

Online Harassment and Doxxing Emergency Protocols

This infosheet is for people currently experiencing online harassment and/or doxxing. Doxxing is the act of publishing personal information about someone without their consent, and using that information to cause them harm.

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How to know if there is a harassment campaign against you

- You receive a massive increase in social media notifications, friend requests, profile views. If there are messages too, they are harassing or even threatening.
- You receive harassing emails from unknown email addresses or calls from unknown numbers. These messages may extend to colleagues, administrators, family, friends, or anyone else associated with you.
- You see private information about you leaked online, to a specific website, social media, or in the contents of the harassing messages.
- You may receive notifications about attempts to access your accounts.

NOTE: Typical doxxing and harassment campaigns last less than a few weeks, but may last for several months or more.

Your support system and mental health

This is not your fault and you deserve to be supported and protected. Emotional support is the most important thing you can have during this time. Be ready to accept help; you don't have to navigate this alone.

DO:

- Recruit friends, family, and/or trusted colleagues to be on your support team. Explain to them exactly what is happening to you, that you will need their support in processing it and their help navigating it. Here is an example of what you might say:

I'm currently experiencing a targeted online harassment campaign [and I am being doxxed, which means my personal information is being published online]. This is an increasingly common form of harassment against women, people of color, LGBTQ people. I am being harassed through [email, texts, social media posts] by [dozens, hundreds] of people and it's very scary and emotionally draining. Sometimes this harassment can result in a person's address being posted publicly, their family members targeted, attempts to get them fired from their job, and more. I don't know how long this harassment will go on for or how much it will escalate, but it's happening right now and I need you to know. The support I need during this time is [just being here for me and knowing what I'm going through] [giving me space at work/home] [checking in with me] [being on my support team].

- If it's available to you, schedule some time off from work and other duties.
- If it feels overwhelming to take these emergency steps, stop and reach out to your support team or professional mental health.
 - Check your access to counseling services (workplace/union/religious institution/insurance coverage).
 - If you are concerned about your employer's mental health services being used against you in some way, learn more about the crisis intervention [laws in your state](#).
 - If you still need help finding support, look at the services available in your community and state.
 - In the US, calling 211 in many places will connect you with a health and human services directory.
 - Search [Good Therapy](#) for therapists in your area that offer discounted sessions or on a sliding scale.

DO NOT:

- Antagonize the people harassing you. Typical harassers will get bored and move on if they don't get the response they're seeking.
- Ignore the harassment and wait for it to go away. Friends, family, and colleagues may not understand what is happening and might advise you to not worry about it. But in many cases, ignoring the harassment can be isolating. Don't engage with it directly, but don't ignore it.

What should your support team do?

- Monitor your accounts - social media, email, etc - to watch the campaign against you.
- Keep a record of everything that's happening (e.g. through screenshots) in case you need them later.
- Help you process your feelings, distract you when things get overwhelming, and make a list of things that you need to get done for your self-care.
- Help you advocate for yourself at work if the harassment against you isn't being taken seriously.

Support team members must have the temperament to handle difficult situations and maintain a clear head in moments of crisis.

First steps

- Assemble your support team and share relevant login info to your accounts.

- Lock down all social media.
- Take inventory of what is happening and what is most urgent. Has your home address been shared? Your workplace? Information about your family? If you are seeing sensitive information about you posted publicly, and you feel unsafe, immediately skip to the section of this document about safety at work and at home.
 - Can you track where this information has been shared, and does that platform have an anti-doxxing policy to get it taken down?
- If your cell phone number has been compromised, you can:
 - Set up Google Voice for call forwarding, which can allow you to block all unknown numbers
 - Contact your phone service provider and ask about changing your number
 - Have a member of your support team monitor your device
- If happening on a social media platform, follow their steps for reporting harassment.
- If on another website, look into their documented steps for reporting harassment.

Your existing accounts:

- Replace all passwords with new unique ones.
 - We recommend using a password manager such as 1Password or KeePassXC.
 - A nondescript paper notebook is also acceptable. Keep it on your person, and take precautions when it is not (like a small safe or a security box).
- Turn on [2-factor/multi factor](#) authentication for all accounts that support it using an authenticator app like [Authy](#).
- Scrub your social media accounts.
 - Change privacy settings to friends-only/followers-only for. Set sensitive information (email, phone number) to “only you.”
 - Audit your list and “unfriend” anyone you don’t know.
 - Remove information like full legal name, location, place of work, birthday, relationship status, and other personal information.
 - Sever links that connect profiles; especially if they connect personal accounts (eg Facebook) to professional accounts (eg LinkedIn).
 - Make sure no two profiles use the same picture.
 - Consider using a picture that is not your face.
 - Do not use the same display/username between professional and personal profiles.
 - Consider deleting profiles; for example Facebook will retain your account information for 30 days after deleting.
- Tell your banks, credit cards, utility companies, etc. that you are being targeted. They can flag your account to be on alert for suspicious activity.
- Contact credit agencies to put a freeze on your credit.

Other information about you online

These steps can mitigate the extent of the doxxing or prevent further escalation. These steps can also help establish safeguards against future harassment attempts.

- Remove yourself from data brokers. These sites collect and sell personal information that is publicly available. They can reveal age, home address, phone number, and family members. The process of removing yourself from their search results is tedious, but it is essential. A list of data brokers is available [here](#).
 - There is a paid service called [DeleteMe](#) which can do this for you.
- Look up images of yourself on the web and contact the site owners to request removal. Removing images of yourself from the web is a difficult task but it will decrease available images for harassers to use to identify you. It will also help for you to consider when doing presentations/videos how you can minimize your picture being taken and recorded.

Physical safety and your workplace

- Talk to Human Resources, your supervisor, and IT about what is happening to you. Here is a script you may use for these conversations:
 I'm currently experiencing a targeted online harassment campaign [and I am being doxxed, which means my personal information is being published online]. This is an increasingly common form of harassment against women, people of color, LGBTQ people. I am being harassed through [email, texts, social media posts] by [dozens, hundreds] of people and it's very scary and emotionally draining. Sometimes this harassment can result in a person's address being posted publicly, their family members targeted, attempts to get them fired from their job, and more. I will need additional security measures in place to protect me at work, including [see checklist below]. I may need additional accommodations if the situation escalates.

 Ask IT what strategies can be taken to make sure your technology is safe.
- If your office is located in a vulnerable space, discuss finding a safer work location.
- Talk to your campus administrators about suppressing any public-facing profiles to remove sensitive information. Ask to delist your email address, office number, photo, and phone number from university websites.
- Contact workplace security to let them know about your situation. Ask what they can do to help you feel safe during this time.
 - Can they walk you to your car in the evening when it gets dark?
 - Is there a panic button/app available that you might use in an emergency situation when you can't access a phone?
 - Can they provide protective equipment like a taser?
 - If your workplace security is police or others you don't feel safe contacting, ask a trusted colleague, HR, union rep, or others who may be able to help you.

Safety at home

- If you don't feel safe at home, and have the means—leave. Consider staying with a member of your support team.
- If you don't want to leave your home, ask a trusted member of your support team to stay with you until things settle down and/or you feel safe staying alone.
- If you are renting, inform your manager/landlord that they might get contacted by someone trying to do you harm by getting them to ask you to leave your home.
- Consider setting up a [security system](#) (if you don't have one already).

Legal support

- If the harassment worsens or continues, you may consider taking legal action.
 - Investigate if your workplace has a legal team that can help you.
 - If you are in a union look into their legal services of support.
- If you don't have access to legal support, investigate if there are [pro bono](#) options. There is also, [LawHelp](#), [USA.gov](#), and [Department of Justice pro bono list](#) for you to consult to find legal help that is right for you.
- Once you have contacted legal support and informed them of your situation ask:
 - Have they worked with these types of cases before?
 - Can you pursue legal action?
 - Does your state have laws to support you?
 - Do they know of other organizations that can help support you?

Law enforcement

We have serious concerns about involving law enforcement in these and other matters. Often, they will not actually help the situation, and may actually make it worse by traumatizing the victim or even putting the victim in greater danger. That said, there are some situations where you may feel there is no other option to contact law enforcement. If your life is in danger and you feel that law enforcement could protect you, contact them immediately. We recommend having members of your support team on hand for any situation where law enforcement may be present. Also, be aware of what your state or city considers false reporting. Investigate if law enforcement has non-emergency options for reporting your harassment (e.g. [Atlanta Online Reporting](#)).

What to do when the harassment ends

- Take some time to breathe and take care of yourself. Take time off if possible.
- Check in with your support team and make sure that the evidence they collected about the harassment is labeled and stored (e.g. name the documents in a way that makes them findable later, date, etc.).
- Review the LFP preventative checklist at libraryfreedom.org/doxxing in order to stay safe against future harassment and doxxing attempts.



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