



# Handling HARASSMENT in Singapore

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WHAT IS  
HARASSMENT?

HOW CAN I  
PROTECT MYSELF?

HOW TO APPLY FOR  
PROTECTION ORDERS?

*This pamphlet is prepared by law students for educational purposes and outlines key differences between the Protection from Harassment Act 2014 (POHA) and the Women's Charter 1961 in the Singapore context. Information is accurate as of 1 August 2025. It is not legal advice, and the authors accept no liability for any loss from reliance on it. Please seek a qualified lawyer for advice on your specific situation.*

## WHAT IS HARASSMENT?

According to the  
Protection from Harassment Act 2014 (POHA)

### SECTION 3 Intentionally cause harassment, alarm or distress

An individual/entity **acts intentionally** to cause harassment/alarm/distress to a victim by –  
(a) using any threatening / abusive / insulting words, behaviour or communication toward a targeted person; or  
(b) publish any identity information about a targeted person or a related individual to the victim.

Examples:

- X and Y were in a relationship that ended badly. X goes on social media and posts a picture of Y's school with a caption threatening to find Y at his / her school.

### SECTION 4 Perceived harassment, harm and distress

An individual / entity by any means uses threatening / abusive / insulting words, behaviour, or communication which can be heard / seen / perceived by any person as likely cause harassment / harm / distress.

Examples:

- X and Y are classmates. X posts a vulgar rant about Y on social media. Y's friend shows Y the message. Y is now distressed.

Note the difference between sections 3 and 4.

**Section 3:**

- More serious offence.
- Requires the offender to possess the mental element of intention to cause harassment.

**Section 4:**

- Less severe offence.
- Does not require the offender to possess the mental element of intention to cause harassment.
- A reasonable person perceiving the offender's conduct as harassment is sufficient.

### SECTION 5 Fear, provocation or facilitation of violence

An individual/entity must not by any means –  
(a) use threatening/abusive/insulting words, behaviour or communication toward a victim; or  
(b) publish any identity information of the victim or a related person to the victim;

if either:

- (a) the individual or entity intends to provoke the use of unlawful violence against the victim or any other person, or intends to cause the victim to believe that such violence will be used; or
- (b) it is likely that the victim would believe that unlawful violence will be used against them or any other person.

Examples:

- X publishes Y's home address, and follows by threatening to beat up Y. If X had intended or knows that Y would believe that violence would be used against Y through X's publishing of the address, X will be guilty of an offence.

### SECTION 6 Offences in relation to public servant or public service worker

When an individual/entity who uses or sends indecent/threatening/abusive/insulting words or messages to a public servant/service worker in connection with their duties, or targets them to stop them from doing their job or because of something they did lawfully.

Examples:

- X posts abusive comments and shares the photos and home address of Y, who is a public servant.

### SECTION 7 Unlawful stalking

If the accused engages in a course of conduct which:  
(a) involves acts or omissions associated with stalking;  
(b) causes harassment, alarm or distress to the victim; and  
(c) the accused –  
(i) intends to cause harassment / alarm / distress to the victim; or  
(ii) knows or ought reasonably to know is likely to cause harassment / alarm / distress to the victim.

Examples:

- X following Y;
- X loitering near Y's home, workplace, or other frequented places.

# RESOURCES

For further assistance in finding more information or help in filing a PO/PPO, you can consider the following organisations –

## 1 PROTECTION SPECIALIST CENTRES

**TRANS SAFE Centre** <https://www.trans.org.sg/>  
+65 6449 9088  
Blk 410 Bedok North Avenue 2, #01-58, Singapore 460410

**Care Corner Project stART**  
<https://www.carecorner.org.sg/services/sexual-assault-recovery/>  
+65 6476 1482  
Blk 7A Commonwealth Ave, #01-672, Singapore 141007

**PAVE Integrated Services for Individual and Family Protection Specialist Centre** <https://pave.org.sg/>  
+65 6555 0390  
• Blk 211, Ang Mo Kio Ave 3, #01-1446, Singapore 560211  
• Blk 305 Yishun Central, #01-175, Singapore 760305

## 2 FAMILY PROTECTION CENTRE

**Family Justice Courts**, Level 1, 3 Havelock Square,  
Singapore 059725

## 3 SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES & LEGAL CLINICS

**AWARE Singapore Sexual Assault Care Centre**  
<https://www.aware.org.sg/womens-care-centre/sexual-assault-care-centre-sacc/>  
+65 6779 0282

**SHECARES@SCWO** <https://www.scwo.org.sg/what-we-do/services/shecaresscwo/> (counselling and pro bono legal assistance for targets of online harms)  
8001 01 4616 (call) or +65 6571 4400 (WhatsApp)

**SMU Pro Bono Centre Legal Clinic** (+65 6828 1951)

**Pro Bono SG** <https://www.probono.sg/get-legal-help/legal-guidance/> (for a comprehensive list of registration information and legal clinics available)

## WHAT YOU CAN DO AS A BYSTANDER

Scan or click the QR code to read SOSCIETY x Voices@SMU's magazine "All About Bystander Intervention" which shares more on how you can be an active bystander!



## WHAT IS A PROTECTION ORDER AND A PERSONAL PROTECTION ORDER?

A **Protection Order (PO)** under the POHA is a legal directive aimed at protecting people from being targets of harassment or stalking, whether online or in other means.

### Who can apply?

Individuals experiencing harassment, which refers to situations in POHA sections 3 to 7 (refer to pamphlet overleaf).

### When is it granted?

When respondent

- has contravened one or more of POHA sections 3 to 7 in respect of victim **AND**
- is likely to continue that contravention or commit another contravention under POHA sections 3 to 7.

Note:

- Circumstances have to be deemed just and equitable.
- Contravention of POHA sections 3 to 7 can also incur criminal liability, punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment term.

### Expedited Protection Order (EPO)

The court is able to grant EPOs (expedited, temporary versions of POs) to provide immediate protection while awaiting the hearing of PO application.

- POHA Section 13, EPO: Granted if the victim's day-to-day activities are adversely affected by the respondent.

**Example 1:** Sarah receives daily abusive emails from an anonymous sender, causing her significant distress. Under POHA, this would likely be classified as intentional harassment, and Sarah could apply for a PO under section 3.

**Example 2:** An ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend continues to harass their ex-partner after the relationship has ended. This could include revenge porn, where an ex-partner distributes intimate images or videos without consent as a form of retaliation or control. The victim could apply for a PO.

### APPLY

### INFORM

### HEARING

- Complete online assessment in the Community Justice and Tribunals Division (CJTD) system to check case eligibility.
- File an Originating Summons and affirmed affidavit at CJTD (State Courts, Level 1) with your IC and evidence of harassment.
- Attend the pre-trial conference (PTC) scheduled by the judge.
- Serve the application to the respondent to inform them of the court order.
- File an affidavit of service at CJTD to confirm service (e.g., if served by email, submit email printout).
- If a PTC is fixed, all parties must attend. The judge may refer parties for mediation.
- If mediation resolves the case, it concludes; otherwise, a hearing date is set. Bring all evidence to the hearing.
- If the judge grants a PO, you must serve it on the other parties and file an affidavit of service at CJTD.
- The PO takes effect only after successful service.

A **Personal Protection Order (PPO)** under the Women's Charter is a legal directive which restrains the respondent from committing family violence against the applicant.

### Who can apply?

Individuals experiencing family violence and persons who have been appointed as protectors.

### When is it granted?

When court is satisfied that:

- the respondent has committed or is likely to commit family violence against the applicant, **AND**
- a PPO is necessary to protect the applicant's personal safety.

### Expedited Order (EO)

The court is able to grant EOs (expedited, temporary versions of PPOs) to provide immediate protection while awaiting the hearing of PPO application.

- Women's Charter Section 61, EO: Granted if court is satisfied that there is danger of family violence being committed when PPO application is pending.

**Family violence:** Violence or threats of violence by family members or appointed protectors. This includes physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse. The conduct can be an isolated event or occur multiple times. (section 58B of the Women's Charter)

**Protectors:** People with suitable qualifications and experience, appointed by the Ministry of Social and Family Development's Director-General of Social Welfare to intervene in certain circumstances.

**Example 1:** Anna's father often smashes furniture in her house when angry. This behaviour causes Anna fear of personal injury. He has committed physical and emotional/psychological abuse against her.

**Example 2:** Rachel's husband makes demeaning comments to humiliate her in front of their children. He threatens to stop her allowance if she contacts family, friends, or seeks help. Rachel suffers mental harm. He has committed emotional/psychological abuse against her.

### APPLY

### HEARING

### APPEAL

- File an in-person PPO application at the Family Protection Centre or a Protection Specialist Centre.
- An application can also be filed online via iFAMS.
- After filing, parties must attend a court mention.
- The court may refer parties to counselling or set a later hearing.
- If unsatisfied with the order made by the court at the end of the hearing, you may appeal to the Family Division of the High Court.