

Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress

“[Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress](#) (IIED) is primarily a civil tort, not a distinct criminal charge, arising when extreme, outrageous conduct intentionally or recklessly causes severe emotional trauma. While rarely prosecuted directly, such acts—including **stalking, severe harassment, or terroristic threats**—can lead to criminal charges under statutes addressing harassment, bullying, or menacing.

Key Aspects of IIED (Civil Tort)

- **Extreme and Outrageous Conduct:** Behavior must exceed all bounds of decency, such as abuse of power, severe bullying, or humiliating conduct.
- **Intentional or Reckless:** The actor must intend to cause distress or act with reckless disregard for the likelihood of causing it.
- **Severe Emotional Distress:** The victim must experience distress so intense that no reasonable person could endure it (e.g., PTSD, anxiety).
- **Causation:** A direct link must exist between the conduct and the emotional distress.

Criminalization of Emotional Distress

While traditionally a tort, some jurisdictions are creating statutes that penalize the criminal infliction of emotional distress, particularly when it involves malicious harassment or stalking.

Examples of Outrageous Conduct

- **Workplace Harassment:** Ongoing sexual harassment.
- **Abuse of Authority:** A person in power utilizing their position to harass or intimidate.
- **Malicious Acts:** Informing someone falsely that a loved one has died.

Defenses

- **Consent:** If the plaintiff consented to the conduct.
- **Free Speech:** Protects certain offensive statements, though not absolute.

Damages

Victims may recover damages for mental anguish, medical expenses (e.g., therapy), and any physical harm resulting from the distress.

For legal advice, consult an attorney, or to understand criminal charges in your area, contact local law enforcement.”