



HARASSMENT

According to the Texas Penal Code, someone commits the offense of harassment if this person initiates communication by telephone, text, in writing, or by electronic communication with intent to harass, annoy, alarm, abuse, torment, or embarrass another. There are several different types of harassment, including sexual, workplace, and teen peer harassment, among others. Harassment can be perpetrated by a family member or a non-family member. When a person is harassed by a family member it is considered a family violence crime. Harassment is a risk factor for further violence and should be taken very seriously. It can lead to more severe crimes like terroristic threats or stalking. Therefore it is important to know what to do if you are harassed and ways to prevent it.

If You Are Being Harassed

- **Make a police report** – *especially if the contact is obscene or threatening*
 - There may be a detective assigned to investigate
- Instruct the offender to stop contacting you, and document when you do
- Document each occurrence of harassment: include method time and date
- Don't play detective
- Don't engage the perpetrator
- Don't extend contact by trying to figure out who it is: that is what they want
- Hang up/end contact if they do not respond or at the first inappropriate comment
- Don't indicate to a caller that you are upset – just hang up
- Don't be clever – the perpetrator may see this as encouragement
- Never volunteer your phone number or personal information
- If necessary and possible, change your cell phone number or block calls and messages from the harassing number

Ways to Help Prevent Harassment

- Try to limit your personal information that is available in public, including on the internet (ie. facebook, MySpace, internet phone books).
 - For example, do not list your cell phone number on your facebook page.
- Always be careful divulging any information to someone else over the phone or internet (ie. phone or internet surveys or sales).
 - For example, do not reply to messages from people you do not know.
- **KNOW** who you are interacting with and if in doubt, verify their identity and credentials first.
 - For example, if you are called by a "business" person, look up the business, contact them, and ensure that the person is a valid staff member
- If someone asks what number they called, ask what number they dialed instead
- Instruct children never to reveal information to unknown callers or people on the internet
- Educate your family and friends about internet and cell phone safety

If you have been harassed you may be affected in different ways. You may experience different reactions such as fear, anger, frustration, or other emotions. Everyone reacts to stressful situations differently so know that whatever you are feeling or experiencing is probably normal. If you seem to have trouble for more than a few weeks, you might want to look into getting some professional counseling. Please contact Victim Services if you have any questions regarding resources or need other information about a harassment case you have reported to TCSO.

What does the law say?

See: <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us>

Select:

<u>Code:</u>	Penal Code
<u>Article/Chapter:</u>	Chapter 42. Disorderly Conduct and Related Offenses
<u>Art. /Sec.:</u>	Sec. 42.07. Harassment
	Sec. 42.072. Stalking

Also

<u>Code:</u>	Penal Code
<u>Article/Chapter:</u>	Chapter 22. Assaultive Offenses
<u>Art. /Sec.:</u>	Sec. 22.07. Terroristic Threat

Available Resources

If you believe you are being harassed, Call 911

First Call For Help (Capital Area United Way): Dial 211

www.211centraltexas.org

Provides callers with information and referral to non-profit agencies and participating businesses based on individual resource needs

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1 (800) 799-SAFE (7233)

www.thehotline.org

Helpful Websites

Internet Safety

www.oag.state.tx.us/criminal/cybersafety.shtml

www.wiredsafety.org

Phone/Text Safety

www.oag.state.tx.us/criminal/wirelesscontrols.shtml

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www.oag.state.tx.us/teens/index.shtml

Information and Advocacy

www.womenslaw.org