



Manatū Wāhine
Ministry for Women

RECOGNISE | RESPOND | SUPPORT

Practical workplace responses to stalking

Equipping workplaces with guidance and tools
to support employees experiencing stalking



New Zealand Government
Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa

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Skip to page 6 if you require immediate advice on how to support an employee experiencing stalking.

You can call Police on 111 if there is an immediate risk to safety.

This workplace guide was developed with family violence specialist organisation Shine, in collaboration with Human Resources New Zealand.



“Workplaces can play a part in supporting people who are being stalked. One of the first things I would say to an employer is to educate yourself about stalking, what it looks like, how it can show up in the workplace and then how to respond safely.”

Mira Taitz

DVFREE Lead and Senior Trainer
Shine

Prepared workplaces, safer spaces

Supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of employees is every employer's responsibility.

Someone may be stalked in their personal life and/or at work, and both can have a serious impact on their workplace health, safety and wellbeing.

Informed and well-prepared workplaces can respond better to issues like stalking and harassment. You can more confidently support employees when you have the right knowledge and tools to respond.

This guide is for workplaces of all sizes and provides practical guidance and tools to help you recognise, understand and respond to stalking. It equips organisations to effectively support employees experiencing stalking, whether it occurs in or outside the workplace, helping them feel understood, supported, and safe at work.

There are small, practical steps you can take right now to enhance the culture of safety and care for all your employees.



"Employers cannot afford to wait until harm escalates before responding to stalking. This guide gives employers the practical steps they need to recognise warning signs, reduce risks, and respond with care, confidence and urgency."

Nick McKissack
Chief Executive
Human Resources New Zealand

Who this guidance is for

This guide is for people in workplaces with a responsibility to support safety and wellbeing for employees at work. This could be:

- Business owners and senior leaders
- Managers and team leaders
- Employee-led networks
- Human resources teams
- Health & Safety representatives
- Cultural advisors
- Wellbeing teams
- Security teams
- Workplace union organisers and delegates

This guide will:

1. Help you understand stalking and its impact on employees and workplaces.
2. Guide you to have safe and supportive conversations when you recognise signs an employee is being stalked or when an employee discloses stalking.
3. Offer you practical prevention and response ideas that ensure employees being stalked feel safe and supported at work.
4. Provide you with information about legal options and specialist support services you can share with your employees.

Stalking and harassment is a crime

Stalking and harassment is illegal under the Crimes Act. Under the Act, stalking and harassment is defined as a pattern of at least two 'specified acts' on two separate occasions within a two-year period, where the person carrying out the behaviour knows it is likely to cause fear or distress. The offence carries a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment.

Police can issue a notice after one act of stalking, so the person knows their behaviour is likely to cause fear and distress. Police will let the person experiencing stalking know before serving the notice and assist them with safety planning. Police can arrest and charge the offender without a notice if two acts occur within two years.



"I call it the three C's.
It's creepy, it's calculated
and it's controlling"

Naomi Ogg
Chief Executive
Women's Refuge

What stalking is and who it impacts

Stalking is a pattern of targeted and unwanted behaviours that cause fear or distress. Stalking can happen in person, online and through the use of technology. Some behaviours may seem minor or trivial in isolation or be seen as subtle; however, harm can build up over time when behaviours are repeated and used to intimidate or control someone. A person may be stalked by someone they know such as a partner, ex-partner, family, whānau or aiga member, colleague, customer, client or acquaintance – or they may be a stranger.

Anyone can experience stalking. However, women are disproportionately affected, including young women, public figures, LGBTQIA+ people, wāhine Māori, Pacific women, migrant women and ethnic minorities, disabled women and women experiencing intimate partner violence¹.

Stalking can be experienced differently across diverse communities and contexts. For wāhine Māori, the presence of a person using stalking behaviours in community spaces can affect not only the individual but also whānau and hapū. Disabled people may have their accessibility needs or support arrangements exploited, rainbow communities may be targeted by hate groups or have private information shared without consent, and women from ethnic and cultural communities may experience persistent unwanted advances that are misinterpreted as friendliness.

Being stalked may bring whakamā or shame, but it's important to understand that experiencing stalking is never the fault of the person being stalked.

Stalking that occurs in the context of family violence and dating relationships is often dismissed as romantic or harmless. However, in the context of intimate partner violence, stalking is a significant predictor of homicide and other serious forms of violence².

The law specifies a wide range of behaviours and contexts.

Stalking behaviours can include:

- Watching, following, waiting for, or blocking someone.
- Tracking, monitoring, or recording someone's movements or activities.
- Contacting someone repeatedly or in unwanted ways.
- Damaging, taking, moving, or interfering with someone's property, taonga, or pets.
- Harming someone's reputation, relationships, employment, education, or opportunities.
- Sharing information about someone, or pretending to be them.
- Doing things that cause fear, distress, intimidation, or make someone feel unsafe.
- Targeting family members or others close to the person.
- Getting another person or organisation to carry out stalking behaviours.
- Using any method or technology, including online tools, social media, spyware, tracking devices, drones, or AI.

Impact on employees in the workplace

While workplaces can be places of safety, they can also be targeted to extend harm and control over the person they're stalking.

When a person experiences stalking, it often impacts on their work life and can reduce their ability to be focused and present at work. Stalking can have safety and wellbeing impacts, restricting a person's freedom and isolating them from their whānau, aiga and communities. It can also affect employment and financial security, for example through the spread of private or false information that damages an employee's reputation and job opportunities.

Some roles, such as customer-facing roles or those where people work alone, are more at risk of stalking and physical harm. Some examples include employees serving customers in shops, eateries and bars; working late hours; care workers supporting clients in homes or facilities; or women working in male-dominated worksites.



“Be the support person.
I encourage you to have hui about it. I encourage you to ensure managers and staff know the law, know where they can go to get support, but also how can they be the support.”

Ruth Money
Chief Victims Advisor
to the Government

1 Note that wāhine Māori are disproportionately represented as victim-survivors of crime and family violence and are therefore likely to experience stalking disproportionately. Similar patterns are likely to apply to Pacific women, migrant women and women of diverse ethnicities. Fanslow, J.L., et al. (2021). Lifetime Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence and Disability: Results From a Population-Based Study in New Zealand. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Vol. 61, Issue 3, Sept. 2021 at 320-328; Thorburn, N., & Jury, A. (2019). Relentless not romantic: Intimate partner stalking in Aotearoa New Zealand. Wellington: Women's Refuge NZ; Wilson S., et al. (2018) Stalking risks to celebrities and public figures. *BJPsych Advances*. 24(3) at 152-160; Sheridan, L. P., et al. (2019). Perceptions and Experiences of Intrusive Behavior and Stalking: Comparing LGBTIQ and Heterosexual Groups. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 34(7), 1388-1409. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16043542/>

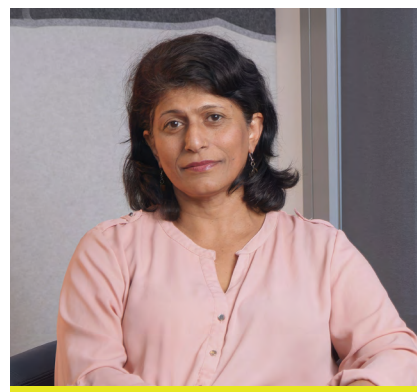
2 Thorburn, N. & Jury, A. (2019) Relentless, not Romantic: Intimate Partner Stalking in Aotearoa New Zealand. National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges.

Supporting staff experiencing stalking

How you support employees who experience stalking, matters. While employers cannot prevent employees from being stalked, you can play a critical role in protecting them at work and supporting their wellbeing.

It is important your approach to supporting affected employees is guided by the following principles:

- **Employee-led** – be guided by the employee in how you support them. They know their situation best, and their views should be central to decisions about the support and responses provided.
- **Confidential and safe** – protect your employees' privacy (unless acting on an immediate safety threat) and clearly communicate this. Call Police on 111 if it is an emergency and take any other actions necessary to keep employees safe at work.
- **Inclusive and accessible** – ensure everyone knows how to access available support to suit their individual needs. This includes cultural considerations, language and accessibility.
- **Know when to seek support** – recognise your limits in supporting employees and seek external support and guidance when needed. This may include whānau involvement.



“There is this feeling that responsibility for stalking is with the victim. But all of us have a part to play. We should educate ourselves on what constitutes stalking.”

Rachel Simon-Kumar
Chair
Shama Ethnic Women's Trust

Responding and supporting

It is important to prioritise safety and trust, putting the person being stalked at the centre of any response. They know their situation best and can guide you.

If there is an immediate safety risk, talk with the employee being stalked where possible and let them know you are calling Police on 111 to report an emergency.

You can take the following steps to provide workplace support for employees experiencing stalking.

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- | | |
|--|--|
| Starting a conversation | > It can be difficult knowing how to start a sensitive conversation. Use the <u>conversation prompts</u> below to take an employee-centred approach for discussions with them. Provide ongoing and regular check-ins to support impacted team members. |
| Planning a safe approach together | > Co-create a <u>workplace safety and wellbeing plan</u> with the employee, ensuring they are leading the approach. Come to the table with a range of options and work with them to create a plan that works for them and their circumstances. Review and update plans regularly to keep them fit for purpose. |
| Considering legal protections | > Share information about the <u>legal options</u> below with your employee and discuss if it is safe and appropriate to collect evidence. |
| Offering specialist support | > Contact <u>other support services</u> where appropriate, and offer your employee time away from work to seek help. |
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Signs an employee may be experiencing stalking

These are some signs an employee might be experiencing stalking. They must be considered with sensitivity and care, as they may reflect other difficulties an employee may be experiencing.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unusually frequent calls, texts and other messages during work, particularly distressing or unwanted contact.• A partner or someone else is at their worksite often or asking after them.• Receiving unwanted gifts at work.• Malicious rumours or private information about the employee are being shared with people in the workplace. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arriving late, frequent absences, leaving early or staying late.• Distracted, hypervigilant, anxious or tired.• Withdrawn or disengaged from their work, their peers and/or work events.• Irritable, frustrated with, or distrusting of their peers. |
|---|---|

Conversation prompts

If an employee tells you about their experience of stalking, they may be looking for:

- **Compassion or empathy without judgement:** Some people may only want to talk about their experience with someone they trust and to be believed and understood.
- **Practical support:** Some people may need specific forms of support, such as leave or security measures to keep them safe at work³.

These conversation prompts can help you respond to stalking concerns safely and sensitively, encourage disclosure, assess immediate risk, and provide support.

Have the conversation in a private setting, allow enough time, and be prepared that the employee may not open up straight away. Let the employee have control over what they share and what action, if any, they want to support them. It may take several conversations to build trust and put in place support options they think will be useful.

It may help to think about how to ask questions and whether anyone else should be there. For example, culturally appropriate approaches, such as talanoa, wānanga, whānau involvement, or conversations led by a trusted person, may help employees feel safe and supported. If an employee speaks English as a second language or has a hearing impairment, it may be necessary for them to have a support person who speaks their first language or uses New Zealand Sign Language.

³ Arathon, C., Beaumont, S., Carrington, H. (2026) Workplace Responses to *Victims of Intimate Partner Violence in Aotearoa*. National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges. Ngā Whare Whakaruruhau o Aotearoa.

Your approach	What to do	Example
Start the conversation	Share what you've noticed and invite them to talk using open, gentle questions.	"I've noticed you seem distracted at work. You're not in trouble, I just wondered if you're okay." "How are you feeling when you're working? Is there anything you're worried about?"
Respond with empathy	If they share, listen without judgement, affirm their experience, and acknowledge the impact.	"Thank you for telling me. That behaviour isn't okay."
Clarify gently	If things are unclear, ask kind and direct questions. Be patient and let them go at their own pace.	"You mentioned things at home aren't great, can you share what you mean by that?" "Are you feeling safe at home?"
Maintain confidentiality	Reassure them that what they share will be kept private, unless there's a serious threat to safety.	"I want to protect your safety and privacy. I'll keep this confidential unless there is immediate danger. In any other circumstance, I'll talk with you first."
Respect if they don't want to share	If they don't want to talk, leave the door open and offer support options without pressure.	"That's okay, you don't have to talk about it now. I'm here if you want to talk at any point, and we can look at support options if that would help."
Offer support options, including cultural support	Ask what they need and offer practical workplace support, letting them guide decisions.	"What would help you feel safer? I can adjust shifts, pair you with a trusted co-worker or use other safety measures? Would you like help to contact Police, a support service, or cultural/language support? Would you like to involve your whānau in our discussions?"
Follow up over time	Check in regularly and adapt support as their situation changes.	"Just checking in, how are things going this week? Is there anything we should adjust?"

Workplace safety and wellbeing plan

Co-creating a plan centred on your employee's safety and wellbeing needs can help your employee feel more supported at work. Below is a planning tool you can adapt and use to support an employee experiencing stalking. Offer as many options as possible and be guided by the employee about what will be useful.

See bit.ly/ShineDVFREE for a fuller version of this tool, which is also used for domestic violence situations.

Workplace safety and wellbeing plan

Emergency contact

- Does the employee need an alternative emergency contact?
- Would they like support from whānau or another trusted person?

Leave

- Does the employee need paid leave, e.g. family violence leave or special leave?

Work arrangements and duties

- Would any workplace adjustments help with safety and wellbeing?
- Do usual hours of work need to be changed?
- Would a change in work duties/location prevent risk and help manage the impacts on the employee or their family?

Stalking in the workplace

- Would it help to trespass someone from the worksite or have a trespass notice ready to serve?
- Should reception or security have information to identify the person using stalking behaviours with instructions on what to do if they come onsite? E.g. photo, car details.
- Is there a security protocol like a code word to alert staff? Do they know when to call Police?
- Do calls, emails or other forms of workplace communications need to be screened?
- Does the employee need a new/additional work phone, to prevent contact with the stalker? Do they need support switching off their location settings?
- Can you provide safe storage of evidence of digital stalking for the employee?

If the stalker is also an employee

- Can you create a safe area to protect the employee from their co-worker?
- What could a security response look like for breaking the safe area?
- Consider how to prevent the two employees' workflows crossing in person, by phone or email.
- Follow human resources processes and seek appropriate advice. See further information on [page 13](#).

Coming and going from the workplace

- Does the employee need a carpark assigned close to the worksite entrance?
- Do the worksite entry locks/codes need to be changed?
- Do you need a security guard or CCTV cameras?
- Does the employee need assistance to get from their car, public transport or into/out of the worksite?

Access to pay

- Does the employee want their pay put in a new account?

Financial assistance

- Are advance payments or paying out leave an option for helping the employee with things like emergency housing, relocating, childcare, legal or other related costs?

Accessibility and language needs

- Does the employee need any additional support, such as language assistance, or accessibility accommodations?
-

Legal options

Providing legal information and options to your employee may help them decide to seek support through the justice system.

Stalking and harassment is illegal



NZ Police can serve a notice and/or arrest someone carrying out stalking and harassment behaviours. NZ Police has more information here: bit.ly/Police-stalking, including how to collect evidence if it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Trespass notice



You can trespass someone from a property that you legally own or occupy, either verbally or in writing. NZ Police has more information here: bit.ly/Police-trespass

Protection order



Your employee can consider applying for a Protection Order, to help protect them from family violence. The Ministry of Justice has more information here: bit.ly/Justice-protection

Restraining order



Your employee can consider applying for a Restraining Order if they have been harassed by another person who is not a family member at least twice in the past 12 months. The Ministry of Justice has more information here: bit.ly/Justice-restraining-order

Harmful Digital Communications Order



Netsafe can help if the stalking is happening online or using digital devices. Following an investigation, they may be able to have harmful communications removed or corrected, or support other steps to address the harm. More information about the support and options available can be accessed through the Netsafe website: netsafe.org.nz/report

These actions will help ensure employees feel safe, supported and in control, while enabling timely and appropriate responses.

If the person stalking is also an employee

Workplaces should prioritise the safety, wellbeing and privacy of the person experiencing stalking, following their lead about how to support them. This may include taking immediate steps to prevent contact between employees and mitigate risk at work, such as by adjusting duties, work locations, rosters, reporting lines or access to certain spaces or systems.

When managing the person doing the stalking, consider responding through workplace policies and formal employment processes, such as codes of conduct, health and safety procedures, bullying and harassment policies or misconduct policies.

Any response should be handled carefully, fairly and sensitively and should not place the burden on the employee experiencing stalking to manage the situation. Stalking should not be treated as simply an interpersonal issue between employees.

You can seek guidance from Employment New Zealand: bit.ly/Employment-misconduct and Shine's DVFREE Guidelines: bit.ly/ShineDVFREE.

Preparing and preventing

Beyond an immediate response, you can build a workplace culture where inappropriate and harmful behaviour can be openly addressed, managed appropriately and not tolerated. This might look like reinforcing expectations through everyday communication, cultural safety⁴ and preventative measures so staff know how to respond with care.

Build awareness of stalking and harassment

Fear, stigma, shame or not wanting to cause a fuss at work may act as a barrier to disclosing and seeking support for people experiencing stalking. It is important to build awareness and a culture that centres on empathy, belief and non-judgement. This might look like:

- **Learn about stalking and talk about it** by reading this guide and information from other organisations as a starting point. Next, start conversations with your colleagues about how it could impact your workplace. Build awareness in easy ways to start normalising discussions about stalking.
- **Address barriers by recognising that** employees may fear negative impacts on relationships at work, their pay, security, visas or stigma. They may have a language, disability, or cultural barrier, so consider making information available in different languages and formats. Consider how you can reduce barriers to reporting stalking in your workplace. Communicate clearly that disclosing someone's experience of stalking and other forms of violence will not impact on job opportunities.
- **Call out inappropriate behaviours** to uphold workplace standards. This might look like shutting behaviour down before it escalates, such as "Hey, that kind of language/behaviour is not okay".
- **Engage in violence prevention campaigns**, such as the United Nations Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, to demonstrate leadership and build trust.
- **Use official and unofficial communication channels** to reduce barriers to reporting such as conversations at shift handovers, noticeboards in the staff room, posters, education sessions and newsletters.
- **Assign workplace peer supporters** who have specific knowledge of how to respond and where to seek support. This may be teammates, or colleagues within wider peer support networks. Consider the cultural identity of the employee experiencing stalking, as this may impact who they feel comfortable being supported by.

⁴ Recognising and Responding to Stalking and Coercive Control: A Kaupapa Māori Resource Guide For Whānau Māori Experiencing Stalking & Coercive Control. Auckland Women's Centre. May 2026.

Consider the risk of stalking in your workplace and sector

- **Consider how stalking may affect your workforce and your workplace context** – are roles customer facing? Are they alone on site? Do staff work late hours or wear name tags? Some roles carry higher risks – identify these early and consider what changes could be made to make your workplace safer.
- **Consider formal training with a specialist provider** – so you can be guided by expertise, such as Shine’s DVFREE training programme for managers and peer supporters. Start small and build organisational capability over time.
- **Understand your workplace health and safety obligations** – visit the WorkSafe website: bit.ly/Worksafe-act
- **Review workplace systems for risks:**
 - Limit unnecessary sharing of employee information i.e. contact details and public rosters.
 - Update reporting systems and review regularly to ensure they’re working as intended.
 - Develop and document internal response processes so managers and support people know what to do when concerns are raised, such as speak-up processes, peer reporting and champion roles.
- **Strengthen environmental safety** – such as CCTV, controlled access, lighting and secure directories.

Inform employees about available supports

- **Review and share information about leave and flexible work options**, such as family violence leave, discretionary leave and flexible work options to support safety and wellbeing.
- **Create policies outlining responsibilities**, limits and when to involve Police or specialist services. Examples can be found in Shine’s DVFREE guidelines for employers: bit.ly/ShineDVFREE
- **Promote community support services** alongside other wellbeing services on staff noticeboards, intranet pages etc.
- **Share the Ministry for Women’s Free to Lead toolkit** for online harm prevention, including free modules for individuals and employers: women.govt.nz/onlineharm

These options can help reduce risk, embed safety and sensitivity into everyday practice and make it clear how to support when concerns arise.

Specialist community support

The following services are free.

They can be shared with employees experiencing stalking and are useful if you need guidance yourself.

Many of these organisations can provide information about local support services, including kaupapa Māori and Pasifika services, or you can find a local family violence or sexual violence service at: areyouok.org.nz/service-finder.

The guidance and tools in this resource are a starting point. Use them, share them and keep building a workplace where everyone feels safe, supported and able to thrive. A prepared and caring workplace can make all the difference for someone experiencing stalking.

Shine

Family violence support service
24/7 freephone 0508 744 633
2shine.org.nz

Women's Refuge

Family violence support service
24/7 freephone 0800 733 843
womensrefuge.org.nz

Are You Okay

Family violence support service
24/7 freephone 0800 456 450
areyouok.org.nz

VisAble

Disability harm specialists
Free message line 0800 998 858
visable.co.nz

Le Va

Pasifika-kaupapa support service
09 261 3490
leva.co.nz

Good Shepherd

Support service for women and girls
experiencing financial abuse
Freephone 0800 466 370
goodshepherd.org.nz

Netsafe

Online safety organisation supporting
victims of online harm
Freephone 0508 638 723
netsafe.org.nz

What's Up

Support service for tamariki and rangatahi
Freephone 0800 942 8787
whatsup.co.nz

Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura

Support service for rainbow and takatāpui
survivors of sexual harm
kahukura.co.nz

Shama

Cultural specialist support services for
ethnic women experiencing violence
07 843 3810
shama.org.nz

Safe to Talk

Sexual harm support service
24/7 freephone 0800 044 334
Text 4334, webchat service
safetotalk.nz

Victim Support

Victims' support service
24/7 freephone 0800 842 846
victimsupport.org.nz

Youthline

Support service for young people
24/7 freephone 0800 376 633
youthline.org.nz

OUTline NZ

Support service for rainbow communities
and takatāpui
Freephone 0800 688 5463
outline.org.nz

Community Law

Free legal advice
communitylaw.org.nz

Citizens Advice Bureau

Free independent and confidential advice
Freephone 0800 367 222
cab.org.nz

WellStop

Supporting people using harmful
sexual behaviour
info@wellstop.org.nz
wellstop.org.nz

Shakti

Cultural specialist domestic/family
violence service
Freephone 0800 742 584
shakti.org.nz



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