

Responding to Harassing or Threatening Messages on Social Media, Email or Mail

If you receive violent or threatening messages on social media, via email or in the mail, it may be challenging to know what to do. Depending on the content of the message, the platform it was sent on and the sender, there are several actions you can take to protect yourself and avoid any further disruptions

To avoid future instances of unwanted comments on your social media accounts, regularly review your privacy settings to ensure only those you wish to access your content can see and engage with your posts.

Step 1: Disengage

If you receive a threat or comment containing bullying or harassing language on social media, the best course of action is to disengage. Do not respond. To respond could potentially invite further harmful comments.

If you feel you must respond, message the sender privately and calmly ask them to stop. If you feel you must post a public response, do not single out the sender and do not tag them in your post. Post a response to the theme, content or sentiment of the message.

Step 2: Block or mute the sender

If you receive a threat or comment containing bullying or harassing language on social media from an account you do not wish to see content from anymore, you can mute or block the sender.

When you mute or block an account, the account you mute or block will not be notified that you have muted or blocked them. When you mute or block an account you will not see any updates from that account anymore. The difference between muting and blocking is that a muted account can still view your activity while a blocked account cannot.

[View a guide for how to mute accounts](#)

[View a guide for how to block accounts](#)

Step 3: Report the threats to the social media platform or email service

If you feel the comments are in violation of the email service or social media platform's terms of service or are persistent despite your attempts to disengage, you can report the abuse to the social media platform where the comments or messages were posted or the email service used to send the messages.

Keep copies or screenshots of all messages, posts, emails or comments that concern you and, if possible, document who made each of the comments.

[Access Twitter's harassment policy](#)

[Access Facebook's harassment policy](#)

[Access Instagram's harassment policy](#)

[Access TikTok's harassment policy](#)

[Access YouTube's harassment policy](#)

[Access Microsoft's harassment policy](#)

[Access Apple's harassment policy](#)

[Access Google's harassment policy](#)

Step 4: Contact local authorities

In situations involving aggressive and/or threatening behaviour, you are strongly urged to contact your local police for assistance and guidance. Any copies or screenshots of interactions you have kept will assist the authorities with your case.

OMA Legal Services is also available to discuss options about what you can do if you receive threats. OMA Legal Services can be contacted at legal.affairs@oma.org.

Additional resources

If you need additional assistance managing issues with violence and harassment, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta and Doctors of BC have guidance on the best ways to protect yourself.

Receiving threats and harassment can take a toll on your mental health and well-being. Below are some resources to help you consider if maintaining a public social media profile is right for you and supports you can access if you're feeling overwhelmed.

- [Managing threatening and violent patient behaviour \(CPSA\)](#)
- [Sound Mind: Threats, harassment and trolls: Is being a "public" medical voice worth it? \(CMA podcast\)](#)
- [Preventing Violence in Healthcare \(Doctors of BC\)](#)
- [Violence preventing guide for community clinics \(Doctors of BC\)](#)
- [Physician Health Program](#)