



Cybercrimes:

How Maryland Law Can Protect You (Victim)

Online tools are an easy and powerful way for abusers to manipulate and control their partner. You are not alone. Help is available.

Introduction (00:44 – 01:38)

- Abusers use the internet, email, social media, messenger, and other apps as tools of power and control.
- They can commit crimes using these digital tools including stalking, harassment, and sextortion and manipulating intimate partners.
- It is important to note that individual messages or calls or contacts might be threatening or annoying. However, the persistent pattern of these actions or series of acts over time may make them a crime.
 - Non-criminal conduct can also rise to the level of stalking or harassment if it is part of a pattern.
- Understanding these crimes and how to protect yourself against abuse can be empowering and lead to holding abusers criminally accountable for their actions.
- Documenting online abuse can also provide the basis for a protective order.

What Are Cyberstalking and Online Harassment (01:38 – 03:10)

- Cyberstalking and online harassment are forms of stalking or harassment using an electronic means of communication such as texting, email, social media, or messaging.
- Stalking is when an individual approaches or pursues a victim and places them in reasonable fear of either them or someone else suffering harm.
 - Harm includes serious bodily injury, assault, rape or sexual assault (or attempted rape or sexual assault), false imprisonment, or death.
 - Stalking also includes approaching or pursuing a victim where the stalker intends to cause serious emotional distress to the victim.
 - Cyberstalking is when abusers use digital tools to stalk their victims.
- Online harassment is when the abuser uses electronic communications that alarm or seriously annoy another person. The abuser must intend to harass, alarm, or annoy the victim.
 - If you are the victim of online harassment, it is essential that you or someone acting on your behalf tell the abuser to stop contacting you.
 - You can find out more about online harassment at:
<https://www.enlawyers.com/internet-harassment/>

2201 Argonne Drive, Baltimore, MD 21218 • **24 Hour Hotline:** 410-889-RUTH (7884)

Administrative Office: 410-889-0840 • **Linea en Español:** 410-889-7889 Oprimá 8

www.hruth.org • **Facebook:** facebook.com/houseofruthmaryland • **Twitter:** @houseofruthmd



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Sextortion and Revenge Porn (03:10 – 04:18)

- Both sextortion and revenge porn involve the abuser threatening the victim to accomplish their goals.
- Threats can include the abuser:
 - Accusing the victim of anything that, if true, would be bad for, or ruin, their reputation,
 - Threatening physical injury,
 - Inflicting emotional distress,
 - Causing economic damage to the victim, and/or
 - Causing damage to the victim's property
- Sextortion is when the abuser makes the victim engage in sexual activity using these threats.
- Revenge porn is when the abuser uses threats to make the victim the subject of sexually explicit images or videos.
 - Revenge porn includes distributing sexually explicit images or videos of the victim with the intent to harm the victim, without the victim's consent, and where the victim expected the images to remain private.
- If you are the subject of an explicit visual representation and there is a criminal court case, the law strictly protects the images or videos from public release or view.

Documenting Abusive Behavior (04:18 – 05:04)

- If you are the victim of any of these crimes, it is important to preserve all communication, images, or videos.
 - Do not edit or alter the data in any way.
 - You can preserve the communications by printing, taking screenshots, or saving them. Keep all saved communications in a safe place.
- Be sure to keep a log of the abuser's communication and any efforts you make to stop the communication, including electronic and non-electronic communication.
 - This documentation can help illustrate the persistent pattern of abuse.



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Reporting Abusive Behavior (05:04 – 06:07)

- You can report any of the abusive behaviors to the police.
 - Provide the police with any communications you preserved, and the police will evaluate the case.
 - You may want to apply for a protective order and have a judge consider your case.
 - You can work with a victim service provider or a lawyer. You can find out more information about victim service providers at:
<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/VictimServ/default.aspx>
- Whether you report to the police or seek a protective order, it is important to create a safety plan with your local crisis center.
 - Safety planning can include alternative housing, limiting contact with the offender, and offering support and services to you and your family. You can find out more about safety plans at: <https://www.peoples-law.org/creating-safety-plan>

Online Resources

Online Harassment:

<https://www.enlawyers.com/internet-harassment/>

Victim Services:

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/VictimServ/default.aspx>

Creating a Safety Plan:

<https://www.peoples-law.org/creating-safety-plan>

House of Ruth Maryland Hotline: 410-889-RUTH (7884) | www.hruth.org
National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 | www.thehotline.org