



# SHOTS HEARD ROUND THE WORLD TOOLKIT

*Guidance on how to prepare for, defend against, and move forward after an anti-vaccination attack.*

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# SHOTS HEARD ROUND THE WORLD TOOLKIT

In today's online world, many health care professionals are taking their expertise to social media to help patients get good information. Too often, these health care professionals are harrassed, bullied, and attacked.

In this toolkit, we will give you the skills and information to **Prepare, Defend,** and **Move Forward** after an anti-vaccination attack on a variety of online platforms. We hope to empower you and give you the resources to continue to be a vaccine advocate online.



## WHO WE ARE

Shots Heard Round the World (Shots Heard or SH) is a rapid-response digital cavalry dedicated to protecting the social media pages of health care providers and practices.

We're a nonprofit, thoroughly vetted, proudly evidence-based, rapid response network dedicated to combating anti-vaccination attacks on the social media pages, web sites, and review sites of providers, practices, hospitals, and whole health systems. **If you stand up for vaccine science, we'll stand up for you.**

We know firsthand that the value of this sort of virtual rapid response network is both immense and profound. [Check out the story of our founders.](#)

Shots Heard is operated by staff at the Public Good Projects, a nonprofit dedicated to tackling the most pressing public health issues across the world.

# WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT AN ATTACK

## PREPARE AND AVOID

There are a series of actions you can take while building your online presence and advocating for vaccines that will help you avoid being attacked by anti-vaxxers or prepare in case you are attacked.

### Have reinforcements ready

- Join The Shots Heard Round The World digital “calvary”
- [EmailJoin@shotsheard.org](mailto:EmailJoin@shotsheard.org)
- Join The Shots Heard private [Facebook Group](#)
- Get to know the community—check out past posts of support, camaraderie, and education

### Assess your online presence

- Don't feed the trolls: To prevent more negative comments, ignore negative, harassing, or bullying commenters
- Avoid unnecessary fights and engage with caution: If you're going to engage with an anti-vaccine comment, choose your conversations wisely based on the context.

#### Here are some things to consider:

- Is the person commenting in good faith? Are they open to a productive conversation? Are they egging you on?
- Do you know this person or trust them?
- Do they have a long history of anti-vaccine posts and are they part of anti-vaccine groups?

### Build a trusted network

- “Friend” or “Follow” profiles that have shown positive behavior and can be allies
- Encourage positive reviews of your place of work



### Prepare your workplace, office, and/or institution

- Phones: train staff to recognize signs of an attack, how to respond, and when to notify leadership
  - If your phones are ringing off the hook with negative, rude, or prank calls:
    - If possible, ignore/silence the phone or turn it off
    - If it's a line you must answer, determine if it's a negative call, and if so, hang up or politely dismiss
    - Document the number of fraudulent phone calls and include phone numbers and messages
- Know the signs of an impending social media attack
  - Staff responsible for monitoring accounts should be trained to look for:
    - A spike in or higher than usual volume of negative comments
    - Unusually rude or mean comments from new accounts
    - Links or screenshots of your page being posted in anti-vax groups or by anti-vax pages
    - People in your pages' comments directing other anti-vaxxers to attack you
    - Negative comments from suspicious, anonymous, or bot-like accounts
    - Anti-vaxxers contacting you through other platforms

### Monitor online account security:

- Turn on two-factor authentication for all accounts that support it
- Use strong, different passwords or a password manager

### Know Your platform's settings in case of attack:

Know how to quickly limit or turn off comments, block offending accounts, make your profile private, report offending accounts, and delete offending comments (see links in the "Defend" section below).

**A few preemptive tactics for avoiding and discouraging attacks:**

1. Consider making your accounts private:  
[Instagram Privacy](#)  
[Twitter Privacy](#)  
[Tiktok Privacy](#)
2. Claim your business online  
[Yelp](#)  
[Google My Business](#)
3. Enable email notifications—this way you'll know quickly if an attack were to happen  
[Facebook Notifications](#)  
[Yelp Notifications](#)  
[Google My Business Notifications](#)



**“Google” and “De-doxx” yourself**

Doxxing is to publicly identify or publish private information about (someone) especially as a form of punishment or revenge. It is important to know if any of your personal information is publicly available online. This information can make you more vulnerable to being doxxed.

[Advice from \*the New York Times\*:](#)

1. Search for yourself on search engines like Google and delete as much information as possible from the sources that come up
2. Remove your information from people-search or data broker sites
3. Make your social media private



## DEFEND

Many health care professionals have been attacked online, especially after sharing truthful, science-based information. Although it can be frustrating, disturbing, and potentially scary, you will overcome it, as so many of your colleagues have done in the past.

If you are attacked, here are 10 important actions to take immediately:

 <p>1. Remember: You will overcome this and you are not alone.</p>	 <p>6. Screenshot and save all attacks, including negative comments, fraudulent reviews, and other such content.</p>
 <p>2. <a href="#">Notify us</a> to ask for support.</p>	 <p>7. Report and block attackers and delete negative comments.</p>
 <p>3. Don't engage with attackers.</p>	 <p>8. Claim your businesses on <a href="#">Yelp</a> and <a href="#">Google</a>.</p>
 <p>4. Turn off social media notifications.</p>	 <p>9. Inform your employer/employees of the situation.</p>
 <p>5. Increase your privacy settings on the platform and pages of the attack.</p>	 <p>10. Take breaks to take care of yourself and your mental health.</p>

**Platform-specific defenses:**



Facebook

[Increase your privacy settings](#)

[Disable visitor posts](#)

[Disable Facebook reviews & recommendations](#)

[Report bullying, doxxing, or misinformation posts](#)



Instagram

[Make your profile private](#)

[Report bullying, doxxing, or misinformation posts](#)



Twitter

[Protect your Tweets \(make account private\)](#)

[Report bullying, doxxing, or misinformation posts](#)

[Block aggressive accounts](#)



TikTok

[Increase your privacy controls](#)

[Report and delete bullying, doxxing, or misinformation comments](#)



Yelp

[Report fraudulent reviews](#)

[Report users](#)



Google Reviews

[Report fraudulent reviews](#)

## MOVE FORWARD AFTER AN ATTACK

Attacks can end gradually or rapidly, but either way you'll notice negative engagement decline when the anti-vaxxers limit their engagement, are blocked, and lose interest. As you notice this, it is critical to take time to rest, clean up your pages, and get organized.

- Organize all screenshots and records from the attack
- Debrief with any staff, moderators, or family who have access to your page or witnessed the attack. Make sure to collect all evidence, assess access moving forward, and check on everyone's mental health.



### Move forward in-platform:

Facebook

- [Leftover page clean-up for business pages](#)

Instagram

- [Delete negative comments](#)

Twitter

- [Hide replies | Twitter API | Docs](#)

Tiktok

- [Delete comments](#)

Yelp

- [Report all remaining fraudulent yelp reviews](#)

Google Reviews

- Send Twitter direct message to [@Googlemybiz](#); briefly explain the attack & ask for help
- Repeat #1 as necessary (because it may be really necessary)
- Also try: [Request review removal - Android - Google My Business Help](#)

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE DOXXED



### Specific action steps:

1. Report the offending pages and comments to the website or platform (there is usually a “report” option on the page/comment)
2. Make your social media accounts private
3. Document instances of doxxing by using screenshots
4. Look yourself up in search engines (Google, Bing, Firefox, etc.) and remove your information from the sources that come up
5. Contact people-search or data broker site customer service to remove your information
6. [Removing Content From Google - Legal Help](#)
7. Set up alerts for your full name on google: [Google Alerts - Monitor the Web for interesting new content](#)
8. Search for yourself on online chat websites such as Reddit and 4Chan
9. Change all passwords to be more secure

**If the doxxing turns into serious threats of violence, contact your local authorities and the FBI**  
**Resources:**

- [Globalsign.com: How to Avoid Getting Doxxed](#)
- [Berkely.edu: Protect yourself from “Doxxing”](#)
- [DHS.gov: How to prevent online harassment from “Doxxing”](#)
- [NYT: A Guide to Doxxing Yourself on the Internet](#)
- [NYT: Social Media Security & Privacy Checklists](#)
- [NYT: Doxxing Curriculum Guide](#)
- [FBI complaint form](#)



# TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

## MENTAL HEALTH

Being attacked can feel isolating. Know that you're never alone, and that there is hope and light at the end of the tunnel. **Thank you for your work providing health care and providing factual information online.**

### Mental health treatment resources

- [CDC resources](#) for People seeking treatment
- Suicide prevention resources: If you're having thoughts of suicide, seek help from local providers or call one of the hotlines below
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health](#)

### Online bullying and harassment resources

- [Cyberbullying Research Center: Resources](#)
- [HeartMob by Hollaback: Know Your Rights](#)



## SOLIDARITY

We can put you in touch with others who have gone through attacks. Please reach out to us if you're interested.

### Stories of people who successfully navigated online attacks:

- See our story at [shotsheard.org](https://shotsheard.org)



## PHYSICAL SAFETY

- If you don't feel safe at home, consider whether you can stay with a friend or relative with whom you'll feel more safe
- Alert any security officers at your work or where you live
- If you've received threats, call your local police department's non-emergency hotline

### Resources if you feel physically unsafe where you are:

You can report any direct threats or doxing to the FBI. Find your local [FBI field office here](#)

## PUT THE INTERNET DOWN IF YOU CAN

**Do activities that make you feel good:** go outside, work out, cook yourself a meal, read, spend time with people you love.

If you feel safe and comfortable doing so, consider turning off notifications on **all social media** accounts.

# KNOW THE RULES

It can be helpful to understand the laws around the kinds of online attacks, doxxing, and cyberbullying that can happen to health care professionals. Laws and enforcement vary from state to state. See below for a general legal overview on this topic. Please note that this is not legal advice and is not intended to replace the assistance of a lawyer.

## LAWS

### Identifying the need for law enforcement

- If you feel that your safety is in danger, call 911

According to [Pen America's online harassment guide](#), police are more likely to be able to help in some way with the following forms of online harassment:

- You've received or been named in direct threats of violence. (Threats that suggest a time, place, or location are more likely to be taken seriously by law enforcement.)
- An online abuser has published nonconsensual, sexually explicit images of you.
- You've been stalked via electronic communication (see below).
- You know your online harasser and wish to seek a restraining order.
- 

**In cases where immediate legal action isn't taken, reporting harassment to law enforcement can help establish a paper trail for later action**

- [Report online harassment to the FBI here](#)
- [Report threats and crime to the FBI](#)
- [Contact local FBI office](#)

### Identifying need for legal support

- [Steps for legal action](#)

### Resources to find a lawyer

- [Lawyer referral directory by state](#)

### Overview of relevant Federal laws

- [Federal stalking law overview](#)
- [Laws about doxxing](#)

### State-based Resources

- [Each state's bullying laws](#)
- [For a more detailed breakdown of each state](#)





## TERMS OF SERVICE/USE/AGREEMENT

Most platforms ban posts and content that bullies, harrasses, or publicly reveals personal information of their users.

### Platform-specific terms of service

- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [TikTok](#)
- [Yelp](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [Google Reviews](#)



**Thank you** for joining us on our mission to take back science, protect public health, and defend pro-vaccine providers—one post, tweet, and shot at a time.

**We're here for you!**