

Chapter 9A.46 RCW
HARASSMENT

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Harassment: RCW 9A.36.080.

RCW 9A.46.010 Legislative finding. The legislature finds that the prevention of serious, personal harassment is an important government objective. Toward that end, this chapter is aimed at making unlawful the repeated invasions of a person's privacy by acts and threats which show a pattern of harassment designed to coerce, intimidate, or humiliate the victim.

The legislature further finds that the protection of such persons from harassment can be accomplished without infringing on constitutionally protected speech or activity. [1985 c 288 § 1.]

RCW 9A.46.020 Definition—Penalties. (1) A person is guilty of harassment if:

(a) Without lawful authority, the person knowingly threatens:

(i) To cause bodily injury immediately or in the future to the person threatened or to any other person; or

(ii) To cause physical damage to the property of a person other than the actor; or

(iii) To subject the person threatened or any other person to physical confinement or restraint; or

(iv) Maliciously to do any other act which is intended to substantially harm the person threatened or another with respect to his or her physical or mental health or safety; and

(b) The person by words or conduct places the person threatened in reasonable fear that the threat will be carried out. "Words or conduct" includes, in addition to any other form of communication or conduct, the sending of an electronic communication.

(2) (a) Except as provided in (b) of this subsection, a person who harasses another is guilty of a gross misdemeanor.

(b) A person who harasses another is guilty of a class C felony if any of the following apply: (i) The person has previously been convicted in this or any other state of any crime of harassment, as defined in RCW 9A.46.060, of the same victim or members of the victim's family or household or any person specifically named in a no-contact or no-harassment order; (ii) the person harasses another person under subsection (1)(a)(i) of this section by threatening to kill the person threatened or any other person; (iii) the person harasses a criminal justice participant who is performing his or her official duties at the time the threat is made; or (iv) the person harasses a criminal justice participant because of an action taken or decision made by the criminal justice participant during the performance of his or her official duties. For the purposes of (b)(iii) and (iv) of this subsection, the fear from the threat must be a fear that a reasonable criminal justice participant would have under all the circumstances. Threatening words do not constitute harassment if it is apparent to the criminal justice participant that the person does not have the present and future ability to carry out the threat.

(3) Any criminal justice participant who is a target for threats or harassment prohibited under subsection (2)(b)(iii) or (iv) of this section, and any family members residing with him or her, shall be eligible for the address confidentiality program created under RCW 40.24.030.

(4) For purposes of this section, a criminal justice participant includes any (a) federal, state, or local law enforcement agency employee; (b) federal, state, or local prosecuting attorney or deputy prosecuting attorney; (c) staff member of any adult corrections institution or local adult detention facility; (d) staff member of any juvenile corrections institution or local juvenile detention facility; (e) community corrections officer, probation, or parole officer; (f) member of the indeterminate sentence review board; (g) advocate from a crime victim/witness program; or (h) defense attorney.

(5) The penalties provided in this section for harassment do not preclude the victim from seeking any other remedy otherwise available under law. [2011 c 64 § 1; 2003 c 53 § 69; 1999 c 27 § 2; 1997 c 105 § 1; 1992 c 186 § 2; 1985 c 288 § 2.]

Reviser's note: As to the constitutionality of subsection (1)(a)(iv) of this section, see *State v. Williams*, 144 Wn.2d 197, 26 P.3d 890 (2001).

Intent—Effective date—2003 c 53: See notes following RCW 2.48.180.

Intent—1999 c 27: "It is the intent of chapter 27, Laws of 1999 to clarify that electronic communications are included in the types of conduct and actions that can constitute the crimes of harassment and stalking. It is not the intent of the legislature, by adoption of chapter 27, Laws of 1999, to restrict in any way the types of conduct or actions that can constitute harassment or stalking." [1999 c 27 § 1.]

Severability—1992 c 186: See note following RCW 9A.46.110.

RCW 9A.46.030 Place where committed. Any harassment offense committed as set forth in RCW 9A.46.020 or 9A.46.110 may be deemed to

have been committed where the conduct occurred or at the place from which the threat or threats were made or at the place where the threats were received. [1992 c 186 § 3; 1985 c 288 § 3.]

Severability—1992 c 186: See note following RCW 9A.46.110.

RCW 9A.46.040 Court-ordered requirements upon person charged with crime—Violation. (1) Because of the likelihood of repeated harassment directed at those who have been victims of harassment in the past, when any defendant charged with a crime involving harassment is released from custody before trial on bail or personal recognizance, the court authorizing the release may issue an order pursuant to this chapter and require that the defendant:

(a) Stay away from the home, school, business, or place of employment of the victim or victims of the alleged offense or other location, as shall be specifically named by the court in the order;

(b) Refrain from contacting, intimidating, threatening, or otherwise interfering with the victim or victims of the alleged offense and such other persons, including but not limited to members of the family or household of the victim, as shall be specifically named by the court in the order.

(2) Willful violation of a court order issued under this section or an equivalent local ordinance is a gross misdemeanor. The written order releasing the defendant shall contain the court's directives and shall bear the legend: Violation of this order is a criminal offense under this chapter. A certified copy of the order shall be provided to the victim by the clerk of the court.

(3) If the defendant is charged with the crime of stalking or any other stalking-related offense under RCW 9A.46.060, and the court issues an order protecting the victim, the court shall issue a stalking no-contact order pursuant to RCW 9A.46.055. [2021 c 215 § 108; 2013 c 84 § 27; 2012 c 223 § 1; 2011 c 307 § 4; 1985 c 288 § 4.]

Effective date—2022 c 268; 2021 c 215: See note following RCW 7.105.900.

RCW 9A.46.050 Arraignment—No-contact order. A defendant who is charged by citation, complaint, or information with an offense involving harassment and not arrested shall appear in court for arraignment in person as soon as practicable, but in no event later than fourteen days after the next day on which court is in session following the issuance of the citation or the filing of the complaint or information. At that appearance, the court shall determine the necessity of imposing a no-contact or no-harassment order, and consider the provisions of RCW 9.41.800, or other conditions of pretrial release according to the procedures established by court rule for preliminary appearance or an arraignment. [1994 sp.s. c 7 § 447; 1985 c 288 § 5.]

Finding—Intent—Severability—1994 sp.s. c 7: See notes following RCW 43.70.540.

Effective date—1994 sp.s. c 7 §§ 401-410, 413-416, 418-437, and 439-460: See note following RCW 9.41.010.

RCW 9A.46.055 Court-initiated stalking no-contact orders.

(1) (a) When any person charged with or arrested for stalking as defined in RCW 9A.46.110 or any other stalking-related offense under RCW 9A.46.060 is released from custody before arraignment or trial on bail or personal recognizance, the court authorizing the release may prohibit that person from having any contact with the victim. The jurisdiction authorizing the release shall determine whether that person should be prohibited from having any contact with the victim. If there is no outstanding restraining or protective order prohibiting that person from having contact with the victim, and the victim does not qualify for a domestic violence protection order under chapter 7.105 RCW, the court authorizing release may issue, by telephone, a stalking no-contact order prohibiting the person charged or arrested from having contact with the victim or from knowingly coming within, or knowingly remaining within, a specified distance of a location.

(b) In issuing the order, the court shall consider the provisions of RCW 9.41.800.

(c) The stalking no-contact order shall also be issued in writing as soon as possible.

(2) (a) At the time of arraignment or whenever a motion is brought to modify the conditions of the defendant's release, the court shall determine whether a stalking no-contact order shall be issued or extended. If a stalking no-contact order is issued or extended, the court may also include in the conditions of release a requirement that the defendant submit to electronic monitoring, including real-time global positioning system monitoring with victim notification. If electronic monitoring is ordered, the court shall specify who shall provide the monitoring services, and the terms under which the monitoring shall be performed. Upon conviction, the court may require as a condition of the sentence that the defendant reimburse the providing agency for the costs of the electronic monitoring, including costs relating to real-time global positioning system monitoring with victim notification.

(b) A stalking no-contact order issued by the court in conjunction with criminal charges shall terminate if the defendant is acquitted or the charges are dismissed, unless the victim files an independent action for a stalking protection order. If the victim files an independent action for a civil stalking protection order, the order may be continued by the court until a full hearing is conducted pursuant to chapter 7.105 RCW.

(3) (a) The written order releasing the person charged or arrested shall contain the court's directives and shall bear the legend: "Violation of this order is a criminal offense under chapter 7.105 RCW and will subject a violator to arrest. You can be arrested even if any person protected by the order invites or allows you to violate the order's prohibitions. You have the sole responsibility to avoid or refrain from violating the order's provisions. Only the court can change the order."

(b) A certified copy of the order shall be provided to the victim at no charge.

(4) If a stalking no-contact order has been issued prior to charging, that order shall expire at arraignment or within seventy-two hours if charges are not filed.

(5) Whenever an order prohibiting contact is issued pursuant to subsection (2) of this section, the clerk of the court shall forward a copy of the order on or before the next judicial day to the appropriate law enforcement agency specified in the order. Upon

receipt of the copy of the order, the law enforcement agency shall enter the order for one year unless a different expiration date is specified on the order into any computer-based criminal intelligence information system available in this state used by law enforcement agencies to list outstanding warrants. Entry into the computer-based criminal intelligence information system constitutes notice to all law enforcement agencies of the existence of the order. The order is fully enforceable in any jurisdiction in the state.

(6) (a) When a defendant is found guilty of stalking as defined in RCW 9A.46.110 or any other stalking-related offense under RCW 9A.46.060 and a condition of the sentence restricts the defendant's ability to have contact with the victim, and the victim does not qualify for a domestic violence protection order under chapter 7.105 RCW, the condition shall be recorded as a stalking no-contact order.

(b) The written order entered as a condition of sentencing shall contain the court's directives and shall bear the legend: "Violation of this order is a criminal offense under chapter 7.105 RCW and will subject a violator to arrest. You can be arrested even if any person protected by the order invites or allows you to violate the order's prohibitions. You have the sole responsibility to avoid or refrain from violating the order's provisions. Only the court can change the order."

(c) A final stalking no-contact order entered in conjunction with a criminal prosecution shall remain in effect for a period of five years from the date of entry.

(d) A certified copy of the order shall be provided to the victim at no charge.

(7) A knowing violation of a court order issued under subsection (1), (2), or (6) of this section is punishable under RCW 7.105.450.

(8) Whenever a stalking no-contact order is issued, modified, or terminated under subsection (1), (2), or (6) of this section, the clerk of the court shall forward a copy of the order on or before the next judicial day to the appropriate law enforcement agency specified in the order. Upon receipt of the copy of the order, the law enforcement agency shall enter the order for one year unless a different expiration date is specified on the order into any computer-based criminal intelligence information system available in this state used by law enforcement agencies to list outstanding warrants. Entry into the computer-based criminal intelligence information system constitutes notice to all law enforcement agencies of the existence of the order. The order is fully enforceable in any jurisdiction in the state. Upon receipt of notice that an order has been terminated under subsection (2) of this section, the law enforcement agency shall remove the order from the computer-based criminal intelligence information system. [2021 c 215 § 165; 2013 c 84 § 16. Formerly RCW 7.92.160.]

Effective date—2022 c 268; 2021 c 215: See note following RCW 7.105.900.

RCW 9A.46.060 Crimes included in harassment. As used in this chapter, "harassment" may include but is not limited to any of the following crimes:

- (1) Harassment (RCW 9A.46.020);
- (2) Hate crime (RCW 9A.36.080);

- (3) Telephone harassment (RCW 9.61.230);
- (4) Assault in the first degree (RCW 9A.36.011);
- (5) Assault of a child in the first degree (RCW 9A.36.120);
- (6) Assault in the second degree (RCW 9A.36.021);
- (7) Assault of a child in the second degree (RCW 9A.36.130);
- (8) Assault in the fourth degree (RCW 9A.36.041);
- (9) Reckless endangerment (RCW 9A.36.050);
- (10) Extortion in the first degree (RCW 9A.56.120);
- (11) Extortion in the second degree (RCW 9A.56.130);
- (12) Coercion (RCW 9A.36.070);
- (13) Burglary in the first degree (RCW 9A.52.020);
- (14) Burglary in the second degree (RCW 9A.52.030);
- (15) Criminal trespass in the first degree (RCW 9A.52.070);
- (16) Criminal trespass in the second degree (RCW 9A.52.080);
- (17) Malicious mischief in the first degree (RCW 9A.48.070);
- (18) Malicious mischief in the second degree (RCW 9A.48.080);
- (19) Malicious mischief in the third degree (RCW 9A.48.090);
- (20) Kidnapping in the first degree (RCW 9A.40.020);
- (21) Kidnapping in the second degree (RCW 9A.40.030);
- (22) Unlawful imprisonment (RCW 9A.40.040);
- (23) Rape in the first degree (RCW 9A.44.040);
- (24) Rape in the second degree (RCW 9A.44.050);
- (25) Rape in the third degree (RCW 9A.44.060);
- (26) Indecent liberties (RCW 9A.44.100);
- (27) Rape of a child in the first degree (RCW 9A.44.073);
- (28) Rape of a child in the second degree (RCW 9A.44.076);
- (29) Rape of a child in the third degree (RCW 9A.44.079);
- (30) Child molestation in the first degree (RCW 9A.44.083);
- (31) Child molestation in the second degree (RCW 9A.44.086);
- (32) Child molestation in the third degree (RCW 9A.44.089);
- (33) Stalking (RCW 9A.46.110);
- (34) Cyber harassment (RCW 9A.90.120);
- (35) Residential burglary (RCW 9A.52.025);
- (36) Violation of a temporary, permanent, or final protective order issued pursuant to chapter 9A.44, 9A.46, 10.99, or 26.09 RCW or any of the former chapters 7.90, 10.14, and 26.50 RCW, or violation of a domestic violence protection order, sexual assault protection order, or antiharassment protection order issued under chapter 7.105 RCW;
- (37) Unlawful discharge of a laser in the first degree (RCW 9A.49.020); and
- (38) Unlawful discharge of a laser in the second degree (RCW 9A.49.030). [2022 c 231 § 15; (2022 c 231 § 14 expired July 1, 2022); 2021 c 215 § 109; 2019 c 271 § 8; 2006 c 138 § 21; 2004 c 94 § 4; 1999 c 180 § 7; 1997 c 338 § 52. Prior: 1994 c 271 § 802; 1994 c 121 § 2; prior: 1992 c 186 § 4; 1992 c 145 § 12; 1988 c 145 § 15; 1985 c 288 § 6.]

Effective date—2022 c 231 §§ 8, 9, 11, 13, and 15: See note following RCW 7.105.010.

Expiration date—2022 c 231 §§ 7, 10, 12, 14, 16, and 17: See note following RCW 9.94A.030.

Effective date—2022 c 268; 2021 c 215: See note following RCW 7.105.900.

Severability—Effective dates—2004 c 94: See notes following RCW 9A.90.120.

Finding—Evaluation—Report—1997 c 338: See note following RCW 13.40.0357.

Severability—Effective dates—1997 c 338: See notes following RCW 5.60.060.

Purpose—Severability—1994 c 271: See notes following RCW 9A.28.020.

Severability—1992 c 186: See note following RCW 9A.46.110.

Effective date—Savings—Application—1988 c 145: See notes following RCW 9A.44.010.

RCW 9A.46.070 Enforcement of orders restricting contact. Any law enforcement agency in this state may enforce this chapter as it relates to orders restricting the defendants' ability to have contact with the victim or others. [1985 c 288 § 7.]

RCW 9A.46.080 Order restricting contact—Violation. The victim shall be informed by local law enforcement agencies or the prosecuting attorney of the final disposition of the case in which the victim is involved. If a defendant is found guilty of a crime of harassment and a condition of the sentence restricts the defendant's ability to have contact with the victim or witnesses, the condition shall be recorded and a written certified copy of that order shall be provided to the victim or witnesses by the clerk of the court. Willful violation of a court order issued under this section or an equivalent local ordinance is a gross misdemeanor. The written order shall contain the court's directives and shall bear the legend: Violation of this order is a criminal offense under chapter 9A.46 RCW and will subject a violator to arrest. [2012 c 223 § 2; 2011 c 307 § 5; 1985 c 288 § 8.]

RCW 9A.46.085 Stalking no-contact orders—Appearance before magistrate required. (1) A defendant arrested for stalking as defined by RCW 9A.46.110 shall be required to appear in person before a magistrate within one judicial day after the arrest.

(2) At the time of appearance provided in subsection (1) of this section the court shall determine the necessity of imposing a stalking no-contact order under this chapter.

(3) Appearances required pursuant to this section are mandatory and cannot be waived.

(4) The stalking no-contact order shall be issued and entered with the appropriate law enforcement agency pursuant to the procedures outlined in this chapter. [2021 c 215 § 110; 2013 c 84 § 28.]

Effective date—2022 c 268; 2021 c 215: See note following RCW 7.105.900.

RCW 9A.46.090 Nonliability of peace officer. A peace officer shall not be held liable in any civil action for an arrest based on probable cause, enforcement in good faith of a court order, or any other action or omission in good faith under this chapter arising from an alleged incident of harassment brought by any party to the incident. [1985 c 288 § 9.]

RCW 9A.46.100 "Convicted," time when. As used in RCW 9.61.230, *9.61.260, 9A.46.020, or 9A.46.110, a person has been "convicted" at such time as a plea of guilty has been accepted or a verdict of guilty has been filed, notwithstanding the pendency of any future proceedings including but not limited to sentencing, posttrial motions, and appeals. [2004 c 94 § 5; 1992 c 186 § 5; 1985 c 288 § 10.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 9.61.260 was recodified as RCW 9A.90.120 pursuant to 2022 c 231 § 4.

Severability—Effective dates—2004 c 94: See notes following RCW 9A.90.120.

Severability—1992 c 186: See note following RCW 9A.46.110.

RCW 9A.46.110 Stalking. (1) A person commits the crime of stalking if, without lawful authority and under circumstances not amounting to a felony attempt of another crime:

(a) He or she intentionally and repeatedly harasses or repeatedly follows another person; and

(b) The person being harassed or followed is placed in fear that the stalker intends to injure the person, another person, or property of the person or of another person. The feeling of fear must be one that a reasonable person in the same situation would experience under all the circumstances; and

(c) The stalker either:

(i) Intends to frighten, intimidate, or harass the person; or

(ii) Knows or reasonably should know that the person is afraid, intimidated, or harassed even if the stalker did not intend to place the person in fear or intimidate or harass the person.

(2) (a) It is not a defense to the crime of stalking under subsection (1) (c) (i) of this section that the stalker was not given actual notice that the person did not want the stalker to contact or follow the person; and

(b) It is not a defense to the crime of stalking under subsection (1) (c) (ii) of this section that the stalker did not intend to frighten, intimidate, or harass the person.

(3) It shall be a defense to the crime of stalking that the defendant is a licensed private investigator acting within the capacity of his or her license as provided by chapter 18.165 RCW.

(4) Attempts to contact or follow the person after being given actual notice that the person does not want to be contacted or followed constitutes prima facie evidence that the stalker intends to intimidate or harass the person. "Contact" includes, in addition to any other form of contact or communication, the sending of an electronic communication to the person.

(5) (a) Except as provided in (b) of this subsection, a person who stalks another person is guilty of a gross misdemeanor.

(b) A person who stalks another is guilty of a class B felony if any of the following applies: (i) The stalker has previously been convicted in this state or any other state of any crime of harassment, as defined in RCW 9A.46.060, of the same victim or members of the victim's family or household or any person specifically named in a protective order; (ii) the stalking violates any protective order protecting the person being stalked; (iii) the stalker has previously been convicted of a gross misdemeanor or felony stalking offense under this section for stalking another person; (iv) the stalker was armed with a deadly weapon, as defined in RCW 9.94A.825, while stalking the person; (v) (A) the stalker's victim is or was a law enforcement officer; judge; juror; attorney; victim advocate; legislator; community corrections' officer; an employee, contract staff person, or volunteer of a correctional agency; court employee, court clerk, or courthouse facilitator; or an employee of the child protective, child welfare, or adult protective services division within the department of social and health services; and (B) the stalker stalked the victim to retaliate against the victim for an act the victim performed during the course of official duties or to influence the victim's performance of official duties; or (vi) the stalker's victim is a current, former, or prospective witness in an adjudicative proceeding, and the stalker stalked the victim to retaliate against the victim as a result of the victim's testimony or potential testimony.

(6) As used in this section:

(a) "Correctional agency" means a person working for the department of natural resources in a correctional setting or any state, county, or municipally operated agency with the authority to direct the release of a person serving a sentence or term of confinement and includes but is not limited to the department of corrections, the indeterminate sentence review board, and the department of social and health services.

(b) "Course of conduct" means a pattern of conduct composed of a series of acts over a period of time, however short, evidencing a continuity of purpose. "Course of conduct" includes, in addition to any other form of communication, contact, or conduct, the sending of an electronic communication, but does not include constitutionally protected free speech. Constitutionally protected activity is not included within the meaning of "course of conduct."

(c) "Follows" means deliberately maintaining visual or physical proximity to a specific person over a period of time. A finding that the alleged stalker repeatedly and deliberately appears at the person's home, school, place of employment, business, or any other location to maintain visual or physical proximity to the person is sufficient to find that the alleged stalker follows the person. It is not necessary to establish that the alleged stalker follows the person while in transit from one location to another.

(d) "Harasses" means a knowing and willful course of conduct directed at a specific person which seriously alarms, annoys, harasses, or is detrimental to such person, and which serves no legitimate or lawful purpose. The course of conduct shall be such as would cause a reasonable person to suffer substantial emotional distress, and shall actually cause substantial emotional distress to the petitioner, or when the course of conduct would cause a reasonable parent to fear for the well-being of his or her child.

(e) "Protective order" means any temporary or permanent court order prohibiting or limiting violence against, harassment of, contact or communication with, or physical proximity to another person.

(f) "Repeatedly" means on two or more separate occasions. [2021 c 215 § 111; 2013 c 84 § 29; 2007 c 201 § 1; 2006 c 95 § 3; 2003 c 53 § 70. Prior: 1999 c 143 § 35; 1999 c 27 § 3; 1994 c 271 § 801; 1992 c 186 § 1.]

Effective date—2022 c 268; 2021 c 215: See note following RCW 7.105.900.

Findings—Intent—2006 c 95: See note following RCW 74.04.790.

Intent—Effective date—2003 c 53: See notes following RCW 2.48.180.

Intent—1999 c 27: See note following RCW 9A.46.020.

Purpose—Severability—1994 c 271: See notes following RCW 9A.28.020.

Severability—1992 c 186: "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1992 c 186 § 10.]

RCW 9A.46.120 Criminal gang intimidation. A person commits the offense of criminal gang intimidation if the person threatens another person with bodily injury because the other person refuses to join or has attempted to withdraw from a gang, as defined in RCW 28A.600.455, if the person who threatens the victim or the victim attends or is registered in a public or alternative school. Criminal gang intimidation is a class C felony. [1997 c 266 § 3.]

Findings—Intent—Severability—1997 c 266: See notes following RCW 28A.600.455.

RCW 9A.46.900 Short title. This act shall be known as the anti-harassment act of 1985. [1985 c 288 § 12.]

RCW 9A.46.905 Effective date—1985 c 288. This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, and safety, the support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect May 1, 1985. [1985 c 288 § 15.]