



## Stalking Prevention and Response Strategies

There are many strategies that can be useful when implementing prevention and response strategies in regard to stalking in an organization. Having strategies in place, such as the ones listed below, can help leaders identify stalking behaviors, empower bystander intervention, and support those who report stalking.

Prevention and response strategies for stalking can be accomplished through several means:

- Improve the critical ability of targets and bystanders to identify stalking behaviors.
- Conduct training on how to respond to stalking behaviors. As stalking is a behavior that falls under the larger umbrella of harassment, many of the same models of prevention for harassment training can be applied to the prevention of stalking.
- Maintain an overarching strategy for preventing and responding to stalking to include clear response and reporting pathways, support methods, the prevention measures themselves, and plans to implement continuous efforts to improve all aspects of prevention and response to stalking behaviors.
- Create a climate that holds offenders appropriately accountable, including assurance that reports of stalking behaviors will be taken seriously.

### Identification of Stalking Behaviors

#### *Definition and Indicators*

- Stalking is legally defined across various jurisdictions as involving behaviors that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their safety. These behaviors include physical proximity, surveillance, and communication through different mediums.
- Cyberstalking uses technology (e.g., phones, GPS, etc.) to stalk victims.
- Conduct frequent training sessions to educate personnel on the legal and organizational definitions of stalking, as per military and Federal guidelines (Mowle, 2020; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2023).
  - Use newsletters, posters, and digital media (e.g., resources from the DEOMI toolkit) to highlight examples of stalking behaviors, such as unwanted following and cyberstalking. (Mowle, 2020; CDC, 2023).

### Topics for Training

- Emphasize context-specific training scenarios to help individuals recognize stalking in various settings, tailored explicitly for military or workplace environments (Mowle, 2020), as well as outside of the work environment (e.g., home, shopping, or social events)
  - Best practices for prevention training center on the following:
    - understanding the definition of stalking
    - recognizing early indicators of stalking and associated inappropriate behaviors (e.g., following, threats, verbal or physical abuse, and property damage)



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- discussing impacts of stalking on the target, the perpetrator, and the organization
- emphasizing open discussions about appropriate behaviors, fostering a sense of accountability and awareness in the audience
- Clearly outline the legal repercussions of stalking, including potential actions under the Uniform Code of Military Justice during orientations and training opportunities (Mowle, 2020).
- Maintain the focus for training by doing the following (Wilkie, 2017):
  - Focus on changing behavior, not minds—it does not matter if people think stalking behavior is acceptable. They must know it will not be tolerated.
  - Encourage or require the presence of senior leadership at training, and include them as part of the training, if possible. Leaders must be seen as fully bought into the training and the purpose.
  - Emphasize why the training is essential. It should not simply be about liability but also the potential impact on personnel and the organization, as well as the consequences of stalking behaviors.
  - Prioritize the provision of space for conversations, mentorship, and training about harassment and stalking in an ongoing way.
  - Ensure that the climate supports personnel who come forward to report issues and that expectations about behavior remain clear and enforced.

## Considerations for Bystander Intervention and Training

### *Empowerment and Engagement*

- Execute role-play scenarios that allow participants to practice safe intervention techniques when they witness stalking behaviors (Howell et al., 2023).
- Initiate campaigns to encourage a culture where bystanders feel empowered and safe to report stalking incidents. Efforts in this area might look like the following:
  - Display policy letters around the workplace (e.g., break rooms or bulletin boards) about reporting procedures and having a zero-tolerance policy against inappropriate behaviors.
  - Be flexible as a supervisor to those who want to report stalking behaviors that they may be experiencing. Some examples of flexibility include the following:
    - Allow time away from work to attend appointments.
    - Maintain confidentiality with the Service member doing the reporting, only sharing information with essential personnel.
    - Move workspaces around if the target is uncomfortable.
- Establish a system for bystanders to provide anonymous feedback on the intervention process to help refine strategies and/or ensure that personnel know how to access such resources. Some resources that already exist include the following (Howell et al., 2023):
  - The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office
  - The Integrated Response Co-Location Pilot Program (Air and Space Force)





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- The Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program (Army)
- The Sexual Assault Prevention Response Victim Advocate (Marine Corps)
- *Note:* Though not immediately identifiable by their titles, each of the above reporting programs responds to harassment complaints, including reports of stalking.
- *Note:* More detailed information on other bystander response training methods can be found in the DEOMI toolkit for harassment prevention.

## Responses to Stalking and Prevention Efforts

### *Leader Response*

- Address target with empathy and reassurance that their report will be taken seriously.
- Follow up with those who report stalking (or provide information during any investigations) to ensure that they feel supported, the behavior is no longer occurring, and retaliation is not occurring.
- Provide resources for the target (e.g., medical, legal, spiritual, and mental health support).
- Ask the reporter questions to learn what went right or wrong and what could be done better if another member reports any inappropriate behaviors.

### *Support Systems*

- Provide clear and readily accessible means and procedures for reporting stalking.
- Compile a comprehensive directory of available support resources, both online and in physical formats, inside and outside of the organization (Mowle, 2020).
- Implement a protocol for regular follow-ups with stalking victims, ensuring ongoing support throughout their recovery process (Mowle, 2020).

### *Preventative Measures*

- Develop an easily accessible digital reporting system for stalking incidents that guarantees confidentiality and prompt action (Office of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness, 2022).
- Create an automated system to acknowledge the receipt of a stalking complaint and provide estimated timelines for the investigation process (Office of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness, 2022).
- Conduct workshops on digital safety, focusing on securing personal information and preventing digital stalking (CDC, 2023).
- Schedule annual policy reviews to adapt to new technological developments or changes in stalking behavior patterns (CDC, 2023).

### *Implementation and Continuous Improvement*

- Establish specific dates for periodic reviews of the effectiveness of stalking policies involving feedback from stakeholders, including unit personnel and other leaders within the organization, such as equal opportunity professionals (Howell et al., 2023).





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- Assess new prevention strategies in pilot programs, evaluating their effectiveness before more comprehensive implementation (Howell et al., 2023).





### References

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## Strategies to Prevent Stalking

<https://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/hrtopics/employee-relations/Pages/HR-Gets-it-Wrong-3-.aspx>



Learn more at the Center of Excellence Portal's Harassment & Prevention Tab on DEOMI.mil