

The 5 D's of Active Bystander Intervention

Thank you to [RIGHT TO BE](#) and [Lanark County Interval House & Community Support \(LCIHCS\)](#) for their information on Bystander Intervention.

Intervening when something is wrong is hard. It's difficult to know what to say or do to help the situation, rather than making it worse. Lots of times it's easier to just think it's none of my business and walk away.

The bystander effect occurs when we see a person in need and decide not to help, usually because we think someone else might help.

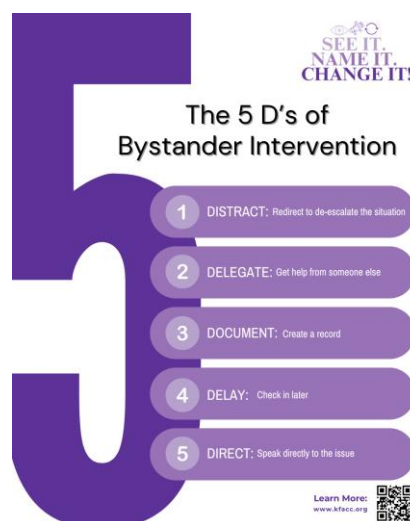
The only one responsible for violence is the perpetrator, but we all have a responsibility to change the culture around Violence and Harassment; we all have the ability to look out for each other's safety. If we all spoke up as active bystanders, we could put an end to so many instances of violence. Even things like sexist jokes, inappropriate comments, innuendos, or catcalling – they aren't illegal, but they are threatening and harmful, and they contribute to a society where violence is normalized.

It can be uncomfortable to step in, but if it means helping someone, and making our community safer for everyone, it's worth it! Whether it's safely confronting the abuser, or giving someone a safe ride home, we can all help to prevent violence and harassment.

Using the 5 D's

The 5 Ds are different methods – Distract, Delegate, Document, Delay, and Direct – that you can use to support someone who's being harassed, to emphasize that harassment is not okay, and to demonstrate to people in your life that they have the power to make their community safer. No matter which of the 5 D's you use, always make sure to check on the victim afterwards. Ask if they are okay, offer to sit or walk with them, and offer to help them report the incident.

Remember: Always prioritize your own safety and do not get involved if it is too dangerous to do so.



DISTRACT

Distraction is a subtle and creative way to intervene. Its aim is simply to derail the incident of harassment by interrupting it and taking the attention off the affected person. Approach either the perpetrator or the affected person with an innocent question or a disruptive comment that interrupts the current situation and changes the tone. Don't talk about or refer to the harassment that's happening, instead, talk about something completely unrelated. Ask for directions or the time, pretend you know the person being harassed and start talking to them etc.



DELEGATE

Delegation is asking a third party for help with intervening in harassment. Look for a Delegate who is ready and willing to help, often the person right next to you! When you Delegate someone to help you, try to tell them as clearly as possible what you're witnessing and how you'd like them to help, for example say "I think the person with the red hat is making the one in the blue jacket uncomfortable. Can you help me get them out of the situation? Can you distract by standing in between the two while I go ask if 'Blue Jacket' is okay?"

Work together to come up with a plan to intervene!



DOCUMENT

Document with photos, videos, notes etc., it is helpful to record harassment, but there are some keys for safely doing so. Assess the situation.

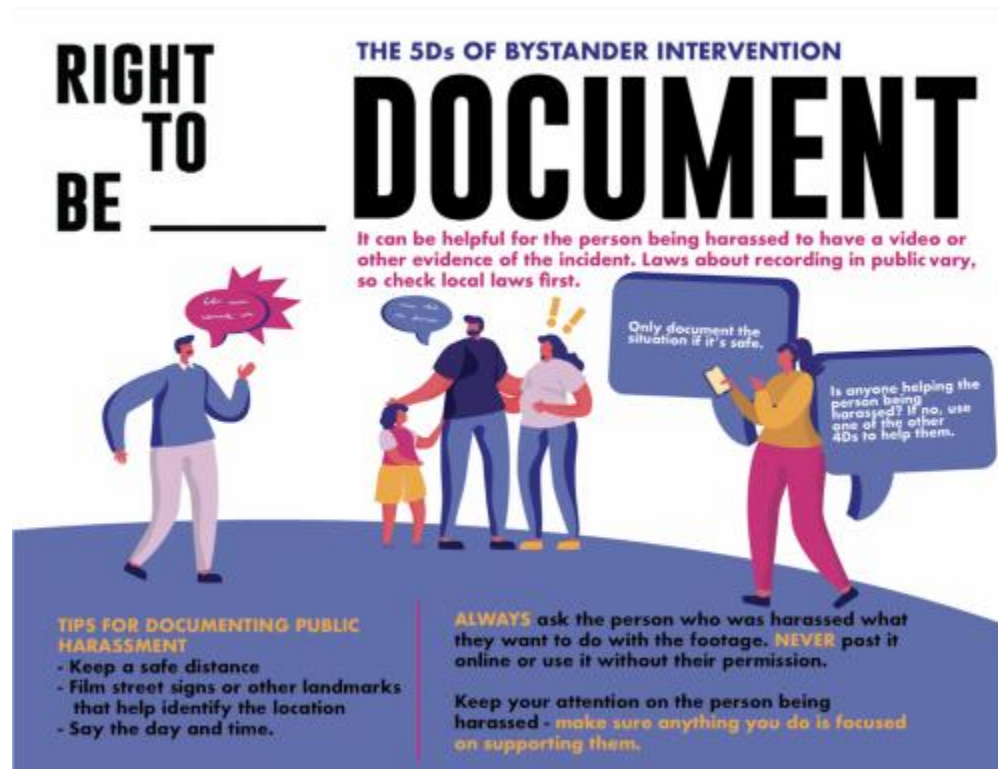
Is anyone helping the person being harassed? If not, use another of the 5Ds. Recording someone without ensuring they're already receiving help can create further trauma.

If someone is already helping, assess your safety and begin documenting. Say the time and document locations by including street names, signs or landmarks.

ALWAYS ask the harassed person what they want to do with your video/notes. **NEVER livestream or share online – it is not your story to tell.** Being harassed or violated is already a disempowering experience, and if we publicize an image or footage of a person being harmed without their consent, it can make them feel even more powerless. If the documentation goes viral online, it can make that person visible in a way they may not want to be.

Also, if we publicize footage of someone being harassed in a way that is illegal, we can open a host of legal issues for that person without their consent. Our action may force them to engage with the legal system in a way that they're not comfortable with.

Let the victim know you have documentation and give/send it to them as requested.



DELAY

Even if we can't act in the moment, we can still make a difference for someone who's been harassed by checking in on them after the fact. Many types of harassment happen in passing or very quickly, and it's not always possible we'll have a chance to intervene in another way. But we don't have to just ignore what happened and move on. We can help reduce that person's trauma by speaking to them after an instance of harassment. Ask the victim later if they are okay, share resources with them, or offer to report it if they want to do so. Let them know you saw what happened and it wasn't okay.

Here are some examples of how you can Delay:

- Ask them if they're okay, and let them know you saw what happened and it wasn't okay.
- Ask them if there's any way you can support them.
- Offer to accompany them to their destination or sit with them for a while.
- Share resources with them and offer to help them make a report if they want to.
- If you've documented the incident, ask them if they want you to give them the documentation.



DIRECT

Sometimes, we may want to respond directly to harassment by naming the inappropriate behavior by confronting the person doing harm.

Direct intervention may be direct and obvious, such as stating directly to the perpetrator that the behaviour is unacceptable, or it may be less obvious, such as saying that what you are seeing is causing you concern. It can be uncomfortable, but it is sometimes the most effective method to stop an unacceptable behaviour.

Use this method with caution. Assess the situation as it can be risky – the person harassing may redirect their abuse towards the intervening bystander or may escalate the situation in another way. Never put yourself, or the victim, in harm's way. **Always prioritize safety and do not put yourself, or anyone else, in harm's way!**

Keep it short and to the point and avoid engaging in dialogue, debate, or an argument. Confront the harasser in a direct, respectful manner:

“You need to stop “or “Leave them alone”

“That’s inappropriate” or “That’s not okay”

“They’ve asked you to leave them alone and I’m here to support them.”

If the person harassing responds to your direct intervention, focus your attention on assisting the person who was harmed, instead of engaging with the person doing the harm.



What If I'm the Target?

Be direct; make it clear you are uncomfortable. Cross the street and go to a café, shop, or somewhere with people. If verbal put your headphones and ignore the perpetrator, but turn the volume down to keep aware of your surroundings and the perpetrators location, while seeking a safe place. Ask for help if you are feeling unsafe!

Remember it's not your fault, and it isn't your responsibility, to have the perfect response. Be resilient! You have the right to be on the streets!

Things to Remember:

Notice and assess your safety to decide which of the 5 D's works for you. What feels the safest?

- There is no right or perfect response, but any response is better than nothing!
- Always check in on the victim as soon as possible to make sure they are okay.
- Never make jokes in this situation. It perpetuates the idea that harassment is funny.