in a store, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Lewdness is a disorderly persons offense, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 6 months in jail. An act of lewdness in the presence of a child less than 13 years of age (if the actor is at least four years older than the child) is a crime of the fourth degree, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to 18 months in prison.

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.

Criminal Coercion

[Title 2C, Chap. 13 §5](#)

New Jersey law specifically prohibits threats made to coerce someone into doing or not doing something, or threats that make someone fear any retaliation for a lawful act.

An actual act of violence is considered assault, but if a street harasser makes a serious threat of violence that comes with any kind of ultimatum, such as, "if you do/don't do this, I will...", or, as an elected or public official, threatens to take some legal action against you, you can report him/her.

This may seem like an extreme situation, but, unfortunately, there have been reports of police officers making such illegal threats when s/he has committed street harassment. If this happens to you, know that it is illegal, you can report it, and you can find more information in our section on [engaging with police](#).

Penalty: Criminal coercion is a crime of the fourth degree, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to 18 months in jail.

Harassment

[Title 2C, Chap. 33 §4](#)

The harassment law prohibits a course of conduct meant to alarm or seriously annoy someone. A course of conduct could include following and harassing someone at least twice.

If a street harasser follows you, blocks your path or tries to keep you from leaving a space, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Harassment is a petty disorderly persons offense in New Jersey, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Stalking

[Title 2C, Chap. 12 §10](#)

Stalking is defined as purposefully or knowingly engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for his/her safety or the safety of a third person or suffer other emotional distress.

Course of conduct includes repeatedly maintaining a visual or physical proximity to a person by following, monitoring, observing, surveilling, threatening, or communicating to or about, a person. It also includes repeatedly committing harassment against a person.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe or feel emotionally distressed, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is most often considered a crime of the fourth degree, punishable by up to 18 months in prison and fines.

Groping

Criminal Sexual Contact

[Title 2C, Chap. 14 §3](#)

In New Jersey, sexual contact is prohibited when:

- The assailant uses physical force or coercion.
- The victim was physically or mentally “helpless.”
- The victim is between 13-16 years old and the assailant is at least four years older.

Sexual contact is the intentional touching, either under or over clothing, of your or the harasser’s intimate parts for the purpose of either sexual arousal or gratification or degrading or humiliating you. A person’s intimate parts include his or her sexual organs, genital area, butt, groin, inner thigh, or breast.

If a street harasser makes sexual contact with you by means of force or coercion – for example, threatening you, grabbing you forcefully, or holding you in place – or you were mentally or physically unable to escape or you are between 13-16 years old and the harasser is at least four years older than you, you can report him/her

Penalty: Criminal sexual contact is a crime of the fourth degree, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to 18 months in prison. If you are severely injured, or the assault is by force and committed by more than one person, the charge rises to aggravated criminal sexual contact, a crime of the third degree punishable by a fine of up to \$15,000 and/or between 3 and 5 years in prison.

Harassment

[Title 2C, Chap. 33 §4](#)

New Jersey’s law against harassment prohibits offensive physical contact, or engaging in another course of conduct meant to alarm or seriously annoy someone.

If a street harasser touches you in an offensive way you can report him/her.

Penalty: Harassment is a petty disorderly persons offense in New Jersey, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 30 days in jail.

Simple Assault

[Title 2C, Chap. 12 §1](#)

It is illegal for someone to cause another person to fear serious bodily injury.

If a street harasser grabs you forcefully, raises his/her hand to you, or acts in any other way that causes you to fear injury, you can report him/her.

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

Hate Crimes

Bias Intimidation

[Title 2C, Chap. 16 §1](#)

In New Jersey, if someone commits or threatens to commit harassment, stalking, lewdness, invasion of privacy, criminal coercion, simple assault, criminal sexual contact (of the crimes included here), or some other violent crime or crime against another person or property because of a bias against the person's actual or perceived protected characteristic, the person can report it under the crime s/he committed as well as for bias intimidation. Protected characteristics in New Jersey include:

-
- Race
- Color
- National origin
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Gender
- Gender identity or expression
- Sexual orientation
- Disability

So if a crime was committed against you in an attempt to intimidate you because of one of these characteristics, a separate and additional sentence, in proportion to the crime committed, will be imposed— even if the harasser is mistaken in his or her perception of your race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other characteristic.

The law specifies that your gender identity or expression needs to be that which is stereotypically associated with your assigned sex at birth.

There is one important exception to New Jersey's bias intimidation law. It is *not* considered an act of bias intimidation if a harasser commits invasion of privacy, lewdness, criminal sexual contact, or any other crime from Chapter 14 of the New Jersey code, which address sexual assault, *because of your gender*.

Presumably, this reflects the fact that gender preference is inherit in sexual acts, and so the state of New Jersey does not find an additional conviction for bias intimidation to be appropriate. If you live in New Jersey and feel that sexual assault laws should reflect the dynamics of power and intimidation that are a real part of street harassment, we encourage you to engage in your own campaign for safe spaces activism and legal reform. [Contact](#) Stop Street Harassment for resources or support.

Penalty: Bias intimidation is at minimum a crime of the fourth degree, and in most cases a crime of one degree higher than the underlying offense. Most street harassment crimes in New Jersey are disorderly persons offense or petty disorderly persons offense, making bias intimidation a crime of the fourth degree, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000 and/or up to 18 months in prison. In addition, anyone convicted of bias intimidation may also be required to complete sensitivity training, attend counseling, or make payments to a local victims-services program.

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 Newark, it is (973) 733-6000 and in Jersey City, it's (201) 547-5477. In Paterson, it is 973-321-1111. 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 harassment) [N.J. Stat. § 2C:33-4. Harassment. \(2002\)](#). 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 by which you can submit the same information listed in #2. For example, in [Newark](#) you can use an online reporting form to report crimes like harassment.

- 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 Jersey City, you can do this by calling (201) 547-JAIL or emailing policetips@njcps.org.
 - In Newark, you can report by calling 877-NWK-TIPS.

- 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.

New Mexico

New Mexico has a variety of laws that prohibit verbal harassment, “up-skirt” or other inappropriate photos, indecent exposure or flashing, stalking, groping, and hate crimes. Here are the laws and reporting procedures you need to know.

Verbal Harassment

There are four laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment in New Mexico

Disorderly Conduct

[Chap. 30, Article 20 §1](#)

In New Mexico, it is illegal to engage in “violent, abusive, indecent, profane, boisterous, unreasonably loud or otherwise disorderly conduct which tends to disturb the peace.”

If a street harasser is using excessively profane or indecent language toward you, yelling at or threatening you, or otherwise causing a scene, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a petty misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Enticement of a Child

[Chap. 30, Article 9 §1](#)

It is illegal in New Mexico for anyone to try to entice someone younger than 15 years old to enter any vehicle, house, building, room, or secluded space.

If something like this happens to you (or a young person you care for), and you think the person harassing you intends to commit a crime against you, you can call 911 as soon as you feel safe to do so.

Penalty: Enticement of child is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Harassment

[Chap. 30, Article 3A §2](#)

In New Mexico, the general harassment law addresses “knowingly pursuing a pattern of conduct that is intended to annoy, seriously alarm or terrorize another person and that serves no lawful purpose.”

A pattern of conduct isn’t specifically defined, but it usually means a series of repeated actions that evidence a continuity of purpose. The law also states that, to be considered harassment, the conduct must be that which “would cause a reasonable person to suffer substantial emotional distress.”

If someone verbally harasses you, follows you, or does any combination of street harassment actions that cause you to suffer substantial emotional distress, you can report him/her.

New Mexico law, in [Chap. 30, Article 1 §15](#), specifies that if you have been the victim of harassment you will not be required to cover certain court costs, including any costs associated with a necessary restraining order, if you choose to report the crime.

Penalty: Harassment is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Public Nuisance

[Chap. 30, Article 8 §1](#)

New Mexico has a law against “knowingly creating, performing or maintaining” nuisances that either are “injurious to public health, safety, morals or welfare,” or that interfere with “the exercise and enjoyment of public rights, including the right to use public property.”

Street harassment can be injurious to public safety and may limit the right of women and others to use public property.

Nuisance laws typically apply to one entity – either a person or organization – that causes a problem for a large part of the community. New Mexico’s nuisance law probably won’t help if many people in your community are being harassed by a variety of people. If you find that one individual or organization is consistently causing many people to be harassed, you may be able to report it under this law. For example:

- A person who routinely harasses many passersby on the same street corner every day, or who causes some other significant disruption that affects many people at once.
- A company whose employees regularly harass people while on the job, such as construction workers or delivery truck drivers. You might try going directly to the business owner first to file a complaint. But if the harassment doesn’t stop, you could report the business as a nuisance.

Lawmakers, law enforcement officials, or judges may try to trivialize street harassment, but it is okay to make the case for why it IS a public nuisance.

Penalty: A public nuisance is a petty misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 6 months in jail. You may also bring a civil action against any person, corporation, or organization in the state of New Mexico for the abatement of a public nuisance.

Unlawful Filming & Photography

Voyeurism

[Chap. 30, Article 9 §20](#)

It is illegal in New Mexico for anyone to intentionally “view, photograph, videotape, film, webcast or record the intimate areas” of a non-consenting person’s body.

The intimate areas include a person’s naked *or* undergarment-clad genital area, groin, buttocks, anus or breasts.

This law applies in spaces where you might undress, such as a restroom, fitting room, or tanning booth, as well as when you have a reasonable expectation of privacy, whether in a public or private place.

If a street harasser attempts to view, photograph, or record you inappropriately, or is taking “up-skirt” or “down-blouse” photos of you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Voyeurism is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail. If the person observed or photographed is less than 18 years of age, voyeurism is a fourth degree felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 18 months in prison.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Chap. 30, Article 9 §14](#)

It is illegal in New Mexico for anyone to “knowingly and intentionally” expose his or her primary genital area to the public view.

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 for indecent exposure.

New Mexico law, in [Chap. 30, Article 1 §15](#), specifies that if you have been the victim of indecent exposure you will not be required to cover certain court costs, including any costs associated with a necessary restraining order, if you choose to report the crime.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail. In addition, the law states that a person guilty of indecent exposure must participate in a program of professional counseling.

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

[Chap. 30, Article 3A §3](#)

Stalking in New Mexico is defined as “knowingly pursuing a pattern of conduct, without lawful authority, directed at a specific individual when the person intends that the pattern of conduct would place the individual in reasonable apprehension of death, bodily harm, sexual assault, confinement or restraint.”

As used here, a pattern of conduct means two or more acts on separate occasions that include following, monitoring, surveiling, threatening, or communicating to or about you.

If the same person repeatedly harasses you on at least two separate occasions and makes you fear serious injury or sexual assault, you can report him/her for stalking.

New Mexico law, in [Chap. 30, Article 1 §15](#), specifies that if you have been the victim of stalking you will not be required to cover certain court costs, including any costs associated with a necessary restraining order, if you choose to report the crime.

Penalty: Stalking is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail. In addition, anyone convicted of stalking will be required to complete a program of professional counseling at his or her own expense.

Groping

Aggravated Indecent Exposure

[Chap. 30, Article 9 §14.3](#)

New Mexico has a law against aggravated indecent exposure, which is the intentional exposure of a person's genital area while committing another crime.

If a street harasser exposes him or herself to you while assaulting you in some way, or while committing some other crime, you can report him/her.

New Mexico law, in [Chap. 30, Article 1 §15](#), specifies that if you have been the victim of aggravated indecent exposure you will not be required to cover certain court costs, including any costs associated with a necessary restraining order, if you choose to report the crime.

Penalty: Aggravated indecent exposure is a fourth degree felony, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up to 18 months in prison. In addition, anyone convicted of aggravated indecent exposure will be required to complete a program of professional counseling at his or her own expense.

Assault

[Chap. 30, Article 3 §1](#)

In New Mexico, assault includes attempting to unlawfully touch or injure you, threatening you or putting you in fear of injury, or using insulting language toward you that impugns – or calls into question – your “honor, delicacy or reputation.”

If a street harasser is using indecent or obscene language about you, insulting you, or using racial, sexist, homophobic or transphobic slurs, this kind of verbal harassment may be considered assault.

Penalty: Assault is a petty misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Battery

[Chap. 30, Article 3 §4](#)

Battery in New Mexico is defined as the “unlawful, intentional touching or application of force to the person of another, when done in a rude, insolent or angry manner.”

If a street harasser touches you in a rude, disrespectful or sexual way – such as grabbing you or groping you – you can report him/her.

Penalty: Battery is a petty misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Hate Crimes

Hate Crimes

Chap. 31, Article 3 §18B

In New Mexico, hate crimes are when crimes are motivated because of a person's actual or perceived:

- Race
- Religion
- Color
- National origin
- Ancestry
- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity

Penalty: If there is beyond a reasonable doubt that an offender committed a noncapital felony motivated by hate, the basic sentence of imprisonment for that crime (such as assault) increases by one year.

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 Santa Fe, it is (505) 428-3710 and in Albuquerque, it's (505) 242-COPS or (505) 242-2677. In Las Cruces, it is 575-526-0795. 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 harassment, [NM Stat § 30-3A-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, for example, in [Santa Fe](#), [Albuquerque](#), and [Las Cruces](#) you can use an online form to report some crimes.
- 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 Santa Fe, you can submit a tip via [webform](#) or by calling (505) 955-5050.
 - In Albuquerque, you can do this by calling (505) 843-STOP, texting the number 274637 (CRIMES) and beginning the message with "APD" or by submitting via [webform](#).

- In Las Cruces, you can do this by calling 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) or by texting the number CRIMES (274637) and beginning the message with “LCTIPS”.
- 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.

New York

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

Verbal Harassment

There are five laws that prohibit some form of verbal harassment in New York.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title N, Article 240 §20](#)

New York State has a broad law against “disorderly conduct;” prohibited actions relevant to street harassment include:

- Fighting or violent, tumultuous or threatening behavior.
- Unreasonable noise.
- Abusive or obscene language or obscene gestures in a public place.
- Obstructing vehicular or pedestrian traffic.
- Congregating with a group in a public place and refusing to comply with a lawful police officer’s order to disperse.
- Creating a hazardous or physically offensive condition by an act that serves no legitimate purpose.

Examples of street harassment that might be considered disorderly conduct in New York include yelling sexist or homophobic comments, using obscene, offensive, or lewd language, or someone blocking your path on the sidewalk or in the street. If you experience any of these, you can report the harasser.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a violation and carries a fine of up to \$250 and/or up to 15 days in jail.

Harassment in the Second Degree

[Title N, Article 240 §25](#)

The law against harassment in New York prohibits a “course of conduct” or repeatedly committing acts that alarm or seriously annoy another person and serve no legitimate purpose.

A course of conduct means a series of actions over time that evidence a continuity of purpose.

If the same person makes alarming, seriously annoying, or threatening comments or takes other seriously alarming actions toward you at least twice, and/or subjects you to unwanted physical contact, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Harassment in the second degree is a violation in New York and punishable by a fine of up to \$250 and/or up to 15 days in jail.

Loitering

[Title N, Article 240 §35 – 36](#)

It is illegal for a person to loiter:

- On or about the premises of a school, college, university, school bus, or children’s summer camp facility without legitimate business to be there.
- In public places to gamble or play cards or dice.
- In a public transportation facility without a permit for the purpose of selling merchandise or performing.

You can report someone to the police or ask police to have the person disburse if the person is:

- Hanging out near any school, school bus stop, summer camp or institution of higher education and s/he is harassing you or other passerby.
- Involved in gambling, gaming, or illegally selling merchandise while harassing you or someone else.

Penalty: Loitering near a school, in a public transportation facility, or while gambling in public is a violation and carries a fine of up to \$250 and/or up to 15 days in jail.

Loitering for the Purpose of Prostitution

[Title N, Article 240 §37](#)

It is illegal for anyone to either loiter in a public place for the purpose of soliciting a prostitute or to actually request the services of a prostitute. 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.

Penalty: Loitering for the purpose of prostitution is a violation, punishable by a fine of up to \$250 and/or up to 15 days in jail.

Patronizing a Prostitute

[Title M, Article 230 §5](#)

There is also a statute that prohibits soliciting prostitution as a separate crime from loitering. It is illegal for anyone to solicit or request another person to engage in sexual conduct.

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: Patronizing a prostitute is a Class A misdemeanor if the person patronized is over 14 years of age, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to one year imprisonment. The penalties are more severe if the person being patronized is less than 14 years of age, or less than 11 years of age.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Unlawful Surveillance in the Second Degree

[Title N, Article 250 § 45](#)

In New York, it is illegal for someone to intentionally photograph or film:

- A non-consenting person if it exposes that person's sexual or intimate parts or the person is dressing or undressing, and if it is done under circumstances when that person has 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.

- A non-consenting person under the clothing that person is wearing.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Unlawful surveillance in the second degree is a Class E felony, punishable by up to four years in prison.

Indecent Exposure

Exposure of a Person

[Title N, Article 245 §1](#)

Anyone who appears in public with the private or intimate parts of his/her body exposed or unclothed is guilty of exposure of a person.

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, you can report that person.

Penalty: Exposure is a violation punishable by a fine of up to \$250 and/or up to 15 days in jail.

Public Lewdness

[Title N, Article 245 § 00](#)

Public lewdness occurs when a harasser, with the intent that s/he be observed, intentionally exposes the private or intimate parts of his or her body in a lewd manner or commits a lewd act in a public place or on private premises under circumstances that readily allow the actions to be viewed either from a public place or from other private premises.

Flashing or exposing oneself deliberately with the intent that you see the person is public lewdness and you can report that person.

Penalty: Public lewdness is a class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to three 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.

Harassment in the First Degree

Title N, Article 240 §25

New York's harassment law prohibits anyone from repeatedly and intentionally harassing another person by following that person around a public place.

If a harasser follows you at least twice, you can report that person.

Penalty: Harassment in the first degree is a class B misdemeanor and may be punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to three months in jail.

Stalking

Title H, Article 120 §45, 50, 55, 60

Stalking is illegal in New York, and the actions that constitute the crimes of harassment and stalking are similar. However, the statute prohibiting stalking focuses much more on the fear created by a harasser's actions than on the act of being harassed or followed.

If the harasser causes you serious fear of bodily harm or repeatedly interferes with your life so as to jeopardize your employment or harm your mental health, s/he may be found guilty of stalking.

Penalty: Most stalking will fall under the law stalking in the fourth degree, which is a Class B misdemeanor. It may be punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to three months in jail.

Groping

Aggravated Harassment in the Second Degree

Title N, Article 240 § 30

In New York, it is illegal to have physical contact like striking, shoving, or kicking with the "intent to harass, annoy, threaten or alarm" someone and because of the targeted person's belief or perception (correct or not) about any of the following factors:

- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Race
- Color
- National origin
- Ancestry
- Religion or religious practice
- Age

If a harasser gives you any reason to believe that their physical harassment of you is based on one of these biases, such as using a slur based on your gender, race, or sexual orientation, you can report this to the police.

Penalty: Aggravated harassment in the second degree is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to one year imprisonment. Penalties for the various types of harassment will be more severe if the person has been convicted of harassment before.

Forcible Touching

[Title H, Article 130 §52](#)

It is illegal in New York for a person to intentionally and for no legitimate purpose forcibly touch the sexual or intimate parts of another person's body in order to satisfy his or her sexual desire or to degrade or abuse that pers.

The law expressly states that forcible touching includes squeezing, grabbing, or pinching. Article 130, where this section appears, also expressly states that lack of consent is an element of this offense, and that lack of consent results from forcible compulsion, incapacity to consent, *and/or* any circumstances in which you do not expressly or impliedly acquiesce to the person's conduct.

If anyone touches you in a sexual way (such as grabbing your butt or breasts) against your will in a public place like the on the street, at a bus stop, or in a bar, you can report that person.

Penalty: Forcible touching is a Class A misdemeanor and is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to one year imprisonment.

Hate Crimes

Hate Crimes

[Title Y, Article 485 §5](#)

New York State specifies that certain crimes are hate crimes when the victim of the crime is selected because of certain prejudices. The list of particular crimes includes stalking and harassment, as well as assault and rape.

If someone harasses, stalks, or assaults you because of the following characteristics, s/he may have committed a hate crime in addition to the original offense:

- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Race
- Color
- National origin
- Ancestry
- Religion or religious practice
- Age

An example of a hate crime in the context of street harassment would be someone following you and shouting something like, "Don't you know you shouldn't be here because you're [a woman/gay/black/white/latina/etc.]? I should [violent threat] so you'll stay inside."

When reporting a hate crime, report the crime that was committed – harassment, stalking, etc. – and the indication that the crime was motivated by bias, citing any slurs or gendered insults the harasser might have used.

Penalty: If a court finds that the crime committed was also a hate crime, the penalty for that crime will be elevated according the rules prescribed in [Article 485 §10](#) of the New York State Penal Code.

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 York City, you can call (800) 577-TIPS and in Syracuse, you call 315-442-5111. 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 forcible touching, [Title H, Article 130 §52](#). 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's website.
- 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 New York City, you can text "TIP577" plus your message to "CRIMES" (274637).
 - In Albany, you text "APDTips" and the tip information to 847411. In Buffalo you can submit your tip anonymous [online](#).
- In New York City, you can also report street harassment through the free Hollaback! [iPhone app](#) to your city council member for tracking purposes. You still have to contact the police separately.
- 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.

For Transgender and Gender Non-Confirming Individuals: Dealing With Police in New York City

As a transgender or gender non-conforming individual, you may have very valid concerns about interacting with police. Police in New York City have harassed law abiding transgender individuals in the past, and police can be street harassers themselves.

As of June 2012, the NYPD has new policies for appropriate police conduct regarding gender identity. You have the right to be free from street harassment and to be treated with respect by police. If you do have to interact with the NYPD, whether to report a crime or because an officer has stopped or harassed you, learn more about your rights in Make The Road New York's report "[Transgressive Policing: Police Abuse of LGBTQ Communities of Color in Jackson Heights](#)" (PDF, trigger warning for possibly upsetting content).

North Carolina

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

Verbal Harassment

In North Carolina, there are three laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

Disorderly Conduct

[N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-288.4](#)

North Carolina's disorderly conduct law states that it is illegal to make or use any utterance, gesture, display or abusive language that is intended to and likely to provoke violent retaliation.

This is what is known as a "[fighting words](#)" law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment.

If a harasser says something particularly offensive or provoking, you can still try using this law, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class 2 misdemeanor, punishable by up to 30 days in jail, a fine of up to \$1,000, or both.

Intoxicated and Disruptive in Public

[N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-444](#)

Being drunk and disruptive in public in North Carolina by blocking people's way on sidewalks or into a building, cursing or rudely insulting others, or grabbing or shoving people is illegal.

If a street harasser is clearly drunk and doing any of these things to you or someone else, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Intoxicated and disruptive in public is a Class 3 misdemeanor, punishable by up to 10 days in jail, up to \$200, or both.

Using Profane or Indecent Language on Public Highways

[N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-197](#)

It is illegal in North Carolina for anyone, in the hearing of at least two people, to use indecent or profane language while on any public road or highway. (This law does not state it explicitly, but we assume it includes sidewalks).

If a harasser is loudly using sexual language or profanity (such as, "You f---ing bitch" and "Go to hell, fags") and at least one other person besides you hears the harasser, you can report him or her under this law.

Penalty: Using profane or indecent language is a Class 3 misdemeanor, punishable by up to 10 days in jail, up to \$200, or both.

Unlawful Photographing

Secretly Peeping into Room Occupied by Another Person

[N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-202](#)

In North Carolina, it is illegal for anyone to intentionally photograph a non-consenting person through or underneath his/her clothing for the purpose of viewing that person's body or underwear.

If a harasser photographs you someplace like public restrooms, dressing rooms, locker rooms, and hotel rooms, or if someone takes an up-skirt photo of you or takes photographs of your breasts, butt, and genitals or your underwear without your consent, you can report that person.

Penalty: Unlawful photographing is a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by up to 45 days in jail and/or a fine made at the discretion of the court.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-190.9](#)

It is illegal in North Carolina for a person to intentionally expose his or her private parts in any public place when others are present.

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, you can report that person.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a Class 2 misdemeanor, punishable by up to 30 days in jail, a fine of up to \$1,000, 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

[N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-277.3A](#)

A person can be convicted of stalking in North Carolina if, on more than one occasion, s/he engages in conduct directed at another person with the intent to place or when s/he knows or reasonably should know that the conduct places that other person in reasonable fear of personal safety or causes that person substantial emotional distress by making that person fear death, injury, or continued harassment.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class A1 misdemeanor, punishable by up to 60 days in jail and/or a fine made at the discretion of the courts. The penalty increases for repeat offenders.

Groping

Sexual Battery

[N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-27.5A](#)

It is illegal for anyone to have sexual contact with another person by force and without the consent of that person, for the purpose of sexual arousal, sexual gratification, or sexual abuse.

If anyone touches you in a sexual way against your will in a public place like the street, bus stop, or in a bar, you can report that person.

Penalty: Sexual battery is a Class A1 misdemeanor, punishable by up to 60 days in jail and/or a fine made at the discretion of the courts. The penalty increases for repeat offenders.

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 Raleigh, it is 919-996-3335 and in Charlotte, it's 311 if you're within city limits. In Asheville, it's (828) 252-1110. 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 sexual battery, [N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-27.5A](#). 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.
 - [Raleigh](#) has an online webform that allows you to report crimes like harassing phone calls.
 - [Charlotte](#) has an online reporting form that allows to you report crimes like communicating threats.

- Some police departments also allow you to anonymously text a tip about a crime, for example if you see a group of people routinely harassing passersby at the same location. Visit your local police department website for information.
 - Raleigh allows you to submit a tip anonymously by calling 919-834-HELP (4357).
 - In Asheville, you can call 828.255.5050 or text the number 274637 (CRIMES) and begin the message with “APDTIP”.
 - [TipSubmit](#) is also available to over 20 counties in North Carolina.
- 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.

North Dakota

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

Verbal Harassment

In North Dakota, there are four laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment. There is a general harassment law in the state (N.D.C.C. § 12.1-17-07) but it only applies to harassment made via telephone, writing, or electronic communication.

Disorderly Conduct

[N.D.C.C. § 12.1-31-01](#)

North Dakota's disorderly conduct law encompasses several types of street harassment. Under the law, it is illegal for anyone to:

- Make intrusive or unwanted acts, words, or gestures that are intended to adversely affect the safety, security, or privacy of another person.
- Persistently follow a person around a public place
- Solicit sexual contact
- Use abusive or obscene language
- Make an obscene gesture
- Flash someone
- Make unreasonable noise.

If a street harasser is being excessively loud, such as shouting, or says or does anything that is obscene (including using sexual explicit language), follows you, or invades your privacy (such as persistently asking for your phone number, name, or a date after you've said no), you can report that person.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by up to 30 days in prison, a fine of up to \$1,500, or both.

Terrorizing

[N.D.C.C. § 12.1-17-0.4](#)

It is illegal in North Dakota for anyone to intentionally place another person in fear for that person's safety or to cause a serious disruption or public inconvenience by threatening to commit a crime.

If a street harasser is making threats or using threatening behavior (such as following you or standing really close to you while saying things that make you feel uncomfortable) that make you fear the person will harm you, you can report that person.

Additionally, if the person is making threats to many people or otherwise acting in such a way that many people are worried that person will attack or harm them, you can report the person.

Penalty: Terrorizing is a Class C felony punishable by up to five years in prison, a fine of \$10,000, or both.

Menacing

[N.D.C.C. § 12.1-17-0.5](#)

It is similarly illegal for a person in North Dakota to make, or attempt to make, someone afraid of bodily injury.

If someone follows you, makes threats, or does other acts that make you feel afraid for your safety, you can report that person.

Penalty: Menacing is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in prison, a fine of up to \$3,000, or both.

Hiring an Individual to Engage in Sexual Activity

[N.D.C.C. § 12.1-29-0.6](#)

Offering to hire someone for sex is illegal in North Dakota. If a street harasser solicits sexual activity from you, you can report him/her. The law requires that the person must really intend to engage in sexual activity, such as trying to get the person in his or her car or waving money at the person.

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: Offering to hire someone for sex is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by up to 30 days in jail, a fine of up to \$1,500, or both.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Surreptitious Intrusion

[N.D.C.C. § 12.1-20-12.2](#)

In North Dakota, it is illegal for anyone to intentionally film or photograph a non-consenting person with the intention of interfering or intruding upon that person's privacy.

This law is specific harassers who film and photograph in tanning booths, dressing rooms, hotel rooms, and other locations where a person should expect to have privacy. If this happens to you, you can report that person.

The law does not include actions like up-skirt photos or recording you without your permission in a public place.

Penalty: Surreptitious intrusion is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in prison, a fine of up to \$3,000, or both. It rises to a class C felony if the person is a repeat offender, punishable by up to five years in prison, a fine of \$10,000, or both.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[N.D.C.C. § 12.1-20-12.1](#)

It is illegal in North Dakota for a person to intentionally expose his or her private parts or to masturbate in a public place when others are present.

If a harasser flashes you or exposes him or herself to you in a public place, such as a park, on public transportation, or in a store, you can report that person.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in prison, a fine of up to \$3,000, or both. It rises to a Class C felony if the person is a repeat offender, punishable by up to five years in prison, a fine of \$10,000, 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

[N.D.C.C. § 12.1-17-0.1](#)

A person can be convicted of stalking if, on more than one occasion, s/he engages in conduct directed at another person which frightens, intimidates, or harasses that person and serves no legitimate purpose.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is a class C felony, punishable by up to five years in prison, a fine of \$10,000, or both.

Groping

Sexual Assault

[N.D.C.C. § 12.1-20-12.7](#)

In North Dakota, sexual assault includes:

- Forced sexual contact that is offensive.
- Sexual contact when the person cannot give consent because of mental illness or being impaired by substances.
- Sexual contact when that person is under 15 years old and the assailant is an adult.

Sexual contact is defined in North Dakota as meaning “any touching, whether or not through the clothing or other covering, of the sexual or other intimate parts of the person, or the penile ejaculation or ejaculate or emission of urine or feces upon any part of the person, for the purpose of arousing or satisfying sexual or aggressive desires.”

If anyone touches you in a sexual way against your will in a public place like the street, bus stop, or in a bar, or ejaculates onto you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Sexual assault is a Class C felony, punishable by up to five years in prison, a fine of \$10,000, 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 Bismarck, it's (701) 223-1212 and in Fargo it is (701) 235-4493. In Minot, it is (701) 852-0111.. 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 Disorderly Conduct, [N.D.C.C. § 12.1-31-01](#). 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 by which you can submit the same information listed in #2.

- 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 Fargo, you can do this by calling (701) 241-5777, texting (701) 730-8888, or submitting your tip via [webform](#).
 - In Minot, you can do this by calling 85-CRIME (27463) or by submitting your tip via [webform](#).
 - In Bismarck, you can do this by calling (701) 224-TIPS (8477) or by submitting via [webform](#)

- 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.

Ohio

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

Verbal Harassment

There are two laws that prohibit some forms of verbal harassment in Ohio. There is a law against harassment in Ohio (§2917.21), but it only applies to harassment by phone.

Compelling Prostitution

Title 29, Chapter 2907 § 21

It is illegal in Ohio for anyone to solicit, request, or otherwise facilitate or pay a minor – or someone one believed to be a minor – to engage in sexual activity. 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.

If someone solicits you to engage in sexual activity and you are a minor, or this happens to a young person you care for, you can report the harasser.

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: Compelling prostitution is a felony of the third degree, punishable by a prison term of between nine months and three years.

Disorderly Conduct

Title 29, Chapter 2917 § 11

Ohio’s disorderly conduct law prohibits people from:

- Making unreasonable noise.
- Making an offensively course utterance or gesture.
- Insulting or taunting someone under circumstances likely to provoke a violent response.
- Preventing someone from moving along a public street or from entering/leaving a public or private property.

If a harasser is using sexually explicit or other offensive language, taunting you, shouting loudly at you, or stops you from using the sidewalk or entering a store or another public place, you can report him/her.

The prohibition of language likely to provoke a violent response is what is known as a “[fighting words](#)” law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a minor misdemeanor, punishable by a fine. If the offense is committed near a school or in a school safety zone, it is a misdemeanor in the fourth degree, punishable by up to 30 days in jail.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Voyeurism

[Title 29, Chapter 2907 § 8](#)

In Ohio, it is illegal for a person to photograph or record a non-consenting person:

- While that person is naked and with the purpose of sexual arousal.

If a harasser films or photographs you someplace like public restrooms, dressing rooms, locker rooms, and hotel rooms, you can report him/her.
- Under or through his/her clothing for the purpose of viewing that person's body or underwear.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Taking photos or recording someone naked is a misdemeanor in the second degree, punishable by up to 90 days in prison. If the person is a minor, it is a felony in the fifth degree, punishable by between six and 12 months. If someone takes a photo under or through someone's clothing, that is a misdemeanor in the first degree, punishable by up to 180 days in prison.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Title 29, Section 2907 § 9](#)

In Ohio it is illegal for anyone to:

- Recklessly expose his or her private parts.
- Engage in sexual conduct.
- Masturbate.
- Engage in conduct that would appear to be masturbation or sexual conduct to an ordinary observer under circumstances in which the person's conduct is likely to be viewed by and to affront others in the person's physical proximity.

If a harasser flashes you, exposes him or herself to you, or masturbates near/at you in a public place, such as a park, on public transportation, or in a store, you can report that person.

Penalty: Flashing or exposure is a misdemeanor of the fourth degree, punishable by up to 30 days in jail. Masturbation and other sexual conduct in public is a misdemeanor in the third degree, punishable by up to 60 days in prison.

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.

Menacing by Stalking

[Title 29, Section 2903 § 211](#)

Under Ohio's stalking law, it is illegal for anyone to engage in a pattern of conduct that causes another person to believe the harasser will cause him or her physical harm or mental distress.

If the same person follows or harasses you at least twice and those actions make you fearful or distressed, you can report that person under this law.

Penalty: Menacing by stalking is a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable by up to 180 days in prison. It can rise to a more serious crime if the person being stalked is a minor or if the harasser is a repeat offender or has a history of violence against the person s/he is stalking.

Groping

Sexual Imposition

[Title 29, Section 2907 § 6](#)

It is illegal for anyone to have sexual contact with another person if s/he knows that the sexual contact is offensive to that person or if that person is unable to give consent or to realize what is happening.

Sexual contact is defined in Ohio as touching the thigh, genitals, buttock, pubic region, or, if the person is a female, a breast, for the purpose of sexually arousing or gratifying either person.

If a harasser touches or grabs you or rubs against you on an intimate or private part of your body without your consent, be it at a bar, on the bus, or on the street, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Sexual imposition is a misdemeanor of the third degree, punishable by up to 60 days 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.
 - In Dayton, it is (937) 333-COPS (2677).
 - In Cincinnati, it is 513-765-1212.
 - In Cleveland, it is 216-621-1234.
 - In Columbus, it is 614-645-4545.

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 sexual imposition. 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 Central Ohio, you can submit a tip by calling (614) 461-8477 or 1-877-645-8477, texting "CMH PLUS YOUR TIP" to the number 274637 (CRIMES), or via [webform](#).
 - In the Miami Valley area, you can do this by calling (937) 222-STOP or 1-800-637-5735, texting the word "TIP400" followed by your message to CRIMES (274637), or via [webform](#).
 - 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.

Oklahoma

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

Verbal Harassment

In Oklahoma, there are four laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

Disturbance by Loud or Unusual Noise

[Okla. Stat. Title 21, § 1362](#)

It is illegal in Oklahoma to willfully cause a disturbance in a public place through:

- Loud noise
- Abusive, violent, obscene or profane language
- Threatening violence
- Fighting or quarreling

You can report someone who is using racial, homophobic and sexist slurs or sexually explicit comments against you or someone else, or making threats to hurt you. You can also use this law if a harasser is shouting or loudly harassing you.

Penalty: Disturbance by loud or unusual noise is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$100, and/or imprisonment in the county jail for up to 30 days.

Disturbing the Public Peace

[Okla. Stat. Title 21, § 22](#)

Willfully engaging in acts that “outrage public decency” or “grossly disturbs the public peace” is illegal in Oklahoma.

Many actions and comments of street harassers make could qualify as outraging public decency when they involve sexually explicit remarks, sexual demands, and/or insults. If a street harasser is using this kind of indecent language toward you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disturbing the public peace is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$100, imprisonment in the county jail for up to 30 days, or both.

Offensive Language

[Okla. Stat. Title 21, § 1363](#)

It is illegal to use profane, violent, abusive, and insulting language toward another person when it is intended to make that person angry or disturb the peace.

Calling someone a racial, sexist, or homophobic slur could fall under this law. If a street harasser is speaking to you this way, you can report him/her.

- Because it mentions making someone angry or disturbing the peace, it a “[fighting words](#)” law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Offensive language is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$100, imprisonment in the county jail for up to 30 days, or both.

Soliciting Prostitution

[Okla. Stat. Title 21, § 1029](#)

Soliciting, inducing, or enticing someone to commit prostitution is illegal in Oklahoma. 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 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$100, imprisonment in the county jail for up to 30 days, or both. If the person being solicited is younger than 16 years old, it is a felony and the Penalty can be up to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$5,000. It is also a felony to solicit prostitution within 1,000 feet of a church or school.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Peeping Tom

[Okla. Stat. Title 21, § 1171](#)

In Oklahoma, it is illegal for anyone to photograph or film a non-consenting person if the image exposes the private areas of his/her body and if it is done under circumstances when the person would expect that part of his/her body would not be visible to the public.

If a harasser films or photographs you someplace like a public restroom, dressing room, locker room, or hotel room, or if the harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you in a public place like a bus or a bar, you can report that person.

Penalty: Peeping Tom is a misdemeanor, punishable by up to a year in the county jail or a fine of up to \$5,000 or both.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Okla. Stat. Title 21, § 1021 \(A04\)](#)

It is illegal in Oklahoma for a person to willfully expose his or her private parts in any public place when others are present who may be offended or annoyed.

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, you can report that person.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a felony, punishable by a fine of at least \$500 or by imprisonment for at least 30 days, 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

[Okla. Stat. Title 21, § 1173](#)

Stalking is illegal in Oklahoma. A person can be convicted of stalking if, on more than one occasion, s/he follows or harasses another person in a way that would cause a “[reasonable](#)” person to feel frightened, intimidated, threatened, or harassed and actually causes the person to feel these emotions.

This means, if at least two times a harasser follows you or approaches you to harass you and you feel scared or threatened, you can report him/her under the stalking law.

Penalty: Stalking is a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment in the county jail for up to one year or a fine of up to \$1,000, or both.

Groping

Sexual Battery

[Okla. Stat. Title 21 § 1123-J](#)

It is illegal for anyone to intentionally touch, mau, or feel a non-consenting person’s body in a lewd or lascivious manner.

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/her.

It is also illegal for anyone to ejaculate upon or in the presence of anyone under 16 years old or force someone under 16 years old to look at or touch someone’s private parts. If you are under 15 years of age or younger and this happens to you (or to a young person you care for) you can report the harasser.

Penalty: Sexual battery is a felony, punishable by up to five years in the State Penitentiary. The imprisonment can be as long as 20 years if the harassed person is under 16 years old and the harasser is at least three years older.

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 Oklahoma City, it is 405-231-2121 and in Tulsa it is (918) 596-9222. In Norman, it is (405) 321-1600. 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 Stalking, 21, § 1173. 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, [Tulsa](#) and [Norman](#) have online reporting forms that allow you to report crimes such as harassment.
- Some police departments also allow you to anonymously text a tip about a crime, 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 Oklahoma City, you can do this by calling 405-235-7300 or 1-800-632-TIPS, texting 405-415-5666, or via [webform](#).
 - For the state of Oklahoma, [Crimestoppers](#) has a webform that allows you to report tips from over 15 counties in the state.
- 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.

Oregon

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

Verbal Harassment

In Oregon, there are three laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

Disorderly Conduct in the Second Degree

[Or. Rev. Stat. § 166.025](#)

In Oregon, it is illegal for anyone, with the intent of causing a public inconvenience or annoyance or alarm, to engage in threatening behavior, create a hazardous or physically offensive condition, or make unreasonable noise.

While this law does not specify typical street harassment behavior, you can use it to report a harasser who is:

- Threatening you
- Shouting loudly while harassing you and/or others
- Congregating with other harassers in a way that creates an alarming situation for you to pass them on the street or stand near them (such as if you're waiting for a bus).

Penalty: Disorderly conduct in the second degree is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by up to six months in jail, a fine of up to \$3,500, or both.

Harassment

[Or. Rev. Stat. § 166.065](#)

Oregon's general harassment law is pretty narrow and does not address most types of street harassment. The aspects of the law most relevant to street harassment is "Publicly insulting such other person by abusive words or gestures in a manner intended and likely to provoke a violent response," and offensive physical contact.

The prohibition of public insults likely to provoke violence is what is known as a "[fighting words](#)" law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it if a harasser public insults you. If enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

You can also report someone who makes any offensive physical contact with you, such as grabbing your arm or [groping you](#).

Penalty: Harassment is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in prison, up to a \$6,250 fine, or both.

Intimidation in the Second Degree

[Or. Rev. Stat. § 166.155](#)

This law prohibits intentionally alarming someone by threatening physical injury or property damage based on a person's:

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- National origin
- (Notably, sex and gender are excluded).

If someone is verbally harassing you and also makes threats related to your race, ethnicity, orientation, or another protected characteristic, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Intimidation in the Second Degree is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in prison, up to a \$6,250 fine, or both.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Invasion of Personal Privacy

[Or. Rev. Stat. § 163.700](#)

In Oregon, it is illegal for someone to photograph or film you without your consent if you are in a state of nudity and under circumstances when you would have a reasonable expectation of personal privacy. This includes filming and photographing in restrooms, dressing rooms, locker rooms, hotel rooms, and other similar locations.

While the law does not explicitly prohibit this, you can also report a street harasser who takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way,

Penalty: Invasion of personal privacy is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in prison, up to a \$6,250 fine, or both.

Indecent Exposure

Public Indecency

[Or. Rev. Stat. § 163.454](#)

It is illegal in Oregon for a person to intentionally expose his or her private parts, with the intent of sexual arousal, in any public place when others are present.

If a harasser flashes you or exposes him or herself to you in a public place, such as a park, on public transportation, or in a store, you can report that person.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in prison, up to a \$6,250 fine, or both. It rises to a Class C felony if the person is a repeat offender.

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

[Or. Rev. Stat. § 163.732](#)

A person can be convicted of stalking in Oregon if, on more than one occasion, s/he has unwanted contact with someone, including by following the person or speaking to the person, and that contact makes the person fear for his/her safety.

If a harasser follows you or approaches you to harass you at least two times and you feel scared or threatened, you can report him or her for stalking.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class C felony, punishable by up to five years in prison, up to \$125,000 fine, or both.

Groping

Sexual Abuse in the Third Degree

[Or. Rev. Stat. § 163.415](#)

It is illegal for anyone to subject another person to sexual contact without that person's consent. It is also illegal under this law for someone to purposely put blood, urine, semen, or feces on someone without that person's consent.

In Oregon, sexual contact means "any touching of the sexual or other intimate parts of a person" or causing someone to touch the harasser's intimate areas.

If a harasser grabs or touches you on the street, in a park, on a bus, or some other public place in a way that offends you, or ejaculates onto you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Sexual Abuse in the Third Degree is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in prison, up to a \$6,250 fine, 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 Portland, it is 503-823-3333 and in Salem, it is 503-588-6123. In Eugene, it is 541-682-5111. 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, Section 163.454 Public Indecency. 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, [Portland](#) and [Eugene](#) allow you to submit an online report for crimes like suspicious activity or behaviors, or public disturbance and disorderly conduct. Eugene allows you to remain anonymous when filing these types of reports.
 - Some police departments also allow you to anonymously text a tip about a crime, for example if you see a group of people routinely harassing passersby at the same location. Visit your local police department website for information.
 - The state of Oregon has a Crimestoppers program, which allows you to do this by either calling 503-823-HELP, texting 823HELP + your tip to 274637 (CRIMES), or submitting via [webform](#).
 - 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.

Pennsylvania

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in Pennsylvania, 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 three laws in Pennsylvania that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment. Pennsylvania also protects against ethnic intimidation. If a harasser has intimidated you based on your race, color, religion, or national origin, you can include this information in your report.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 18, Chap. 55 § 5503](#)

Disorderly conduct in Pennsylvania includes the following conduct if it is done with the intent to cause public inconvenience, annoyance, or alarm, or recklessly creates a risk thereof:

- Making unreasonable noise.
- Using obscene language or making an obscene gesture.
- Engaging in “fighting or threatening, or in violent or tumultuous behavior.”
- Creating a hazardous or physically offensive condition by an act that serves no legitimate purpose.

Examples of street harassment that may be considered disorderly conduct in Pennsylvania include shouting, cursing, making obscene or lewd gestures, or even following you if done in a threatening or physically offensive way, and you can report it to the police.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a third-degree misdemeanor, punishable by up to 1 year in jail, “if the intent of the actor is to cause substantial harm or serious inconvenience, or if he persists in disorderly conduct after reasonable warning or request to desist.” Without this established intent, disorderly conduct is a summary offense, punishable by up to 90 days in jail.

Harassment

[Title 18, Chapter 27, § 2709](#)

In Pennsylvania, the general harassment law includes a variety of actions. The following prohibited conduct is relevant to street harassment, if done with intent to harass, annoy or alarm another:

- Following someone in or about a public place.
- Striking, shoving, kicking or otherwise subjecting someone to physical contact, or attempting or threatening to do so.
- Engaging in a course of conduct or repeatedly committing acts which serve no legitimate purpose.
- Communicating to or about someone any lewd, lascivious, threatening or obscene words, language, drawings or caricatures.

This statute defines “course of conduct” as “a pattern of actions composed of more than one act over a period of time, however short, evidencing a continuity of conduct.”

If a harasser follows you, uses sexually explicit or obscene language, has some physical contact with you, or repeatedly commits acts which serve no legitimate purpose, you can report that person.

Penalty: Harassment is a summary offense in the state of Pennsylvania, punishable by up to 90 days in prison. Using lewd, lascivious, threatening or obscene language is a third-degree misdemeanor, punishable by up to 1 year in prison.

Loitering and Prowling at Night Time

[Title 18, Chap. 55 §5506](#)

It is illegal in Pennsylvania to “maliciously” loiter or “prowl” near a home or homes that are not your own.

If a street harasser is loitering in a residential area and doing something that strikes you as malicious or that scares you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Loitering and prowling at night time is a third-degree misdemeanor, punishable by up to 1 year in jail.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Invasion of Privacy

[Title 18, Chap. 75 § 7507.1](#)

In Pennsylvania, it is illegal for anyone to photograph or film a non-consenting person:

- In a state of full or partial nudity, in a place where the person would reasonably expect privacy.

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

- On the intimate parts his/her body, whether or not the parts are covered by clothing, when the person does not intend those parts to be visible by normal public observation.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Invasion of privacy is a misdemeanor of the third degree, punishable by up to 1 year in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Title 18, Chap. 31 § 3127](#)

A person commits indecent exposure if that person exposes or flashes his or her genitals in any public place (or in any place where there are other people present) under circumstances in which s/he knows, or should know, that this conduct is likely to offend, affront or alarm.

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, you can report that person for indecent exposure.

Penalty: In general, indecent exposure is a second-degree misdemeanor in Pennsylvania, punishable by up to 2 years in prison. But take note of whether there are children present and include this in your report to the police. If the person knows, or should have known, that anyone under 16 years of age is present, indecent exposure is a first-degree misdemeanor, punishable by up to 5 years in prison.

Open Lewdness

[Title 18, Chap. 59 § 5901](#)

In addition to the law prohibiting indecent exposure, Pennsylvania has another, less specific law against lewd acts in public. It reads: “A person commits open lewdness if s/he does any lewd act which s/he knows is likely to be observed by others who would be affronted or alarmed.”

A lewd act is not defined in the statute, but you may be able to report a harasser under this law for conduct that is vulgar – like masturbating under one’s clothes – but isn’t exposing one’s genitals (indecent exposure).

Penalty: Open lewdness is a misdemeanor of the third degree, punishable by up to 1 year 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.

Harassment

[Title 18, Chapter 27, § 2709](#)

As noted under the “Verbal Harassment” section, in Pennsylvania, the general harassment law prohibits following someone in or about a public place.

Unlike other states, this law does not specify that it has to happen more than once, so if a harasser follows you, you can report that person.

Penalty: Harassment is a summary offense in the state of Pennsylvania, punishable by up to 90 days in prison. Using lewd, lascivious, threatening or obscene language is a third-degree misdemeanor, punishable by up to 1 year in prison.

Stalking

[Title 18, Chapter 27, § 2709.1](#)

person commits the crime of stalking in Pennsylvania when s/he engages in a course of conduct (including following or communicating) with someone without that person’s consent and with the intent to place that person in reasonable fear of bodily injury or to cause substantial emotional distress.

The statute defines a “course of conduct” as “a pattern of actions composed of more than one act over a period of time, however short, evidencing a continuity of conduct,” including “lewd,

lascivious, threatening or obscene words, language, drawings, caricatures or actions, either in person or anonymously.”

This means, if the same person follows you or harasses you at least two times and you feel scared or threatened, you can report him or her under the stalking law.

Penalty: Stalking is a first-degree misdemeanor in Pennsylvania, punishable by up to five years in prison.

Groping

Indecent Assault

[Title 18, Chap. 31 § 3126](#)

In Pennsylvania, a person is guilty of indecent assault if, without consent and for the purpose of arousing sexual desire, s/he:

- Has “indecent contact” with someone.
- Causes someone to have indecent contact with him or her.
- Intentionally causes someone to come in contact with seminal fluid, urine, or feces.

Indecent contact is defined as “any touching of the sexual or other intimate parts of the person for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire, in either person.”

If a street harasser touches you in a sexual way, such as grabbing your crotch, butt, or breasts, against your will in a public place, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Indecent assault in general (against an adult) is a second-degree misdemeanor, punishable by up to two years in prison. Indecent assault against someone under 16 years of age *or* by forcible compulsion, by threat of force that would prevent a reasonable person from resisting, while you are unconscious (such as asleep on the bus), or if the harasser knows that you unaware the indecent conduct is occurring, it becomes a first-degree misdemeanor, punishable by up to five years in prison.

Reporting Crimes to the Police

- Call 9-1-1 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 the City of Harrisburg, the number is 717-558-6900; in Philadelphia, call 311. Be prepared to provide them with:
 - When it happened (date and time).
 - Where it happened (street location, store location, bus line or bus stop, etc).
 - Who is reporting (your name, 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 Disorderly Conduct, [Title 18, Chap. 55 § 5503](#).
- A description of the harasser/s.

- Many police departments also have online reporting forms, for example, the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police has an [online reporting form](#).

- 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 Philadelphia you can do this [online](#), by email (tips@phillypolice.com), by phone (215.686.8477), and by text (773847).

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.

Rhode Island

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in Rhode Island, 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 four laws that can apply to various types of verbal harassment in Rhode Island.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 11, Chapter 45, §1](#)

It is illegal for a person to:

- Intentionally make loud and unreasonable noise in a public place or near a private residence which would reasonably disturb an average person.

If a harasser is shouting and otherwise making loud noises in a public space, you can report him or her under this law.

- Block a street, sidewalk, stairway, building entrance, or other places that the public should have access to for no legitimate purpose.

If a harasser or group of harassers is stopping you from using the sidewalk or entering a store because s/he are harassing passersby, or s/he have harassed you there before, you can report him, her, or them.

- Spy on someone else through a window in a private place or to spy on someone in a restroom, locker room, changing room, dressing room, or other place where someone should have privacy.

If this happens to you, you can report the harasser for disorderly conduct.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is punishable by a fine of up to \$500 and/or up to 6 months in jail.

Disorderly Conduct - Profanity

[Title 11, Chapter 11, §5](#)

In Rhode Island, profane swearing and cursing is illegal, so if a harasser is swearing at you as part of the harassment, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct – profanity is punishable by a fine of up to \$5.

Loitering

[Title 11, Chapter 34, §11](#)

It is illegal for someone to loiter on or around school grounds (elementary, vocational, or secondary school) and attempt to engage someone in prostitution or other “indecent acts,” especially if s/he intends to carry out the action on or within 300 yards of school grounds.

If a street harasser is soliciting sexual activity at or near a school, you can report him or her for loitering.

Stop Street Harassment doesn't oppose consensual sex work, but we do think it's never okay to solicit and harass underage youth by their school!

Penalty: Loitering for indecent purposes in or near schools is punishable by a fine of between \$500 and \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Soliciting from Motor Vehicle for Indecent Purposes

[Title 11, Chapter 34.1, §6](#)

If a person in a motor vehicle tries to solicit you for sex or a sex act, while you're on foot or in another vehicle, you can report that person.

Penalty: Soliciting from a motor vehicle for indecent purposes is punishable by a fine up between \$750 and \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Video Voyeurism

[Title 11, Chapter 64, §2](#)

In Rhode Island, it is illegal for a person to videotape or transmit visual images of another person's intimate areas without that person's knowledge and consent and when that person should expect privacy.

If someone videotapes you while you are somewhere like a public restroom, changing room, or a locker room, or if a person takes video footage up your skirt or down your shirt while you're in a public area (such as walking up stairs or riding a bus), you can report him/her.

Penalty: Video voyeurism is punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or up 3 years in prison.

Indecent Exposure

Disorderly Conduct – Indecent Exposure

[Title 11, Chapter 45, §2](#)

In Rhode Island, it is illegal for a person to knowingly expose his or her genitals in the view of others for the purpose of sexual arousal when s/he should know the behavior will cause affront, distress, or alarm to the other person.

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, you can report that person.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct – indecent exposure is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or up to 1 year in jail. Persons convicted of this crime may also have to attend professional counseling.

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

Title 11, Chapter 59, §2

Stalking is illegal in Rhode Island. Stalking is defined as harassing or repeatedly following another person with the intent to place that person in reasonable fear of bodily injury.

If someone follows you at least twice with the intent to make you fear s/he will physically harm you, you can report that person for stalking.

Penalty: Stalking is a felony punishable by up to five years in prison, a fine of up to \$10,000, or both.

Groping

Second Degree Sexual Assault

Title 11, Chapter 37, §5

In Rhode Island, groping is considered second degree sexual assault. This law prohibits anyone from subjecting another person to sexual contact without that person's consent by using force or because the person is unable to give consent due to a disability.

If a harasser grabs or slaps you on an intimate or private part of your body using physical force, or physically forces you to touch him or her on a private part of his or her body, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Second degree sexual assault is punishable by 3 to 15 years in prison. If the person assaulted is a child, the penalty rises to between 6 and 30 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 Providence, this number is (401) 272-3121 and in Newport it is (401) 847-1306. In Warwick, it is (401) 468-4200. 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 Video Voyeurism, Title 11, Chapter 64, Section 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.
 - [Warwick](#) allows you to submit tips via webform, or by calling 401-732-8477.
 - Newport allows you to report by calling 401-846-2606.
- 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.

South Carolina

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in South Carolina, 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 three laws that can apply to various types of verbal harassment in South Carolina.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 16, Chapter 17, Section 530](#)

Disorderly conduct includes:

- Being boisterous or disorderly while in a public place
- Being “grossly intoxicated”
- Using obscene or profane language in a public place or within hearing distance of a school or church.

If a harasser is visibly drunk while harassing you, or is loudly saying obscene comments to you or about you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a misdemeanor and can result in a fine of up to one hundred dollars or imprisonment for up to 30 days.

Harassment in the Second Degree

[Title 16, Chapter 3, Section 1700](#)

In South Carolina, it’s illegal for someone to intentionally, unreasonably, and substantially intrude into the private life of a targeted person more than once and in such a way that it would cause a reasonable person to suffer mental or emotional distress. This includes verbal, written, or electronic contact that is initiated, maintained, or repeated.

If someone has verbally harassed you on multiple occasions (for example, the same person always harasses you at your bus stop or at the park in your neighborhood) and it’s causing you emotional or mental distress, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Harassment in the second degree is a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, a person may be fined up to two hundred dollars, imprisoned for up to thirty days, or both. The penalties can be more severe if the person has a prior conviction or if there was a restraining order in effect to prohibit the harassment.

Soliciting Prostitution

[Title 16, Chapter 15, Section 90](#)

It is illegal in South Carolina for a person to procure or solicit prostitution. 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: For the first offense of soliciting prostitution, a person may face a fine of up to two hundred dollars or confinement in prison for up to thirty days. The penalty rises upon further offense.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Voyeurism

[Title 16, Chapter 17, Section 470](#)

In South Carolina it is illegal for anyone to photograph or record someone without his/her consent or knowledge when it is for the purposes of arousing or gratifying sexual desire and when the person is in a place where s/he would 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.

This law does not address non-consensual sexual photos taken in public spaces, like up-skirt photos on the bus or down-blouse photos in a bar.

Penalty: Voyeurism is a misdemeanor that can result in a fine of up to five hundred dollars or imprisonment for up to three years, or both. Penalties increase upon repeat convictions.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Title 16, Chapter 15, Section 130](#)

It is unlawful for a person to willfully, maliciously, and indecently expose him/herself in a public place, on property of others, or within view of any person on a street or highway.

If a harasser purposely exposes her/himself to you in a public place, on your property or from their property but s/he is purposely making sure people on the street can see, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a misdemeanor a fine made at the discretion of the court or imprisonment for up to three years, 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.

Harassment in the First Degree

[Title 16, Chapter 3, Section 1700](#)

In South Carolina, it's illegal for anyone to intentionally, unreasonably, and substantially intrude into the private life of a targeted person more than once and in such a way that it would cause a reasonable person to suffer mental or emotional distress. This includes following a person from location to location.

If a harasser follows you more than once, you can report him or her under this law.

Penalty: Harassment in the first degree is a misdemeanor and the penalty can be a fine of up to one thousand dollars, imprisonment for up to three years, or both. The penalties can be more severe if the person has a prior conviction or if there was a restraining order in effect to prohibit the harassment.

Groping

Assault and Battery in the Third Degree

[Title 16, Chapter 3, Section 600](#)

South Carolina's assault and battery in the third degree law prohibits injuring someone through the non-consensual touching of the private parts of that person, either under or above clothing, with "lewd and lascivious intent."

If a harasser touches or grabs you on an intimate or private part of your body, either under or above clothes, and moderately injures you or attempts to do so, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Third-degree assault and battery is a misdemeanor that may result in a fine of up to five hundred dollars, imprisonment for up to 30 days, 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 Charleston, this number is (943) 577-7434 and in Greenville it's (864) 271-5333. In Columbia, it's (803) 545-3500. 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 Third-Degree Assault and Battery, Title 16, Chapter 3, Section 600. 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. In Columbia, for example, you can use [this form](#) to report crimes like unlawful communication.
- 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 Charleston, you can do this by using their [Crime Stoppers web form](#), or by calling 1-888-CRIME-SC, or 554-1111.
 - In Columbia and the surrounding areas, you can text the number 274637 and beginning the message with “TIPSC” or by calling the number above. You can also report via [webform](#).
 - [Greenville](#) also allows you to report via webform.
- 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.

South Dakota

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in South Dakota, including verbal harassment, indecent exposure, following, and groping. Here are the laws and reporting procedures you need to know.

Verbal Harassment

There are two laws that prohibit some form of verbal harassment in South Dakota.

Disorderly Conduct

[SDCL § 22-18-35](#)

South Dakota's disorderly conduct law prohibits a person from intentionally causing a public inconvenience, annoyance or alarm to another person or making unreasonable noise.

If a harasser says anything that makes you feel annoyed or alarmed (such as repeatedly asking for your name or phone number after you've said no, or asking where you live), or if the harasser escalates and shouts and otherwise makes loud noises, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class 2 misdemeanor, punishable by 30 days in the county jail or a \$500 fine, or both, but it can rise to a more severe penalty if the harasser is a repeat offender.

Stalking

[SDCL § 22-19A-1](#)

Stalking is illegal in South Dakota. It is illegal for anyone to repeatedly (at least twice) harass another person verbally or by other means, and it is also illegal for someone to make a credible threat with the intention of making another person fear being hurt or killed,

If someone verbally harasses you on at least two different occasions or if a person makes just one threat against you that makes you fear s/he will hurt you and you fear s/he will try to act on these threats, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by one year in the county jail, a \$2,000 fine, or both. If a person is convicted a second time within 10 years, it is a Class 6 felony, punishable by two years imprisonment in the state penitentiary, a fine of \$4,000, or both.

Indecent Exposure

Public Indecency

[SDCL § 22-24-1.1](#)

In South Dakota, it is illegal for a harasser to intentionally expose his or her genitals or buttocks in a public place when s/he knows that doing so is likely to annoy, offend, or alarm another person.

If a harasser flashes you or exposes her or himself to you in a public place like a park, the street, or a bus, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Public indecency is a Class 2 misdemeanor, punishable by 30 days in jail or a \$500 fine, or both. If the harasser is at least 18 years old and that person exposes him or herself to a child who is 13 years or younger, public indecency is a Class 6 felony, punishable by 2 years in prison, a fine of \$4,000, or both. If the harasser flashes a child more than once, it becomes a Class 5 felony, punishable by five years in prison and a fine of \$10,000.

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

[SDCL § 22-19A-1](#)

Stalking is illegal in South Dakota. Under the law, it is illegal for someone to repeatedly (at least twice) harass and purposely and maliciously follow another person.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by one year in the county jail, a \$2,000 fine, or both. If a person is convicted a second time within 10 years, it is a Class 6 felony, punishable by two years imprisonment in the state penitentiary, a fine of \$4,000, or both. It's also a Class 6 felony if the person being stalked is twelve years of age or younger.

Groping

Sexual Contact without Consent

[SDCL § 22 – 22 - 7.4](#)

It is illegal in South Dakota for anyone to have sexual contact with a person who is capable of giving consent without that person's consent.

Sexual contact is defined as any touching, whether under or over clothing, of the genitalia, anus, or (female) breasts of another person for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire.

If a harasser touches or grabs your crotch, butt, or breasts without your consent, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Sexual contact without consent is a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by one year in jail, a \$2,000 fine, or both. The charge rises to a Class 4 felony if the sexual contact was with a person incapable of giving consent because of a physical or mental disability. In this case, the penalty is ten years in prison and a fine of \$10,000.

Hate Crimes

SDCL § 22 – 19B -1

In South Dakota, it is illegal to intentionally intimidate or harass, harm or threaten to harm another person because of that person's:

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Ancestry
- National origin

If a harasser indicates that s/he is committing an act against you – such as following you, threatening you, or putting their hands on you – because of your race, religion, or another protected characteristic, you can report his or her crime and hate to the police. Demonstrating that the crime was committed because of the offender's bias is the key element in determining if something was a hate crime.

Penalty: A hate crime is a Class 6 felony, punishable by two years in prison, a fine of \$4,000, 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 Sioux Falls, this number is (605) 367-7212, in Rapid City it's (605) 394-4131, and in Aberdeen it's (605) 626-7000. 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 Hate Crime, Chapter 22-19B section 1. 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 website 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 Rapid City, you can do this anonymously via an [online form](#) or by texting "RCPD" and your tip to 847411.

- 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.

Tennessee

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

Verbal Harassment

In Tennessee, there are three laws that may apply to some form of verbal street harassment. There is a general law against harassment (Tenn. Code Ann. §39-17-308), but it only applies to harassment done via telephone, writing, or electronic communication.

Disorderly Conduct

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-17-305](#)

In Tennessee, it is considered disorderly conduct for anyone in a public place to make unreasonable noise that interferes with the business of others or to intentionally cause public annoyance or alarm by violent or threatening behavior.

If a street harasser is shouting and otherwise making loud noises, making threats, or engaging in threatening behavior (such as following you or standing really close to you while saying things that make you feel uncomfortable), you can report that person. Additionally, if the harasser is shouting and otherwise making loud noises, you can report him or her under this law.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$50, up to 30 days in jail, or both.

Patronizing Prostitution

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-514](#)

It is illegal to patronize prostitution in Tennessee. 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: Patronizing prostitution is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$500. If patronizing prostitution takes place within 100 feet of a church or 1.5 miles of a school (all public and private schools that conduct classes in grades K-12), the charge rises to a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$1,500 or up to 11 months and 29 days in jail.

Stalking

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 18.2-60.3](#)

A person can be convicted of stalking if, on more than one occasion, s/he harasses another person in a way that would cause a “[reasonable](#)” person to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated, threatened, or harassed.

If you encounter the same harasser multiple times (for example, s/he are often at your bus stop or the corner store where you shop) and the harasser's actions or comments make you feel frightened or intimidated (for example, you worry the person may follow you home or the person's actions make you want to stop going to the bus stop or the store because you feel intimidated), you can report that person under this law.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$1,500 or confinement in prison for up to 11 months and 29 days. It rises to a Class E felony if the harasser is a sex offender. The Penalty then is up to 1.5 years in prison and potentially a fine of up to \$3,000. The penalty can also vary depending on factors like if the harasser has a previous conviction.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Unlawful Photographing in Violation of Privacy

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-605](#)

In Tennessee, it is illegal for anyone to intentionally photograph someone in a place where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy and if:

- The photograph would offend or embarrass the person
- The photograph was taken for the sexual gratification of the photographer

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

While the law does not explicit states this, you can also try to report harassers who take photos up women's skirts/dresses or down their tops while in public places.

Penalty: Unlawful photographing is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$1,500 and/or up to 11 months and 29 days in jail.

Indecent Exposure

Public Indecency

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-511 \(a\)](#)

It is illegal in Tennessee for a person to intentionally expose his or her private parts or engage in any sexual act – including masturbation – in any public place.

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, you can report that person.

Penalty: Public indecency is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$500. It is a Class E felony when the defendant is at least 18 years old and the person being harassed is younger than 13 years old, punishable by up to 1.5 years in prison and/or a fine of up to \$3,000.

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

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 18.2-60.3](#)

Stalking is illegal in Tennessee. A person can be convicted of stalking if, on more than one occasion, s/he has “unconsented contact” with another person.

This means, if at least two times a harasser follows you, approaches you to harass you, or appears at your home or workplace without your permission and harasses you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$1,500 or confinement in prison for up to 11 months and 29 days. It rises to a Class E felony if the harasser is a sex offender. The Penalty then is up to 1.5 years in prison and potentially a fine of up to \$3,000. The penalty can also vary depending on factors like if the harasser has a previous conviction.

Groping

Assault

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-13-101](#)

In Tennessee, assault includes both causing physical injuries and intentionally or knowingly causing physical contact with another person that a “reasonable” person would find extremely offensive or provocative.

If anyone touches the private areas of your body or otherwise touches you in a sexual way against your will in a public place like the street, bus stop, or in a bar, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Assault is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$1,500 and/or up to 11 months and 29 days 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
 - 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 Memphis, it is 901-545-COPS (2677) and in Nashville, it is (615) 862-8600. In Knoxville, it is 865-215-7268. 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 Assault, § 39-13-101. 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.
 - In Memphis, you can do this by calling 901-528-CASH (2274), texting the number 274637 (CRIMES) and beginning the message with "AWARD" or submitting a [webtip](#).
 - In [Nashville](#), you can do this via webform or by completing their [Crimestoppers](#) webform. You can also call 74-CRIME.
 - Some police departments also allow you to anonymously text a tip about a crime, for example if you see a group of people routinely harassing passersby at the same location. Visit your local police department website for information.
 - 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.

Texas

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in Texas, 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 that you can use to report verbal harassment in public places in Texas.

Disorderly Conduct

[Texas Penal Code §42.1](#)

It is illegal for anyone to:

- Intentionally use abusive, indecent, profane, or vulgar language.
- Make an offensive gesture in a public place if it incites a breach of the peace.
- Make unreasonable noise in a public place or abuse or threaten someone in an obviously offensive manner.

If a harasser is using sexually explicit language, making sexual gestures, using profanity against you, or abusive language, or if the person is making a lot of noise or directly threatening you, you can report him/her.

A breach of the peace usually means a violent reaction to the abusive, indecent, or profane language. This law may be interpreted as a “[fighting words](#)” law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using it, and if enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500.

Prostitution

[Texas Penal Code §43.2](#)

It is illegal in Texas for anyone to solicit another person to engage with him or her in some kind of paid sexual conduct in a public place. 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: Prostitution is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a jail term of up to 180 days, a fine of up to \$2,000, or both. There can be a more severe penalty if the harasser is a repeat offender.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Improper Photography or Visual Recording

[Texas Penal Code §21.15](#)

In Texas, it is illegal for a person to photograph or record a non-consenting person in bathrooms or a private dressing room. If a harasser films or photographs you someplace like public restrooms, dressing rooms, locker rooms, and hotel rooms, you can report him/her.

It is also illegal for anyone to photograph or record a non-consenting person in general, with the purpose of arousing or gratifying the sexual desire of themselves or someone else with the photograph or film.

- While the law does not specify examples of places, it may be broad enough to incorporate all public places.
- For example, if someone takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you for the purpose of arousing his/her sexual gratification, you can try reporting him/her.

Penalty: Improper photography or visual recording is a felony that can result in jail time.

Indecent Exposure

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 9, Chapter 42, §1](#)

Texas' law against disorderly conduct covers not only abusive or indecent language, but also some forms of indecent exposure. A person commits disorderly conduct laws if s/he exposes his or her "anus or genitals" in a public place.

If a harasser flashes you, moons you, or otherwise exposes him or herself to you in a public place, such as a park, on public transportation, or in a store, you can report that person.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$500.

Indecent Exposure

[Texas Penal Code §21.8](#)

Someone exposing his or her genitals or buttocks with the intent of arousing or gratifying sexual desire, while in front of another person and without consent, is illegal if it makes the person feel offended or alarmed.

If a street harasser exposes her or himself to you in a particularly alarming, offensive, or threatening way, you can report that person.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a jail term of up to 180 days, a fine of up to \$2,000, or both.

Public Lewdness

[Texas Penal Code §21.7](#)

It is illegal in Texas for anyone to engage in sexual acts in a public place, including all sexual contact.

If a harasser masturbates in front of you or engages in some other inappropriate sexual activity, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Public lewdness is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a jail term of up to one year, a fine of up to \$4,000, 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

[Texas Penal Code §42.72](#)

In Texas, it is illegal for anyone to engage in a course of conduct (at least twice) against a person knowing that their conduct will make him/her feel threatened and fearful of bodily injury – or worse. This includes following someone.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is a felony of the third degree, punishable by two to ten years in prison and/or a fine of up to \$10,000. But the Penalty may be more severe for several reasons, including if the person previously has been convicted of stalking or a similar crime.

Groping

Assault by Contact

[Texas Penal Code §22.1](#)

In Texas, it is illegal for anyone to intentionally or knowingly touch another person in a way that s/he knows that person will regard as offensive or provocative.

If a harasser grabs or touches you in an offensive way on the street, in a park, on a bus, or some other public place, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Assault by contact is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by a jail term of up to one year, a fine of up to \$4,000, or both.

Indecency with a Child

[Texas Penal Code §21.11](#)

It is illegal for anyone to make sexual contact with a child younger than 17 years old, including touching a child inappropriately or making the child touch him or her inappropriately, over or under clothing.

If you are or someone you care for is under 17 years old and a harasser grabs or touches you in a sexual way, or him or her, on the street, in a park, or on a bus, you can report that person.

Penalty: Indecency with a child is a felony in the second degree, punishable by a prison term of two to twenty years and a fine of up to \$10,000.

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, this number is (713) 884-3131 in Houston, (512) 974-5750 in Austin, and (817) 335-4222 in Fort Worth. 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).
 - 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 Voyeurism, Title 76, Chapter 9, Section 702.2. 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, for example, the Austin Police Department has an [iReport online form](#).
- 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 San Antonio, you can send a secure and [anonymous tip online](#) or by using the keyword "SATIP" to "TIP411" (847411).
 - In Dallas, you can call (877) 373-8477 to make an anonymous tip.
- 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.

Utah

A variety of forms of street harassment are illegal in Utah, 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 that you can use to report verbal harassment in public places in Utah.

Disorderly Conduct

[Utah Code §76-9-102](#)

It is illegal for anyone to intentionally or recklessly cause members of the public inconvenience, annoyance, or alarm through violent or threatening behavior or unreasonable noises.

It is also illegal for anyone to refuse to move from a public place after being ordered to do so by police, or to knowingly create a hazardous or physically offensive condition for others for no legitimate purpose.

If a harasser's comments or behavior are annoying or scaring you, or if the harasser is making an excessive amount of noise by yelling at you or others, you can report him/her. You also have the right to ask the person to stop his or her disorderly behavior (if you feel safe to do so).

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is an infraction and the penalty is a fine of up to \$750. If the conduct continues after a request by a person to desist, it is a Class C misdemeanor and the penalty is up to 90 days in jail or a fine of up to \$750.

Threats of Violence

[Utah Code §76-5-107](#)

It is illegal in Utah for anyone to threaten to physically hurt or assault you, even if the person does not act on his/her threat or claims s/he was incapable of carrying out the threat.

If a street harasser threatens to hurt you, you can report that person for threats of violence.

Penalty: A threat of violence is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by up to six months in jail and/or up to a \$1,000 fine.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Voyeurism

[Utah Code §76-9-702.2](#)

In Utah, it is illegal for anyone to intentionally photograph and record a non-consenting person:

- In a place where that person should expect to have privacy.

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

- When s/he should expect to have privacy to not have their intimate body parts seen.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Illegally taking photographs or recording someone without their consent while s/he are in a place where s/he would expect privacy is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by up to six months in jail and/or up to a \$1,000 fine. If the person being harassed is under 14 years old, the penalty rises to a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in jail and a fine of up to \$2,500.

Indecent Exposure

Lewdness

[Utah Code §76-1-702](#)

It is illegal in Utah for anyone to expose his or her genitals, buttocks or breasts (if female), masturbate, or engage in any sex act while in a public place in circumstances in which the person should know the actions will alarm others.

If you see anyone flashing or exposing her or himself in public, such as in a park, on a bus, or on the street, you can report that person.

Penalty: Lewdness is typically a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by up to six months in jail and/or up to a \$1,000 fine. If the harasser exposes himself or herself to someone under the age of 14 years old, lewdness is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in jail and/or a fine of up to \$2,500. Penalties often increase for repeat convictions or if the act is done in conjuncture with another crime – such as sexual battery or assault.

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

[Utah Code §76-5-106.5](#)

Stalking is illegal in Utah. It is illegal for anyone to follow, observe, or threaten someone at least twice in a way that causes him/her to fear for his/her safety or suffer emotional distress. It must be the type of behavior that a person knows or should know would make a [reasonable person](#) afraid or distressed.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe or emotionally distressed, you can report that person.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in jail and a fine of up to \$2,500. It can rise to the level of a felony for several reasons, including if the person has been previously convicted of stalking or a similar crime or if the person used a dangerous weapon.

Groping

Sexual Battery

Utah Code §76-9-702

It is illegal to intentionally touch (under or through clothing) the anus, butt, or any part of the genitals of another person, or the breast of a female, when the person's conduct is under circumstances the person knows or should know will likely cause affront or alarm to the person touched.

If anyone purposely touches the private areas of your body with no regard for your feelings in a public place like the street, bus stop, or in a bar, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Sexual battery is a Class A misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail and/or a fine of up to \$2,500.

Forcible Sexual Abuse

Utah Code §76-5-404

Similarly, it is illegal and classified as forcible sexual abuse if a person touches a non-consenting person's crotch, buttocks, or breasts or causes someone else to do this to him/her without consent, and s/he intend to cause you emotional or physical pain or to gratify his or her own sexual desire.

If anyone touches the private areas of your body or otherwise touches you in a sexual way against your will in a public place like the street, bus stop, or in a bar, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Forcible sexual abuse is a felony in the second degree, punishable by 1 to 15 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, this number is (801) 799-3000 in Salt Lake City, (801) 256-2000 in West Jordan, and (435) 716-9300 in Logan. 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).
 - A description of what happened.
 - It can be helpful to include the law the crime falls under, such as Voyeurism, Utah Code 76-9- 702.2. 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, for example, the Salt Lake City Police Department has a [Citizens Online Police Reporting form](#) as does the [West Valley City Police Department](#).
- 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 Salt Lake City, you can send a secure and anonymous tip by using the keyword "TIPSLCPD" to "CRIMES" (274637) and in Provo you can send it to 27467 with the keyword "PROVOTIP."
 - In St. George, you can [submit a tip online](#).
- 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.

Vermont

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

Verbal Harassment

In Vermont, there are two laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 13, Chapter 19, § 1026](#)

In Vermont, it is illegal for anyone to:

- Use abusive or obscene language.
- Make unreasonable noise.
- Engage in violent or threatening behavior in a public place with the intent of causing a public inconvenience or annoyance.

Many types of street harassment could qualify as disorderly conduct, such as harassers shouting at you, making lewd or sexually explicit comments, making abusive remarks like “fat cow,” or “ugly dyke,” or making threats to follow or assault someone. If someone is verbally harassing you in this way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: The penalty for disorderly conduct is imprisonment for up to 60 days or a fine of up to \$500, or both.

Stalking

[Title 13, Chapter 19, § 1062](#)

Vermont’s stalking law prohibits intentionally harassing another person on at least two separate occasions with no legitimate purpose for the actions. The harassment may be done verbally or through writing, telephone or electronic means.

If someone has verbally harassed you on multiple occasions (for example, the same person always harasses you at your bus stop or at the park in your neighborhood) and you fear s/he may touch you or harm you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Anyone who is found guilty of stalking may face up to two years in prison, a fine of up to \$5,000, or both.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Voyeurism

[Title 13, Chapter 59, § 2605](#)

It is illegal in Vermont for anyone to photograph, film or otherwise record a non-consenting person:

- If s/he is in a place where s/he should expect privacy.

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

- If s/he believes his/her intimate areas should not be visible, such as anytime someone is in public and his/her clothes completely cover his/her intimate parts.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

- Spying on someone with the intent of purposely invading his or her privacy is also illegal under this law.

Penalty: The Penalty for voyeurism is up to two years in prison, or a fine of up to \$1,000, or both. The penalty increases if the defendant is a repeat offender.

Indecent Exposure

Lewd and Lascivious Conduct

[Title 13, Chapter 59, § 2601](#)

It is illegal for anyone to engage in lewd and lascivious conduct in a public place, including public indecency and public masturbation.

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, you can report him/her.

Penalty: A person found guilty of lewd and lascivious conduct may face a prison sentence of up to five years, a fine of up to \$300, 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

[Title 13, Chapter 19, § 1062](#)

Stalking is illegal in Vermont. It is illegal for anyone to intentionally follow, lay in wait for, or harass someone on at least two separate occasions, with no legitimate purpose for the actions.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person.

Penalty: Anyone who is found guilty of stalking may face up to two years in prison, a fine of up to \$5,000, or both. The Penalty may be more severe if the defendant is a repeat offender.

Groping

Simple Assault

[Title 13, Chapter 19, § 1023](#)

Unlike other states, Vermont doesn't have a law that specifically addresses groping – a street harasser grabbing, touching, or rubbing your butt, crotch, or breasts without your consent.

Simple assault seems to be the closest law. It prohibits someone from attempting to cause or purposely or knowingly causing bodily injury to another person.

If someone makes unwanted physical contact with you or does something that put you in immediate fear of physical injury, you can report him/her.

Penalty: A person convicted of simple assault may be penalized with up to one year in prison and up to \$1,000 in a fine, or both.

Hate Crimes

Hate Motivated Crimes

[Title 13, Chapter 31, § 1455](#)

A hate crime occurs any time a crime is carried out because of a bias against a victim's actual or perceived:

- Age
- Ancestry
- Color
- Gender identity
- Handicap
- National origin
- Race
- Religion
- Service in the U.S. armed forces
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

In Vermont, [typical hate crimes](#) include assault, unlawful mischief (damage or destruction of property), telephone harassment, and disorderly conduct (by public yelling of threats and abuse).

An example of a hate crime in the context of street harassment might be someone following you and shouting something like, "Don't you know you shouldn't be here because you're [a woman/gay/black/white/latina/etc.]? I should [violent threat] so you'll stay inside." Depending on the

situation, this kind of verbal harassment could be considered assault, and so the accompanying indication of bias may elevate the offense to a hate crime.

Penalty: The penalty for a hate crime varies depending on the Penalty of the underlying crime. Typically, the Penalty will range from a prison sentence of up to two years, a fine of up to \$2,000, 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 Burlington, the number is (802) 658-2704, and in Montpelier it's (802) 223-3445. 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).
 - The name and contact information of witnesses, if you spoke to any.
 - A description of what happened. It can be helpful to include the law the crime falls under, such as, Stalking, Title 13, Chapter 19, § 1062. 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.

- Some police departments also allow you to anonymously text a tip about a crime, 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 Bennington, you can send a tip via an [online form](#).
 - Across Vermont, you can contact the Vermont State Police by texting "CRIMES" (274637) to Keyword: VTIPS.

- 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.

Virginia

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

Verbal Harassment:

In Virginia, there are five laws that may apply to some forms of verbal street harassment.

Disorderly Conduct

§ 18.2-415

The disorderly conduct law in Virginia is narrow and only covers actions that purposely mean to cause public inconvenience, annoyance, or alarm and have a tendency to result in acts of violence by the person at whom the behavior is directed.

This is what is known as a “[fighting words](#)” law. Since street harassment rarely results in the harassed person fighting back, these laws usually have not been used to address street harassment. But you can still try using to report harassment that annoys or alarms you. If enough people make a case for why it should be used, then it might be applied more often.

Disorderly conduct also includes being publicly intoxicated and disrupting the operation of a school or school activity or a government meeting or funeral service.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a Class 1 misdemeanor and may result in confinement in jail for up to twelve months and a fine of up to \$2,500, or both.

Profane Swearing and Intoxication

§ 18.2-388

It is illegal for anyone to be intoxicated or to use profane language in a public place.

If a street harasser is visibly drunk and bothering you, *or* if s/he is using profanity when harassing you or someone else, you can report that person.

Penalty: Profane swearing or intoxication is a Class 4 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$250.

Slander and Libel

§ 18.2-417

Interestingly, this law focuses specifically on banning people from falsely and derogatorily speaking about a “virtuous and chaste” female’s character or using grossly insulting language about any “female of good character or reputation.”

While evaluating women based on their so-called chastity is outdated and not something we support, this is a good statute to use when street harassers call women “sluts” and “hoes.”

If a street harasser (or anyone else) is attempting to insult or defame you based on assumptions about your sexuality, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Slander and libel is a Class 3 misdemeanor, punishable by a fine up to \$500.

Soliciting Prostitution

[§ 18.2-346](#)

Soliciting 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 an adult for prostitution is a Class 1 misdemeanor and may result in confinement in jail for up to twelve months and a fine of up to \$2,500, or both. The penalty is higher if the person solicited is a minor.

Unlawful Assembly

[§ 18.2-406](#)

It is illegal for three or more people to gather for the purpose of doing something through force or violence that is likely to jeopardize public safety, peace, or order and that makes someone else fear for his/her safety.

If at least three people are engaging in street harassment together and they make any kind of threat of force against you or otherwise make you fear for your safety, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Unlawful assembly is a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by up to 1 year in jail or a fine of up to \$2,500, or both.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing:

Unlawful Filming, Videotaping or Photographing of Another

[§ 18.2-386.1](#)

In Virginia, it is illegal to position a recording device directly beneath or between a person’s legs to film or photograph the person’s intimate parts or underwear when it would not otherwise be visible and when the person should reasonably expect privacy.

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

It is also illegal for anyone to intentionally film or photograph a non-consenting person if the image exposes the private areas of his or her body.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Unlawful filming/photographing is a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by up to 1 year in jail and/or a fine of up to \$2,500, or both.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

§ 18.2-387.1

It is illegal in Virginia for a person to intentionally expose his or her private parts in any public place when others are present.

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, you can report that person.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a Class 1 misdemeanor and may result in confinement in jail for not more than twelve months and a fine of not more than \$2,500, or both.

Obscene Sexual Display

§ 18.2-387.1

It is illegal in Virginia for anyone to engage in actual or simulated masturbation in a public place where others are present and where the harasser knows s/he can be seen.

If a street harasser masturbates in front of you in a public place, you can report that person.

Penalty: Anyone who is found guilty of an obscene sexual display may be found guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor and may spend up to twelve months in jail, face a fine of up to \$2,500, or both.

Obstructing Your Path

Obstructing Free Passage of Others

§ 18.2-404

In Virginia, it is illegal to unnecessarily block or otherwise prevent someone from entering or leaving a public place or a private property that is open to the public.

If a street harasser is keeping you from going somewhere because s/he is physically blocking your way or s/he is in or near the doorway of a building (such as a convenience store) and is harassing you or others, you can report that person.

Penalty: Obstructing Free Passage of Others free passage of others is a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by up to 1 year in jail or a fine of up to \$2,500, or both.

Following

If you think someone is following you, you can call 911 right away – you do not have to wait for that person to commit a crime.

Stalking

§ 18.2-60.3

Stalking is illegal in Virginia. A person can be convicted of stalking if, on more than one occasion, s/he engages in conduct directed at another person with the intent to place (or when s/he knows or reasonably should know that the conduct places) that other person in reasonable fear of death, criminal sexual assault, or bodily injury.

If a harasser follows you more than once and makes you feel worried for your safety, then it is considered stalking and can be reported.

Penalty: Stalking is a Class 1 misdemeanor and persons convicted of this crime may spend up to twelve months in jail, face a fine of up to \$2,500, or both. The penalties may be harsher if there are prior convictions or if stalking occurs in conjunction with another crime.

Groping

Sexual Battery

§ 18.2-67.4

It is illegal for a person to sexually abuse someone by force, threat, intimidation, or ruse.

Sexual abuse is defined as touching a person's intimate parts or touching the material directly covering such intimate parts or forcing someone to touch the harasser's intimate parts.

If anyone touches you in a sexual way against your will in a public place, like on the street, at a bus stop, or in a bar, you can report that person.

Penalty: Sexual battery is a Class 1 misdemeanor and may result in jail time for up to a year, a fine of up to \$2,500, 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 Virginia Beach, the number is (757) 385-5000 and in Arlington it's (703) 558-2222. 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 Indecent Exposure, § 18.2-387. 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 Roanoke Police Department has a "[Citizen Concerns](#)" form, accessible.
 - Some police departments ~~also~~ allow you to anonymously text a tip about a crime, for example if you see a group of people routinely harassing passersby at the same location. Visit your local police department website for information.
 - 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.

Washington

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

Verbal Harassment

In Washington, there are four laws that prohibit some form of verbal street harassment.

Disorderly Conduct

[RCW 9A.84.030](#)

In Washington, the disorderly conduct law is narrow. Under the law, it is illegal for someone to use abusive language to intentionally make someone fear assault or intentionally obstruct pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

If a street harasser is using abusive language that makes you fearful or if a harasser or harassers is blocking your path, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Disorderly conduct is a misdemeanor. The penalty can include imprisonment in the county jail for a maximum term fixed by the court of not more than ninety days, or by a fine in an amount fixed by the court of not more than \$1,000, or by both.

Harassment

[RCW 9A.46.020](#)

It is illegal for a person to make any kind of threat to physically harm someone else if the person being harassed has a reasonable fear that the threat will be carried out.

If a street harasser threatens you and you believe he or she may actually harm you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: harassment is a Class C felony and can result in confinement in a state correctional institution for five years, or a fine in an amount fixed by the court of ten thousand dollars, or both.

Malicious Harassment

[RCW 9A.36.080](#)

It is illegal for anyone to engage in malicious harassment of someone because of his or her perception of the victim's:

- Ancestry
- Color
- Gender
- Mental, physical, or sensory handicap
- National origin
- Race
- Religion
- Sexual orientation

Malicious harassment includes intentionally causing or threatening to cause physical injury to that person.

If a harasser threatens to harm you and does so for one of those reasons (e.g. s/he adds a gendered, racial, homophobic or transphobic slur), you can report him/her.

Penalty: Malicious harassment is a Class C felony and can result in confinement in a state correctional institution for five years, or a fine in an amount fixed by the court of \$10,000, or both.

Patronizing a Prostitute

[RCW 9A.88.110](#)

A person is guilty of patronizing a prostitute if s/he solicits or requests another person to engage in sexual conduct with him or her in return for a fee. If a street harasser solicits sexual activity from you, you can report him/her.

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: Patronizing a prostitute is a misdemeanor. The penalty can include imprisonment in the county jail for a maximum term fixed by the court of not more than ninety days, or by a fine in an amount fixed by the court of not more than \$1,000, or by both.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Voyeurism

[RCW 9A.44.115](#)

It is illegal in Washington to:

- Take photos or videotape someone without his or her consent in a place where s/he should expect privacy (such as a bathroom or locker room).

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

- Take photos or videotape of the intimate areas of a non-consenting person's body under circumstances where the person has a reasonable expectation of privacy, including public place.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Voyeurism is a Class C felony and the Penalty can be five years' confinement in a state correctional institution, or a \$10,000 fine, or both.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[RCW 9A.88.010](#)

It is illegal for anyone to intentionally make any open and obscene exposure of his or her private parts if s/he knows that doing so is likely to cause reasonable affront or alarm to other people nearby.

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, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is usually a misdemeanor and the Penalty can include imprisonment in the county jail for a maximum term fixed by the court of not more than 90 days, or by a fine in an amount fixed by the court of not more than one thousand dollars, or by both. The Penalty may be more severe if the person being harassed is under the age of 14.

It is a Class C felony if the person has previously been convicted of indecent exposure or a sex offense. A Class C felony can result in imprisonment in a state correctional institution for a maximum term of not more than five years, or a fine in an amount fixed by the court of not more than \$10,000, 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

[RCW 9A.46.110](#)

Stalking is illegal in Washington. It is illegal for someone to intentionally and repeatedly (on two or more occasions) harass or repeatedly (on two or more occasions) follow another person when the person being harassed or followed is made to feel fearful. Additionally, the stalker must either:

- Intend to frighten, intimidate, or harass the person, or
- Know (or reasonably should know) that the person is afraid, intimidated, or harassed by their actions, even if the stalker did not intend to harm or harass that person.

If a person follows you or harasses you more than once, even if s/he claim s/he did not mean to frighten you or didn't intend to harm you, if s/he made you feel fearful, you can report him/her

Penalty: The penalty for stalking can vary depending on if the person has prior convictions or if the stalking is done in conjunction with another crime (like assault). Stalking is often classified as a gross misdemeanor, which means possible imprisonment in the county jail for a maximum term fixed by the court of up to 364 days, or by a fine in an amount fixed by the court of not more than \$5,000, or by both.

Groping

Indecent Liberties

RCW 9A.44.100

It is illegal for anyone to force another person to have sexual contact with him/her by force. It is also illegal in Washington for someone to have sexual contact with another person if s/he has developmental or physical disabilities or if the harasser is providing the person with transportation.

If someone touches your buttocks, crotch, or breasts against your will, or if s/he forces you to touch him or her by rubbing up against you or forcing your hand onto their body, you can report that person.

Penalty: Indecent liberties is Class A felony. The Penalty may entail confinement in a state correctional institution for a term of life imprisonment, or a fine in an amount fixed by the court of \$50,000, or by 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 Seattle, this number is (206) 625-5011, and in Tacoma it's (253) 798-4721. 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).
 - The name and contact information of witnesses, if you spoke to any.
 - A description of what happened. It can be helpful to include the law the crime falls under, such as Voyeurism, RCW 9A.44.115. 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 Spokane County Police Department has a "[Reportable Online Crime Check](#)."

- Some police departments also allow you to anonymously text a tip about a crime, for example if you see a group of people routinely harassing passersby at the same location. Visit your local police department website for information.

- 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.

West Virginia

Verbal harassment, indecent exposure, following, and groping are a crime in West Virginia. Here are the laws and reporting procedures you need to know.

Verbal Harassment

There are three laws that prohibit offensive or inappropriate verbal harassment in public places in West Virginia.

Disorderly Conduct

[Chapter 61, Article 6, §1b](#)

It is unlawful for a person to use conduct or language in a public place that is:

- Violent
- Profane
- Indecent
- Boisterous

It is also unlawful to make unreasonably loud noise with “the intent to cause annoyance or alarm to another person.”

If a street harasser uses sexually explicit language, profanity, or threats, or loudly shouts while harassing you, you can report him/her.

A law enforcement officer may arrest a street harasser for disorderly conduct if the officer has instructed him/her to stop and s/he continues the disorderly behavior. This provision of the law re-iterates your right to get a police officer involved, should you feel you need to.

Penalty: For disorderly conduct, a person may be committed to the custody of the division of corrections for twenty-four hours or fined up to \$100.

Harassment

[Chapter 61, Article 2, §9a](#)

In West Virginia, it is illegal for a person to repeatedly harass or repeatedly make credible threats against another person.

Harassment means, “willful conduct directed at a specific person or persons which would cause a reasonable person mental injury or emotional distress.”

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

Penalty: Harassment is a misdemeanor, punishable by fine of up to \$100 or imprisoned in the county jail for no more than 30 days, or both.

Loitering on school property

[Chapter 61, Article 6, §14a.](#)

In West Virginia, it is illegal for a person without legitimate business at a school to loiter at or near the premises.

If you see someone hanging out near one of these facilities and s/he is harassing you or other passersby, you can report him/her to the police or a school administrator or official.

Penalty: Any person who loiters on school property is guilty of a misdemeanor, and may be fined up to \$100 or imprisoned in the county jail for no more than thirty days, or both. Upon a second or subsequent conviction, a person may be fined up to \$500, or imprisoned in the county jail for no more than one year, or both.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent Exposure

[Chapter 61, Article 8, §9](#)

In West Virginia, it is illegal for a person to intentionally expose his or her sex organs or anus or the sex organs or anus of another person, or engage in any overt act of sexual gratification (such as masturbation), when s/he knows that others may see this and be alarmed.

If someone flashes or exposes him or herself to you, whether on the street, on public transportation, in a park, or in any other public place, you can report him/her. You could also report someone for indecent exposure if s/he lifts your dress or skirt or otherwise exposes you.

Penalty: Indecent exposure is a misdemeanor and can result in jail for no more than 90 days, or a fine of not more than \$250, or both. The penalty increases for each subsequent offense.

Following

If you think someone is following you, you can call 911 right away – you do not have to wait for that person to commit a crime.

Stalking

[Chapter 61, Article 2, §9b](#)

Stalking is illegal in West Virginia. It is illegal for anyone to repeatedly follow you, knowing or having reason to know that their conduct causes you to reasonably fear for your safety or suffer significant emotional distress.

If the same person, on more than one occasion, follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person.

Penalty: If convicted, stalking can result in incarceration in the county or regional jail for not more than six months or a fine or no more than \$1,000, or both. The Penalty can increase if the defendant has prior convictions.

Groping

Sexual Abuse in the First Degree

[Chapter 61, Article 7, §8B](#)

It is unlawful in West Virginia to subject another person to sexual contact:

- Without their consent; by force.
- When that person is physically helpless.
- When the person is younger than 12 years old and the harasser is at least 14 years old.

"Sexual contact" means intentional touching, either directly or through clothing, the anus, butt, or any part of the sex organs of another person, or the breasts of a female, when the touching is done for the purpose of gratifying the sexual desire of either party.

If someone intentionally touches your intimate body parts without your permission, either directly or through clothing, you can report that person.

Penalty: Sexual abuse in the first degree is a felony, and, upon conviction, a person may be imprisoned in a state correctional facility for one to five years, or fined up to \$10,000.

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 Charleston, this number is (304) 348-8111 and in Morgantown, it is (304)-599-6382. 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 Sexual Abuse in the First Degree, [Chapter 61, Article 7, §8B](#). 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.

- Some police departments also allow you to 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 Parkersburg, you can do this via this online form on the [sidebar of the homepage](#).
 - In Shepherdstown, you can send it via e-mail, tips@shepherdstown.us.

- 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.

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.

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.

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.

Wyoming

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

Verbal Harassment

Wyoming has three laws that prohibit various forms of verbal harassment.

Breach of the Peace

[Title 6, Chapter 6, §101](#)

A person commits breach of the peace if s/he disturbs the peace of a community or its inhabitants by using threatening, abusive or obscene language or violent actions with knowledge or probable cause to believe s/he will disturb the peace.

If someone threatens to follow, touch, or hurt you, or uses abusive or sexually explicit language, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Breach of the peace is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than six months, a fine of not more than \$750.00, or both.

Equal Enjoyment of Public Accommodations and Facilities

[Title 6, Chapter, §101](#)

The state of Wyoming guarantees *full and equal enjoyment* of all public agencies or place that invite the patronage of the public to everyone, as long as they are not doing anything illegal or otherwise misbehaving. No one can be denied entry or discriminated against based on his/her race, religion, color, sex, or national origin.

If someone is preventing you from going to or using a public space because of these reasons, whether directly (“People of your kind aren’t allowed in”) or because s/he is generally harassing you or others on the premises and this makes you unwilling to return, you can report that person to the police.

For example, men may not harass women entering a corner store, making them unwilling to return, or at a public basketball court to keep women from playing there.

Penalty: A person who intentionally violates this section commits a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than six months, a fine of not more than \$750, or both.

Soliciting an Act of Prostitution

[Title 6, Chapter 4, §102](#)

A person is guilty of soliciting an act of prostitution if, with the intent that an act of sexual intrusion be committed, that person knowingly or intentionally pays, or *offers* or agrees to pay money or other property to another person under circumstances that indicate an act of prostitution will be committed.

Circumstances that indicate that person intends to commit prostitution might include stopping his or her car, stopping you on the street, and/or asking repeatedly, giving you reason to believe s/he is serious.

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 an act of prostitution is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than six months, a fine of not more than \$750, or both.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Voyeurism

[Title 6, Chapter 4, §304](#)

It is illegal for anyone to photograph or record another person under their clothing without the person's consent.

If a harasser photographs or records you undressed in a place like a public restroom or changing room, or takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Voyeurism is a felony, punishable by imprisonment for up to two years, a fine of no more than \$5,000, or both.

Indecent Exposure

Public Indecency

[Title 6, Chapter 4, §201](#)

In Wyoming, a person is guilty of public indecency if, while in a public place where s/he may reasonably be expected to be viewed by others, s/he exposes his or her intimate parts with the intent of arousing the sexual desire of himself or herself or another person, or engages in sexual contact with or without consent, with the intent of arousing the sexual desire of himself or herself or another person.

You can report a street harasser who flashes you, masturbates in public, commits another sexual act in public, or otherwise exposes him /herself.

Penalty: Public indecency is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than six months, a fine of not more than \$750, 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

[Title 6, Chapter 2, §506](#)

Stalking is illegal in Wyoming. A person commits the crime of stalking if, with intent to harass another person, the person repeatedly follows a person, communicates with them (through verbal, electronic, mechanical, telephonic, or written means) in a harassing way, stays outside a person's place of residence, school, employment or vehicle, or otherwise engages in a course of conduct that harasses another person.

If the same person follows you more than once or harasses you more than once, you can report him/her.

Penalty: Stalking is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than six months, a fine of not more than \$750, or both. If the harasser also caused bodily harm to the victim or committed the offense in violation of parole or a protective order, then it is a felony stalking and the Penalty is imprisonment for up to 10 years.

Groping

Sexual Assault in the Third Degree

[Title 6, Chapter 2, §305](#)

Sexual contact that does not result in penetration or injury but is committed by force is considered sexual assault in the third degree in Wyoming.

Sexual contact is defined as touching, either over or under clothing, the intimate parts of another person's body without consent, or by forcing someone to touch the intimate parts of the actor's body, with the intention of sexual arousal, gratification or abuse.

If a street harasser touches or grabs your crotch, butt, or breasts, or forces you to touch these parts of his or her body (such as by rubbing up against you or putting you hand in his or her lap), you report that person.

Penalty: Sexual assault in the third degree is a felony punishable by imprisonment for up to 15 years. The Penalty will be more severe if the victim is a minor or if the defendant already has convictions on file.

Simple Assault and Battery

[Title 6, Article 5, §501](#)

Under this statute, a person is guilty of unlawful contact if s/he touches another person in a rude, insolent or angry manner (without intentionally using sufficient physical force to cause bodily injury to another.)

If a street harasser grabs you or touches you in an offensive way on any part of your body, you can report him/her.

Penalty: An unlawful contact is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than six (6) months, a fine of not more than \$750, 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 Laramie, this number is (307) 721-2526. 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 Sexual Assault in the Third Degree, [Title 6, Chapter 2, §305](#). 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 Casper Police Department has a [Citizens Online Police Reporting System](#).

- Some police departments also allow you to anonymously text a tip about a crime, for example if you see a group of people routinely harassing passersby at the same location. Visit your local police department website for information.
 - For example, the Cheyenne Police Department says you can text 274637 and start your message with TXTCPD.

- 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.

Success Stories

Here are examples of people who used the law to report street harassment.

1. New York City, New York

Seventeen-year-old Annie Jiang was riding the N train in New York City, on her way to school, when she felt an object poking her. When she turned she was disturbed to see that a man was masturbating against her back.

She grabbed her cell phone and took a photo of him. She reported the creep to the dean of her high school. The dean called the police but she didn't see the man in a collection of photos they showed her. The next morning, a detective went with her to the subway station and she spotted the harasser. The detective arrested him.

Daniel Barricella, 59, of Brooklyn, found himself charged with public lewdness, sex abuse and harassment, thanks to Annie's phone and report.

"I was scared," [she told](#) *The New York Post*. "He didn't look creepy; he just looked like a normal man. I reported it to the police to keep him off the streets, so he can't do it to anybody else. The technology really makes a difference."

2. Boston, Massachusetts

A young woman would not let a public masturbator intimidate her during her trolley ride home from work.

When she realized what was he was doing, she shouted at him. No one else on the car reacted, however, so when he tried to bolt off the train, she went into "She-Hulk" mode and lunged at him as he tried to run away. She called the police and held onto him, berating him for his actions. The police charged him with open and gross lewdness and he was ordered to stay off the train in the future.

[The story made the local news](#) and the woman told the news reporter that she acted because, "I've had enough of being harassed on the street. I'm tired of it and I want it to end. It was the last straw."

3. Kansas City, Missouri

A woman was trying on bras in a Kohl's dressing room when she noticed a phone under her dressing room door. A man was laying on the floor, using it to film her topless. She screamed and chased him through the store, trying to get his phone.

Since she was still topless, she stopped when he ran out of the store, but other customers in the store continued the chase. They called the police, who caught with him three blocks from the store and arrested him under the charge breach of privacy. "When you feel violated, what you really want is for justice to be done," [she told](#) news station KCTV-5.

4. Charlotte, North Carolina

A man was arrested for multiple incidents of flashing, [all over the city of Charlotte](#). He was arrested in February 2012 after exposing himself to women while he was riding a bike. He had also been accused of flashing a woman while she was walking her dog, and exposing himself to a jogger, amongst other incidents. Information from the victims, as well as anonymous tips, led investigators to the suspect.

He pleaded guilty to indecent exposure and public masturbation. He was sentenced to 80 days in the county jail, but the district judge suspended the sentence, as long as he completes two years of supervised probation, in addition to 72 hours of community services, and psychological assessment and treatment. If he is accepted into the county's Mental Health Court treatment program, he must remain for two years.

5. Tucson, Arizona

A man verbally harassed and had "inappropriate contact" [with three different girls](#) from a local high school as they walked to school. They each reported it in separate incidents. A 58-year-old man matched all three girls' descriptions and was arrested for the crime of molestation of a child.

6. New York, New York

Nicola Briggs is an assertive Tai-Chi instructor and when she felt someone rub up against her during her subway ride in New York City one evening, she turned and saw a man exposing his penis to her. She decided to make a scene. She yelled out what she saw, called the police, and several passengers assisted her in making sure he didn't escape while they waited for the police. One passenger took a quick video of the commotion and posted it on YouTube where it went viral, garnering 1.5 million views, as Nicola shouts, pointing at the man, "And then I see his penis out!"

Offender Mario Valdivia wore a condom—showing it was premeditated—and turned out to be a repeat offender who was not only charged with sexual abuse but also deported back to Mexico. Nicola said this of her actions during [an interview with CBS news](#): "It's about getting over the embarrassment of that circumstance...taking away the shame, from you, as a woman being violated—and bringing the shame back on the perpetrator."

7. Yorba Linda, California

Two black law enforcement officials and their children [moved](#) out of Orange County and into Corona, after repeatedly being the victims of hate crimes in their neighborhood. They experienced rocks being tossed at their home, car tires being slashed, and acid pellets being fired into their garage, damaging their vehicle. The six-year-old son asked his parents why children said they refused to play with him at school because he was black, and the college-aged son reported that when he rode his bike to work, he was taunted with racial epithets and told to go back home by passerby.

Despite the fact that African-Americans make up only 1% of the population in Yorba Linda, they are the most frequently targeted group for hate crimes. A pastor at one of the county's largest

black churches said that congregants frequently share personal challenges related to being the minority in this town. The Orange County Human Relations Commission is where the wife reported the hate crime incidents, and they responded with a written letter, apology and commitment to wipe out hate in the area. The commission said it intends to share the story with local politicians, and conduct focus groups or listening sessions to further gauge the experience of African Americans in Orange County.

8. Chicago, Illinois

A man was [approached in a subway restroom](#) by teenagers who began making fun of his hair, threatening him and making anti-gay comments. One of the attackers then pulled out a pocket knife, causing the victim to push past them and run out of the bathroom. They followed him and continued to threaten and yell insults at him. After one of the attackers dropped his bookbag and came towards the victim with his fists clenched, the victim called the police. The three attackers have been charged with a felony hate crime charge and a misdemeanor count of aggravated battery in a public place.

9. Vancouver, Washington

While Priscilla Dang was on a run through Vancouver, Washington, two teenage boys bicycled toward her. One of them reached out and groped her. She knows kung-fu and she decided to physically confront them to let them know that what they did was not okay. [She](#) “pushed one of the teenagers to the ground and made him apologize. When the second teenager called her a derogatory term, Dang says she snapped, hitting him in the face several times while simultaneously dodging his punches...When he pulled out a knife she used his bike as a shield until a passerby showed up and called 911. The 18-year-old suspect faced fourth-degree assault charges, while the 16-year-old was judged by a juvenile prosecutor.

10. New York, New York

A kippah-clad Jewish man was [being harassed](#) by a group of teenagers on a subway. They greeted him with a traditional Muslim greeting, and when the victim asked the teenagers to leave him alone, one responded with ethnic slurs. The victim took a picture of the ringleader with a cell phone, and he responded by taking the phone and issuing death threats to the victim. It is not clear who called the police, but the attacker was detained at the next train stop, arrested, and eventually charged on eight counts including aggravated harassment as a hate crime.

Do you have a success story? [Share it](#) with us!

The Best Laws, Advocating for Stronger Laws, and Anti-Street Harassment Ordinances

In this section, we highlight some of the states laws we think could most realistically apply to street harassment, what elements we think could strengthen other state laws, and conclude by exploring what legal scholars have said about creating a specific anti-street harassment law.

The Best Laws

There are many states with good laws; these laws are the ones that stood out to us as being potential models for other states. Thus, this list is not exhaustive.

Please note, we are not lawyers or legal scholars, so our list of best laws comes from the perspective of advocates and women who have been frequently street harassed. Not everyone may agree with this, and that is fine! If you have suggestions for which law(s) you think best address street harassment, please [contact us](#).

Verbal Harassment

The following are examples of laws that do a good job of addressing at least some forms of street harassment.

Arizona

Harassment

[Title 13, Chap. 29 §2921](#)

Under Arizona's harassment law it is illegal for anyone to communicate with you in a harassing manner or to repeatedly commit an act or acts that harass you. The statute defines harassment as "conduct that is directed at a specific person and that would cause a reasonable person to be seriously alarmed, annoyed or harassed *and* the conduct in fact seriously alarms, annoys or harasses the person."

This is a fairly broad law that should cover many types of street harassment. If someone is speaking to you or doing some other action that seriously alarms or annoys you, you can report him/her.

California

Harassment on Public Transportation

[Title 15, Chap. 2 §640](#)

California code identifies a number of "miscellaneous offenses" that can protect you from harassment on public transportation. It is unlawful to do any of the following on public transportation:

- Disturb another person by making loud or unreasonable noise.
- Willfully disturb others on or in a system facility or vehicle by engaging in boisterous or unruly behavior.
- Willfully block the free movement of another person.
- Expectorate (spit) upon a system facility or vehicle.

If a harasser is excessively boisterous or loud, such as shouting at you, blocks your path, or spits at you while you're on public transportation, you can report him/her.

Colorado

Unlawful Conduct on Public Property

[Title 18, Article 9, §117](#)

In Colorado, supervisors, managers, and administrators of public property and spaces have the power to proscribe the acceptable conduct within that public space. Their rules for the use of the space are enforceable by law if s/he are posted publicly, including rules that prohibit “activities or conduct within public buildings or on public property which may be reasonably expected to substantially interfere with the use and enjoyment of such places by others or which may constitute a general nuisance.”

Under this section of Colorado code, administrators of public parks, schools, libraries, hospitals, transportation, government buildings, and other public property can (and may already) prohibit acts of street harassment or establish and enforce Harassment Free Zones. Check the posted rules in public venues. If it is illegal, you can report it. If there are no rules against harassment, consider raising the issue with the owners/managers of public spaces.

Florida

Breach of the Peace and Disorderly Conduct

[Title XLVI, Chap. 877 §3](#)

Florida’s breach of peace and disorderly conduct law is quite broad and it includes acts that “outrage the sense of public decency,” affect the peace and quiet of persons who may witness them, and constitute a breach of the peace or disorderly conduct.

Many examples of street harassment could fall into these categories, such as shouting, homophobic or transphobic slurs, or lewd or sexually explicit comments, and you can report that person.

Hawai’i

Harassment

[Title 37 §711-1106](#)

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

- Repeatedly communicate with you after you have told him or her to stop.
- Insult, taunt, or challenge you, or use offensive language toward you in way that makes you reasonably believe the harasser will cause you bodily harm.
- Strike, shove, kick, or otherwise touch you in an offensive way or subject you to offensive physical contact.

You can report street harassers who threaten you, use inappropriate language, physically touch you, or repeatedly ask for your name/number or to go out with you after you have told the person to stop.

Iowa

Harassment

[Title XVI, Subtitle 1, Chap. 708 §708.7](#)

Iowa law prohibits an encounter “in which two or more people are in visual or physical proximity to each other” and one person, “purposefully and without legitimate purpose,” intentionally threatens, intimidates, or alarms the other person.

A threatening, intimidating, or alarming action could include:

- Verbal harassment

- Insults
- Obscene or explicit language
- Racial, homophobic, or transphobic slurs
- Other nonverbal actions such as following you or obstructing pathways.

If a street harasser does something that is clearly threatening, intimidating, or alarming, you can report him/her.

Louisiana

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.

Massachusetts

Disorderliness in Public Conveyances & Disturbance of Travelers

[Title 1, Chap. 272 §43](#)

Massachusetts law prohibits disorderly conduct and disturbing or annoying passengers by using “profane, obscene or indecent language, or by indecent behavior” on public transportation and “conveyances” in general that are open to the public.

If someone is harassing you on public transportation, you can report him/her.

Michigan

Undesired and Unwelcome Accosting – Detroit

[Part III, Chap. 38, Article IX, §6](#)

In the city of Detroit, it’s illegal for anyone to continue to accost someone after that person has asked him or her to stop or has reasonably and clearly communicated that continuing to accost him/her is undesired and unwelcome.

The city law defines accosting as “the act of approaching and communicating, by word, gesture, or any other means, with another person or persons without having been communicated to first.”

If a street harasser approaches you and speaks to you, and you do not want him or her to, you have the right to tell him or her to stop and to report him or her for accosting you if s/he does not stop. *If you feel safe to do so*, you can say clearly to the harasser “Stop harassing me,” “Stop talking to me,” or make it known in some other way that his or her attention is undesired. If the harassment does not stop, you have the right to report it to the police.

Montana

Disturbing the Public Peace

[Okla. Stat. Title 21, § 22](#)

Willfully engaging in acts that “outrage public decency” or “grossly disturbs the public peace” is illegal in Oklahoma.

Many actions and comments of street harassers make could qualify as outraging public decency when they involve sexually explicit remarks, sexual demands, and/or insults. If a street harasser is using this kind of indecent language toward you, you can report him/her.

Nevada

Offenses in Public Conveyances

[Nev. Rev. Stat. § 203.100](#)

It is illegal in Nevada for anyone to “use profane, offensive or indecent language or engage in any quarrel in any public conveyance, or interfere with or annoy any passenger therein.”

If someone is using inappropriate language or harassing you on public transportation or on any bus, railroad, or other conveyance open to the public, you can report him/her.

New Jersey

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 2C, Chap. 33 §2](#)

It is considered disorderly conduct in New Jersey for anyone to purposefully “offend the sensibilities of the hearer” by addressing “unreasonably loud and offensively coarse or abusive language” at a specific person in a public place.

New Jersey’s disorderly conduct law also prohibits:

- Fighting
- Making threats
- Engaging in violent or tumultuous (noisy or uproarious) behavior
- Creating a hazardous or physically dangerous condition in a public place with the intent to “cause public inconvenience, annoyance or alarm”

If a street harasser is yelling at you, threatening you, using offensive or abusive language, or otherwise making a scene, you can report him/her.

New Jersey

Harassment

[Title 2C, Chap. 33 §4](#)

New Jersey's law against general harassment prohibits:

- Communicating with another person using offensively coarse language.
- Subjecting someone to offensive physical contact, striking or kicking, or threatens to do so.
- Engaging in another course of conduct meant to alarm or seriously annoy the person.

If a street harasser uses sexually explicit language, follows you, threatens you, touches you in an offensive way, blocks your path or tries to keep you from leaving a space, you can report him/her.

New York

Disorderly Conduct

[Title N, Article 240 §20](#)

New York State has a broad law against "disorderly conduct;" prohibited actions relevant to street harassment include:

- Fighting or violent, tumultuous or threatening behavior.
- Unreasonable noise.
- Abusive or obscene language or obscene gestures in a public place.
- Obstructing vehicular or pedestrian traffic.
- Congregating with a group in a public place and refusing to comply with a lawful police officer's order to disperse.
- Creating a hazardous or physically offensive condition by an act that serves no legitimate purpose.

Examples of street harassment that might be considered disorderly conduct in New York include yelling sexist or homophobic comments, using obscene, offensive, or lewd language, or someone blocking your path on the sidewalk or in the street. If you experience any of these, you can report the harasser.

North Dakota

Disorderly Conduct

[N.D.C.C. § 12.1-31-01](#)

North Dakota's disorderly conduct law encompasses several types of street harassment. Under the law, it is illegal for anyone to:

- Make intrusive or unwanted acts, words, or gestures that are intended to adversely affect the safety, security, or privacy of another person.
- Persistently follow a person around a public place
- Solicit sexual contact
- Use abusive or obscene language
- Make an obscene gesture
- Flash someone
- Make unreasonable noise.

If a street harasser is being excessively loud, such as shouting, or says or does anything that is obscene (including using sexual explicit language), follows you, or invades your privacy (such as persistently asking for your phone number, name, or a date after you've said no), you can report that person.

Ohio

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 29, Chapter 2917 § 11](#)

Ohio's disorderly conduct law prohibits people from:

- Making unreasonable noise.
- Making an offensively course utterance or gesture.
- Preventing someone from moving along a public street or from entering/leaving a public or private property.

If a harasser is using sexually explicit or other offensive language, taunting you, shouting loudly at you, or stops you from using the sidewalk or entering a store or another public place, you can report him/her.

Oklahoma

Disturbing the Public Peace

[Okla. Stat. Title 21, § 22](#)

Willfully engaging in acts that "outrage public decency" or "grossly disturbs the public peace" is illegal in Oklahoma.

Many actions and comments of street harassers make could qualify as outraging public decency when they involve sexually explicit remarks, sexual demands, and/or insults. If a street harasser is using this kind of indecent language toward you, you can report him/her.

Pennsylvania

Harassment

[Title 18, Chapter 27, § 2709](#)

In Pennsylvania, the general harassment law includes a variety of actions. The following prohibited conduct is relevant to street harassment, if done with intent to harass, annoy or alarm another:

- Following someone in or about a public place.
- Striking, shoving, kicking or otherwise subjecting someone to physical contact, or attempting or threatening to do so.
- Engaging in a course of conduct or repeatedly committing acts which serve no legitimate purpose.
- Communicating to or about someone any lewd, lascivious, threatening or obscene words, language, drawings or caricatures.

This statute defines "course of conduct" as "a pattern of actions composed of more than one act over a period of time, however short, evidencing a continuity of conduct."

If a harasser follows you, uses sexually explicit or obscene language, has some physical contact with you, or repeatedly commits acts which serve no legitimate purpose, you can report that person.

Vermont

Disorderly Conduct

[Title 13, Chapter 19, § 1026](#)

In Vermont, it is illegal for anyone to:

- Use abusive or obscene language.
- Make unreasonable noise.
- Engage in violent or threatening behavior in a public place with the intent of causing a public inconvenience or annoyance.

Many types of street harassment could qualify as disorderly conduct, such as harassers shouting at you, making lewd or sexually explicit comments, making abusive remarks like “fat cow,” or “ugly dyke,” or making threats to follow or assault someone. If someone is verbally harassing you in this way, you can report him/her.

Wyoming

Equal Enjoyment of Public Accommodations and Facilities

[Title 6, Chapter, §101](#)

The state of Wyoming guarantees *full and equal enjoyment* of all public agencies or place that invite the patronage of the public to everyone, as long as they are not doing anything illegal or otherwise misbehaving. No one can be denied entry or discriminated against based on his/her race, religion, color, sex, or national origin.

If someone is preventing you from going to or using a public space because of these reasons, whether directly (“People of your kind aren’t allowed in”) or because s/he is generally harassing you or others on the premises and this makes you unwilling to return, you can report that person to the police. For example, men may not harass women entering a corner store, making them unwilling to return, or at a public basketball court to keep women from playing there.

Unlawful Filming & Photography

Hawai’i

Violation of Privacy in the Second Degree

[Title 37 § 711-1111](#)

In Hawai’i, the following is illegal:

1. Photograph or film a person without his/her consent if that person is partially or fully undressed or engaged in sexual activity in a private place.

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

2. Photograph or film the intimate areas of a person’s body underneath his/her clothing while the person is in a public place.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

New Hampshire

Violation of Privacy

[§644:9](#)

It is illegal in New Hampshire for anyone to observe, photograph, or record the private parts of a non-consenting person's body either underneath clothing, or in a private place where one should reasonably expect privacy.

The law states that the private parts of your body include “the genitalia, buttocks, or female breasts, or a person's body underneath that person's clothing.”

If a harasser films or photographs you someplace like public restrooms, dressing rooms, locker rooms, and hotel rooms, and/or if a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

New Mexico

Voyeurism

[Chap. 30, Article 9 §20](#)

It is illegal in New Mexico for anyone to intentionally “view, photograph, videotape, film, webcast or record the intimate areas” of a non-consenting person's body.

The intimate areas include a person's naked *or* undergarment-clad genital area, groin, buttocks, anus or breasts.

This law applies in spaces where you might undress, such as a restroom, fitting room, or tanning booth, as well as when you have a reasonable expectation of privacy, whether in a public or private place.

If a street harasser attempts to view, photograph, or record you inappropriately, or is taking “up-skirt” or “down-blouse” photos of you, you can report him/her.

New York

Unlawful Surveillance in the Second Degree

[Title N, Article 250 § 45](#)

In New York, it is illegal for someone to intentionally photograph or film:

- A non-consenting person if it exposes that person's sexual or intimate parts or the person is dressing or undressing, and if it is done under circumstances when that person has 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.

- A non-consenting person under the clothing that person is wearing.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Virginia

Unlawful Filming, Videotaping, or Photographing of Another

[§ 18.2-386.1](#)

In Virginia, it is illegal to position a recording device directly beneath or between a person's legs to film or photograph the person's intimate parts or underwear when it would not otherwise be visible and when the person should reasonably expect privacy.

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

It is also illegal for anyone to intentionally film or photograph a non-consenting person if the image exposes the private areas of his or her body.

If a street harasser takes an up-skirt or down-blouse photo of you, or otherwise observes or photographs you in an inappropriate way, you can report him/her.

Indecent Exposure

Indecent exposure laws are very similar. We chose Alabama because it's broad, Colorado because it's straightforward, and D.C. as an example of a good city ordinance.

Alabama

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.

Colorado

Indecent Exposure

[Title 18, Article 7, §302](#)

These acts are considered indecent exposure in Colorado:

- Knowingly exposing one's genitals to another person in a way that is likely to cause affront or alarm to the other person with the intent to arouse or satisfy sexual desire.
- Knowingly performing an act of actual or simulated masturbation, either under or over one's clothing, in the view of another person and in a way that is likely to cause affront or alarm to the other person.

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 for indecent exposure.

Washington, D.C.

Lewd, Indecent, or Obscene Acts

[Title 22, Subtitle I, Chap. 13 §1312](#)

It is illegal in D.C. for anyone to “make an obscene or indecent exposure” of his or her genitals or anus, to masturbate, or to engage in a sexual act in a public place.

If a street harasser exposes him or herself to you or flashes you, masturbates in front of you, or does any other sexual act in public, you can report him/ her.

Obstructing Your Path

California

Obstructing Free Movement

[Title 15, Chap. 2 §647c](#)

Anyone who “willfully and maliciously obstructs the free movement of any person on any street, sidewalk, or other public place or on or in any place open to the public is guilty of a misdemeanor.”

If a harasser is preventing you from passing on a sidewalk, street, or other public place, such as in a park, you can report him or her for obstructing free movement. (Obstructing your free movement on public transportation is also illegal under §640).

Delaware

Obstructing Ingress or Egress from Public Buildings

[Title 11, Chap. 5 § 1324](#)

It is illegal in Delaware for a harasser to obstruct your entry to or exit from (ingress or egress) any public building. The law does not specify whether this applies only to publicly owned buildings or to any building open to the public.

If a harasser is obstructing your path while you are trying to enter or exit a public building, you can report him/her.

Following

Arkansas

Harassment

[Title 5, Subtitle 6, Chap. 71 §208](#)

In Arkansas, it is illegal for anyone, with the intent to harass, annoy, or alarm you, to follow you in or about a public place.

You can report anyone who follows you to harass, annoy or alarm you.

Arizona

Harassment

[Title 13, Chap. 29 §2921](#)

Under Arizona’s harassment law it is illegal for anyone to follow you “in or about a public place for no legitimate purpose after being asked to desist.”

In order for the harassment law to apply, you must first ask the person to stop following you. Of course, only do this if you feel safe enough. Arizona's law uses the verb "ask," meaning that even a polite, non-confrontational request – if that's what you're most comfortable with – should be enough to establish your rights under the law. However, even if you do not feel safe enough to speak to the person, you can call 911 as soon as you are safe to do so.

Colorado

Harassment

[Title 18, Article 9, §111](#)

In Colorado, the harassment law prohibits anyone from following another person in or about a public place.

You can report street harassers who follow you, make overtly sexual references to you, or repeatedly taunt you. This Colorado law is one of the best in the country for addressing harassers who follow people because it does not state that the following must be repeated for it to be a crime.

Georgia

Stalking

[Title 16, Chap. 5, Article 7](#)

Stalking in Georgia is defined as someone following, placing under surveillance, or contacting a non-consenting person for the purpose of harassing or intimidating that person.

If someone follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person. Unlike many other states, under this stalking law it is a crime the first time it happens.

Kentucky

Harassment

[KRS Chapter 525, §70](#)

Under Kentucky's harassment law, it is illegal for someone to follow another person around in a public place with the intent to intimidate, harass, annoy, or alarm that person.

The first time a street harasser follows you and you feel harassed, annoyed or alarmed, you can report that person using this law.

Minnesota

Stalking

[§609.749](#)

Stalking is illegal in Minnesota. The law defines stalking as conduct which causes another to feel frightened, threatened, oppressed, persecuted, or intimidated. Then it specifies the acts that, when done under these circumstances, constitute the crime of stalking. One of the included acts is following, monitoring, or pursuing another person. The law also specifies that it is not necessary to prove that the actor intended to cause you to feel scared or intimidated, but only that s/he did so, and it does not state that the stalking actions need to be repeated to constitute a crime.

If the same person follows you or harasses you and you feel threatened and unsafe, you can report that person. You may also have the right to a restraining order to prevent future harassment.

Pennsylvania

Harassment

[Title 18, Chapter 27, § 2709](#)

The law prohibits a person from “following someone in or about a public place” if done with intent to “harass, annoy or alarm” that person.

You can report anyone who follows you to harass, annoy or alarm you.

Groping

Alaska

Harassment in the First and Second Degree

[Alaska Stat. §11.61.118 & 120](#)

There are two degrees of the harassment law that apply to groping.

1. The statute harassment in **the first degree** prohibits anyone from touching your genitals, breasts, or buttocks through clothing or causing you to come in contact with "human or animal blood, mucus, saliva, semen, urine, vomitus, or feces."

If a street harasser touches you in an offensive way or causes you to come in contact with any bodily fluid, you can report him/her.

2. Alaska's statute against harassment in **the second degree** prohibits subjecting "another person to offensive physical contact."

If a street harasser makes any offensive physical contact with you, such as grabbing you by the arm, you can report him/her.

Maryland

Sexual Offense in the Fourth Degree

[Md. Criminal Code, Title 3, Subtitle 3 §308](#)

Sexual contact is intentionally touching a non-consenting person’s “genital, anal, or other intimate area for sexual arousal or gratification,” or for abuse.

If a street harasser grabs your crotch, butt, or breasts – whether on the street, in a store, on public transportation, or any place at all – you can report him/her.

Missouri

Sexual Abuse in the Second Degree

[§566.101](#)

It is illegal in Missouri for anyone to subject a non-consenting person to sexual contact.

Sexual contact is defined as “any touching of another person with the genitals or any touching of the genitals or anus of another person, or the breast of a female person, or such touching through the clothing, for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire of any person.”

If a street harasser touches your genitals or breasts, either over or under your clothing, or causes you to come in contact with his or her genitals – for example, by rubbing against you or putting your hand in his or her lap – you can report him/her.

Montana

Sexual Assault

[§45-5-502](#)

It is illegal for someone to force a non-consenting person to have sexual contact.

Sexual contact is defined as the touching of sexual or other intimate parts of another person directly or through clothing (meaning if the person touches you over your clothes) with the intent of causing that person bodily injury or to humiliate, harass or degrade that person, or for the harasser’s sexual gratification.

If anyone touches you in a sexual way against your will in a public place, such as on the street, at a bus stop, or in a bar, you can report him/her.

Virginia

Sexual Battery

[§ 18.2-67.4](#)

It is illegal for a person to sexually abuse someone by force, threat, intimidation, or ruse.

Sexual abuse is defined as touching a person’s intimate parts or touching the material directly covering such intimate parts or forcing someone to touch the harasser’s intimate parts.

If anyone touches you in a sexual way against your will in a public place, like on the street, at a bus stop, or in a bar, you can report that person.

Hate Crimes

The hate crime laws of California, Connecticut, Washington D.C., Missouri, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, and Vermont punish bias crimes more comprehensively, on the basis of all: race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, gender, and gender identity.

California

[Title 11.6, Chap. 2 §422.6](#)

In California, it is illegal for anyone, even a law enforcement officer or other representative of the state, to “willfully injure, intimidate, interfere with, oppress, or threaten” you or to limit your free exercise and enjoyment of the rights guaranteed to you by the State of California or the U.S. government because of your:

- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Race or ethnicity
- Nationality
- Religion
- Disability

- Association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics

If a street harasser threatens, intimidates, or injures you because of any of these characteristics – such as using a racial, homophobic, or gender-based slur in a threat – this harassment may be considered a hate crime in California. You can report any crime s/he has committed, as well as any indication of hate or bias, to the police. The California statute indicates that a hate crime does *not* consist of speech alone *unless* the harasser has threatened violence and appears able to carry out their threat.

An example of a hate crime in the context of street harassment would be someone following you and shouting something like, “Don’t you know you shouldn’t be here because you’re [a woman/gay/black/white/Latina/etc.]? I should [violent threat] so you’ll stay inside.” This threat would be considered a hate crime if the person attempts to or does carry it out.

If a court finds that someone has committed a hate crime against you, the judge will issue a protective order. A restraining order may also be issued for the duration of court proceedings (prior to a conviction) if deemed necessary for your safety.

District of Columbia

Bias-Related Crime

[Title 22, Subtitle II, Chap. 37, §400-4004](#)

In D.C., a hate crime is a crime that is committed against a person because of prejudice or bias, including because of a person’s actual or perceived:

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- National origin
- Sex
- Age
- Marital status
- Personal appearance
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity or expression
- Family responsibility
- Homelessness
- Physical disability
- Matriculation
- Political affiliation

A person who is charged with and found guilty of a bias-related crime shall be fined not more than 1 1/2 times the maximum fine authorized for the designated act and imprisoned for not more than 1 1/2 times the maximum term authorized for the designated act.

Iowa

Violation of Individual Rights — Hate Crime

[Title XVI, Subtitle 1, Chap. 729 §729A.1](#)

Iowa provides particular protections from crimes committed because of bias or prejudice. The statute on individual rights and hate crimes contains the following: “Persons within the state of Iowa have the right to be free from any violence, or intimidation by threat of violence, committed against their persons or property because of their race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, political affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability.”

If a street harasser assaults you because of your sex, race, sexual orientation, or another protected category, this harassment may be considered a hate crime. You can report any crime the person has committed, as well as any indication of hate or bias – such as using a racial, homophobic, or gender-based slur – to the police.

Hate Crimes

[Chap. 31, Article 3 §18B](#)

In New Mexico, hate crimes are when crimes are motivated because of a person’s actual or perceived:

- Race
- Religion
- Color
- National origin
- Ancestry
- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity

If there is beyond a reasonable doubt that an offender committed a noncapital felony motivated by hate, the basic sentence of imprisonment for that crime (such as assault) increases by one year.

Vermont

Hate-Motivated Crimes

[Title 13, Chapter 31, § 1455](#)

A hate crime occurs any time a crime is carried out because of a bias against a victim’s actual or perceived:

- Age
- Ancestry
- Color
- Gender identity
- Handicap
- National origin
- Race
- Religion
- Service in the U.S. armed forces
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

In Vermont, [typical hate crimes](#) include assault, unlawful mischief (damage or destruction of property), telephone harassment, and disorderly conduct (by public yelling of threats and abuse).

An example of a hate crime in the context of street harassment might be someone following you and shouting something like, “Don’t you know you shouldn’t be here because you’re [a woman/gay/black/white/latina/etc.]? I should [violent threat] so you’ll stay inside.” Depending on the situation, this kind of verbal harassment could be considered assault, and so the accompanying indication of bias may elevate the offense to a hate crime.

Strengthening Laws

Several legal scholars have examined criminal and civil law to see if either can be used to prosecute street harassers, most notably legal scholars Cynthia Grant Bowman in her 1993 *Harvard Law Journal* article “[Street Harassment and the Informal Ghettoization of Women](#),” and Tiffany Heben in her 1994 *South California’s Review of Law and Women’s Studies* article “[A Radical Reshaping of the Law: Interpreting and Remediating Street Harassment](#).” Their conclusion, like ours, is that some forms of street harassment are crimes under current laws, including sexual touching, masturbating, and direct threats; however, people can engage in the most common types of street harassment like whistling and commenting on a person’s appearance without legal consequences. They suggested ways to redefine existing laws to encompass street harassment, guidelines for creating new ordinances, and they proposed their own.

From her research, Bowman determined that the goal of any new law should be the general deterrence of harassing behavior toward women through realistic and effective remedies. To that end, she [came up](#) with several factors that need to inform the creation of a law.

- The remedy should not define the offense in terms based on the intent of the harasser; it should incorporate a “reasonable woman” standard as to the offensiveness of the conduct and to the reasonableness of the woman’s response to it.
- The law should apply to both verbal and non-verbal conduct.
- The ability to press charges should not require a course of conduct (meaning the person had to have committed the harassment more than once).
- The law’s application needs to be limited to speech that is not general public discourse but street harassment.
- Pressing charges needs to be cheap enough that women can realistically do it.
- The consequences with being charged of harassment must be great enough that they deter most people from committing the crime [but not so great that people don’t use it for fear of ruining someone’s life].

We agree with those recommendations. Additionally, we have recommendations for how to strengthen the laws most frequently covered in this toolkit. (Notably, we are not addressing indecent exposure laws as those are uniformly useful across the states.)

Verbal Harassment

While the disorderly conduct, disturbing the peace and harassment laws in some states do a good job of addressing forms of verbal harassment, those laws in other states could be strengthened by:

- Uniformly addressing “abusive, violent, obscene or profane language” in the language of the statute. Many of these laws already do, so it would be a matter of adding it to those that do not.
- Removing any mention of the intent of the perpetrator; regardless of what his/her intent was, the impact it has on the harassed person is what matters.
- Removing the requirement that it must provoke a fight or violence, as women who are verbally street harassed rarely respond with violence.

Many harassment laws only address “threats of bodily harm” or “threats of bodily injury,” but we suggest expanding the actions to include sexually explicit language. Such language is also threatening to many people, especially women, even if it does not include a direct threat to touch them.

Also, many general harassment laws only cover repeated unwanted communication by phone or electronic communication. Broadening those laws to include repeated unwanted communication in public spaces would make it more applicable to street harassment.

Unlawful Filming/Photographing

Most states now address the new problem of people taking photos or video footage of other people’s intimate body parts while in public spaces, including “up-skirt” and “down-blouse” footage in their voyeurism or violation of privacy laws. The states that do not have laws that cover this behavior should expand their existing laws to do so.

Sample language they could add to their laws is “it is unlawful for anyone to intentionally view, photograph, videotape, film, webcast or record the intimate areas of a non-consenting person’s body, including a person’s naked *or* undergarment-clad genital area, groin, buttocks, anus or breasts.”

Following

All states have a stalking law – and some also have a harassment law – that addresses someone following another person at least twice. These laws were typically written with abusive intimate partners or family members in mind, so they do not apply well to street harassment since it is less likely that a harasser will follow someone more than once. Being followed “just” once can still be very scary.

In Stop Street Harassment’s research, of 811 women, 75% of the respondents said they had been followed by a stranger at least once. Overwhelmingly, they said that being followed made them fearful and upset and women rated it second, behind assault, as the worst type of harassment they had experienced.

In five states, Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota, the law states that someone only needs to follow another person once for the action to constitute a crime. Other states could follow

suit. We recommend they incorporate the language into their harassment or disorderly conduct laws, rather than revising the stalking laws.

Additionally, some states use the “reasonable man” standard in laws that address being followed, stating that the action(s) must make a reasonable person fearful of bodily injury or death. States should either eliminate this requirement, or set the bar for enforcement at a reasonable woman standard since women are far more likely than men to fear being abducted, raped, and murdered by someone following them.

Groping

Most states have laws addressing non-consensual sexual contact that include groping and other unwanted touching that happens in public spaces. A few states could do a better job of addressing the reality of what happens by eliminating the requirement that the victim needed to clearly not withhold consent.

This requirement applies better when it is between people who know each other, but if someone grabs your butt while you are on the bus or grabs your breasts while passing you on the street, there isn’t an opportunity to say no or to clearly state one’s desire to not be touched. Thus, the law should reflect that when people are in a public space, their default desire is to not be sexually touched by a stranger.

Hate Crimes

The states that have not passed a hate crime law should do so. Additionally, not all states’ hate crime laws mention sexual orientation or gender expression, and even fewer include sex or gender as a form of bias. Gender-based street harassment is motivated by these biases and is a form of discrimination based on sex, gender, and often sexual orientation or gender expression. Broadening hate crimes laws to incorporate these biases would allow the laws to better address street harassment.

Anti-Street Harassment Ordinances

In addition to, or instead of, strengthening existing laws, what if there was a law or ordinance specific to street harassment?

This is something that legal scholars like Cynthia Grant Bowman, author of “[Street Harassment and the Informal Ghettoization of Women](#),” and Tiffany Heben, author of “[A Radical Reshaping of the Law: Interpreting and Remediating Street Harassment](#)” have explored.

The [following](#) is Grant Bowman’s proposed public ordinance for street harassment at the state or municipal level. (At Stop Street Harassment, we would suggest making it gender neutral to include men who are targets of harassers and the few women who initiate street harassment.)

It shall be a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$250, to engage in street harassment. Street harassment occurs when one or more unfamiliar men accost one or more women in a public place, on one or more occasions, and intrude or attempt to intrude upon the woman’s attention in a manner that is unwelcome to the woman, with language or action that is explicitly or implicitly sexual. Such language includes, but is not limited to, references to male or female genitalia or to female body parts or to sexual activities, solicitation of sex, or reference by word or action to the targets of the harassment as

the object of sexual desire, or similar words that by their very utterance inflict injury or naturally tend to provoke violent resentment, even if the woman did not herself react with violence. The harasser's intent, except his intention to say the words or engage in the conduct, is not an element of this offense. This section does not apply to any peaceable activity intended to express political views or provide public information to others. A woman's dress and prior sexual history are irrelevant to the issue whether the harassment was welcome or unwelcome to her...Any person aggrieved under this statute shall have a private cause of action for damages.

Bowman concedes that the ordinance she proposed is subject to First Amendment challenge. Since the ordinance is both gender-based and content-based in its description of the prohibited behavior and "underbroad" in the conduct it prohibits, the statute could be argued to be invalid. Nonetheless, she [says](#) that these possible problems should not deter people from working to pass such an ordinance because the process alone of introducing legislation and campaigning for its passage would likely incite public discussion about street harassment and raise consciousness of it as a problem.

Heben [came](#) to similar conclusions as Bowman and generally agrees with Bowman's proposed ordinance. The biggest hurdle she foresees in passing such a law is the inability to predict if people will actually use it and report harassment. Based on precedent, she found that many women feel that the police and the legal system will continue to fail to acknowledge the gravity of women's experiences, so women may decide not to waste their time and energy reporting an incident that will not be taken seriously.

Heben fears, rightly so, that discrimination against women in the LGBTQ community and women of color might also deter women in those groups in particular from reporting their experiences of harassment. Also, she says, women of color may understandably fear that a law against street harassment will be used to unfairly prosecute men of color and [may](#) "regard an ordinance against it as yet another way to punish black men, rather than empower black women."

Thus, Heben writes, and we agree, all women need to collaborate to develop an ordinance that is sensitive and useful to all populations.

Overall, despite the current shortcomings of Bowman and Heben's proposed statutes, both scholars support the modification of current laws to deter street harassment and the introduction of a law that criminalizes severe street harassment.

Also, interestingly, in her [study](#) of offensive speech in the California Bay Area, sociologist Laura Beth Nielsen found little support for an expanded government role in legislating sexist and racist speech, even among men and women who believed strongly that such speech is offensive and morally wrong. White men tended to cite the First Amendment to support their position, while white women and people of color believed that policing sexist speech would either not work or would backfire. Nielsen, though, believes from her research that changes in law would have an "important symbolic effect." New laws, [she said](#), would help women make the case that harassment "doesn't just suck, but is illegal."

Stop Street Harassment agrees and we would support a specific, well-publicized anti-street harassment law as it could deter harassers, and, perhaps more importantly, it would help quicken our gradual societal shift away from trivializing and dismissing street harassment. It would also offer people more options for dealing with their harassers.

Further, in most cities there are public ordinances against nuisances like littering, not picking up dog waste, and panhandling. Street harassment is a much bigger problem in many people's, and especially women's lives, than these problems, as it can negatively impact their quality of life and limit access to public spaces. If these issues have ordinances, surely we can have one that addresses street harassment!

If you are interested in advocating for an anti-street harassment ordinance or law, or want to strengthen an existing law relevant to street harassment and need help, [contact us!](#)

Related Resources

Scholarship on Street Harassment and the Law

- Ayres, Melanie, Carly K Friedman and Campbell Leaper. "Individual and Situational Factors Related to Young Women's Likelihood of Confronting Sexism in Their Everyday Lives." *Sex Roles* 61 (7-8): 449-460.
- Bowman, Cynthia Grant. "[Street Harassment and the Informal Ghettoization of Women](#)," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no 3 (January 1993): 517-580.
- Chhun, Bunkosal, "[Catcalls: Protected Speech or Fighting Words?](#)" *Thomas Jefferson Law Review* 33, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 273
- Cohen, Patricia Cline. "Safety and Danger: Women on American Public Transport, 1750-1850." In [Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History](#), edited by Dorothy O. Helly and Susan M. Reverby. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992
- Cooper, Davina. "[Being in Public: The Threat and Promise of Stranger Contact](#)." *Law & Social Inquiry* 32, no. 1 (March 2007): 203-232.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. "[Race, Gender, and Sexual Harassment](#)." *Southern California Law Review* 65 (1991-1992): 1467-76
- Crouch, Margaret. "[Sexual Harassment in Public Places](#)." *Social Philosophy Today* 25 (2009): 137-148
- Davis, Deirdre. "[The Harm that Has No Name: Street Harassment, Embodiment, and African American Women](#)." In *Gender Struggles: Practical Approaches to Contemporary Feminism*, edited by Constance L. Mui and Julien S. Murphy. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002: 214-225
- Fine, Michelle, Nick Freudenberg, Yasser Payne, Tiffany Perkins, Kersha Smith and Katya Wanzer. "['Anything Can Happen with Police Around': Urban Youth Evaluate Strategies of Surveillance in Public Places](#)." *Journal of Social Issues* 59, no.1 (April 2003): 141-158
- Gardner, Carol Brooks. "[Safe Conduct: Women, Crime, and Self in Public Places](#)." *Social Problems* 37, no. 3 (Aug. 1990): 311-328
- Heben, Tiffanie. "[Reshaping of the Law: Interpreting and Remediating Street Harassment](#)." *South California's Review of Law and Women's Studies* 4, no. 1 (1994): 183- 219
- Kearl, Holly. [Stop Street Harassment: Making Public Places Safe and Welcoming for Women](#). Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Publishers, 2010
- Kelly, Janice and Eric Wesselmann. "Cat-Calls and Culpability: Investigating the Frequency and Functions of Stranter Harassment." *Sex Roles* (2010) 63: 451-462

- Laniya, Olatokunbo Olukemi. "[Street Smut: Gender, Media, and the Legal Power Dynamics of Street Harassment, or 'Hey Sexy' and Other Verbal Ejaculations.](#)" *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 14 (2005): 91-130
- Nielsen, Laura Beth. "[Civility in the Streets: Reactions, Responses, and Resistance to Public Speech.](#)" *Insights on Law & Society* 13, no. 2 (2013).
- Nielsen, Lara Beth. [License to Harass: Law, Hierarchy, and Offensive Public Speech.](#) Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2006.
- O'Neill, Jarrah. "[Gender in Public Space: Policy Frameworks and the Failure to Prevent Street Harassment.](#)" Senior thesis at Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, 2013
- Oshynko, Norma Anne. "[No Safe Place: The Legal Regulation of Street Harassment.](#)" Masters of Law Thesis, The University of British Columbia, 2002.
- Perry, Imani. "[Let Me Holler at You: African-American Culture, Postmodern Feminism, and Revisiting the Law of Sexual Harassment.](#)" *Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law* 8 (2007): 111
- Sigler, Robert T. and Ida M. Johnson. "[Public perceptions and the need for criminalization of sexual harassment.](#)" *Journal of Criminal Justice* 14, no. 3 (1986): 229-237.
- Stringer, Scott M. "[Hidden in Plain Sight: Sexual Harassment and Assault in the New York City Subway System.](#)" July 2007
- Thompson, Deborah. "'The Woman in the Street:' Reclaiming the Public Space from Sexual Harassment." *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 6 (1994): 313 – 348.
- Tuerkheimer, Deborah. (1997) "[Street Harassment as Sexual Subordination: The Phenomenology of Gender-Specific Harm.](#)" *Wisconsin Women's Law Journal* 12.
- West, Robin L. "[The Difference in Women's Hedonic Lives: A Phenomenological Critique of Feminist Legal Theory.](#)" *Wisconsin Women's Law Journal* 3 (1987): 81-145.

Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Legal Resources

- [Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) is a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, and religion. You can read more about the law at the link above.
- [Know Your Rights at Work](#) is a resource from the American Association of University Women that compiles legal developments and content intended to ensure workplace protection for employees suffering from harassment and discrimination.
- [Legal Advocacy Fund](#) of the American Association of University Women allows employees who have filed harassment lawsuits to apply for backing and support, including legal case support, legal referrals, and case support travel grants.

- [What to Do If You Want to Take Legal Action](#) is a page compiled by the Feminist Majority Foundation that provides an overview of legal steps and remedies that sexual harassment victims can take.
- [US Cases and Precedents Related To Sexual Harassment in the Workplace](#) are outlined and summarized on this resource page by the American Association of University Women.

Sexual Harassment and Assault in Schools Legal Resources

- [The Office of Civil Rights](#) provides sexual harassment resources for students and administrators including legislation, frequently asking questions, complaint forms and guidance on how to address it.
- [Crossing the Lines: Sexual Harassment at Schools](#), a research report by the American Association of University Women on sexual harassment in grades 7-12 with action steps for students and community members provided at the end of the resource.
- [The National Women’s Law Center](#) compiled a sheet with frequently asked questions regarding harassment and bullying in schools that also includes a legal resource and contact information.
- [Know Your Rights](#) is a publication produced by the Equal Rights Advocates that outlines legislation related to harassment at school.
- [UN Women](#) has multiple modules dedicated to guiding program implementation and legislative change related to sectors such as safe spaces or violence against young women and men.

Sexual Harassment and Assault on Campus Legal Resources

- [Know Your IX](#) is a campaign to educate all college students in the U.S. about their rights regarding sexual harassment and sexual assault under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and what they can do to hold their campus administrators accountable.
- [Students Active For Ending Rape](#) have compiled fact sheets, podcasts, advice and resources for college students, victims, and activists detailing and providing instructions on how they can use Title IX as an effective tool for change.
- [AAUW](#) has a contact information sheet for activists and victims, including governmental resources, nongovernmental programs, and community outreach programs.
- [US Cases and Precedents Related to Sexual Assault on College Campuses](#) are outlined and summarized on this resource page by AAUW.
- [The Feminist Majority Foundation](#) provides a list of hotlines, websites and resources for victims, organized by state.

LGBTQ Rights Legal Resources

- [The American Civil Liberties Union](#) provides educational resources related to LGBTQ rights that also highlights key policy and legislation.
- [The Transgender Law and Policy Institute](#) provides legislation and data resources related to discrimination in all contexts as they apply to LGBTQ populations.
- [GLAAD](#) provides resources related to legislation and policy, as well as a frequently asked questions section to offer clarity on policy.
- [The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network](#) provides resources on policy and legislature that exists, as well as efforts and victories for change at the federal and state level.
- [Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays](#) offers roughly one dozen downloadable booklets and materials related to LGBTQ people for youth, adults, families, friends, and allies, that include information related to policy and resources.

Racial Equality Legal Resources

- [Womenspace](#) National Network to End Violence Against Immigrant Women provides resources on policy and legislation specific to immigrant women.
- [The U.S. Department of Education](#) provides information related to legislation and resources regarding race and national origin discrimination, as well as action steps for victims.
- The [FBI](#) allows victims of hate crimes to report and leave tips by calling or via webform, and their website provides details by state.
- [The Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) provides advice, guidance, legal resources, projects and policy highlights as well as general information about race discrimination and the promotion of race equality.
- [The American Civil Liberties Union](#) provides educational resources related to policy and legislature on racial justice.

Sexual Assault Resources

- [RAINN Hotline](#): The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network is available by phone or online for advice or guidance for victims.
- Department of Defense Safe Helpline: 877-995-5247 is available to call for guidance for sexual assault victims.
- [National Center for Victims of Crime](#) offers information and help for victims as well as connecting them with local resources.
- [Rape Kits](#): RAINN offers an overview of what a rape kit entails as well as policy related to rape kits.

- [The National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#) offers information and resources for victims, parents and advocates.

Human Trafficking Resources

- [Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking](#)
- [National Human Trafficking Resource Center](#) provides a hotline, tip line, training and resources related to human trafficking victims as well as people who want to assist or volunteer.
- [The U.S. Department of Homeland Security](#) provides resources related to policy and assistance and allows you to submit anonymous tips related to trafficking victims.

Sex Offenders Registry

- [The U.S. Department of Justice National Sex Offender Public Website](#) allows people to search for registered sex offenders by their area and location or by ending their full name.