NNEDV

Spyware/Stalkerware Overview

SAFETY ALERT: Spyware and stalkerware have made it easier than ever before for perpetrators to stalk, track, monitor, and harass victims. Abusers, stalkers, and other perpetrators can use spyware to secretly monitor what you do on your mobile device, such as a smartphone or tablet. If you suspect you are being stalked or monitored:

- Be aware that anything you do on that device may be seen by the abuser, including searching for the spyware or how to get help.
- Use a device that the abusive person isn't monitoring.
- Trust your instincts. Look for patterns to help figure out what the person might be doing.

What is Spyware or Stalkerware?

Spyware or stalkerware is an app, software program, or device that enables another person (such as an abuser) to secretly monitor and record activity about another person's computer or phone. The term 'stalkerware' is a more recent term that draws intention to the invasive, intrusive, and dangerous misuse of these tools. Spyware enables remote monitoring to facilitate surveillance, harassment, abuse, stalking, and/or violence, without the user's consent. The software may be "hidden" on the device, and does not provide explicit and persistent notification that the software is installed. Spyware or stalkerware can be installed on a computer or smartphone. It is usually difficult to detect and remove.

Is Spyware or Stalkerware Legal?

In general, it is illegal to monitor or surveil another person without their permission or knowledge. This applies to both in-person behaviors and those acted out via technology. Depending on the circumstance and context, installing spyware can violate a wide range of laws, ranging from stalking or harassment, to

unauthorized access of a computer, to wiretapping and eavesdropping. For more information on laws related to electronic surveillance, visit WomensLaw.org.

What Can I Do If I Suspect Spyware?

If you suspect that spyware is on your device(s), read through the resources below to learn about spyware, signs to help determine if it's there, options for removing it, and how to document what's happening while keeping yourself safe. You can also consider speaking with law enforcement about what they can do to investigate the spyware on your device.

Be aware that anything you do on the device with spyware installed could be revealed to the person who is monitoring it, so consider using a device that isn't being monitored. Also, consider other ways that someone could know about the activity on your devices, such as having access to the device itself, to your online accounts, or even by simply asking other people who have information about you.

- Spyware and Stalkerware: Phone Surveillance & Safety for Survivors
- Spyware and Stalkerware: Computer Surveillance & Safety for Survivor
- Documentation Tips for Survivors
- 12 Tips on Cell Phone Safety and Privacy
- Computer and Laptop Security Tips
- Mobile Spyware: Evidence Collection Series (for professionals working in legal system)

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