

Know More, Do More: Recognizing and Responding to Stalking Among Victims with Disabilities

SPARC: Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and
Resource Center



OVW Funding

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SPARC Website

- URL: www.StalkingAwareness.org
- Available resources include:
 - Practitioner guides
 - Training modules
 - Victim resources
 - Webinar recordings
- Sign up for our newsletter
- Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
 - @FollowUsLegally



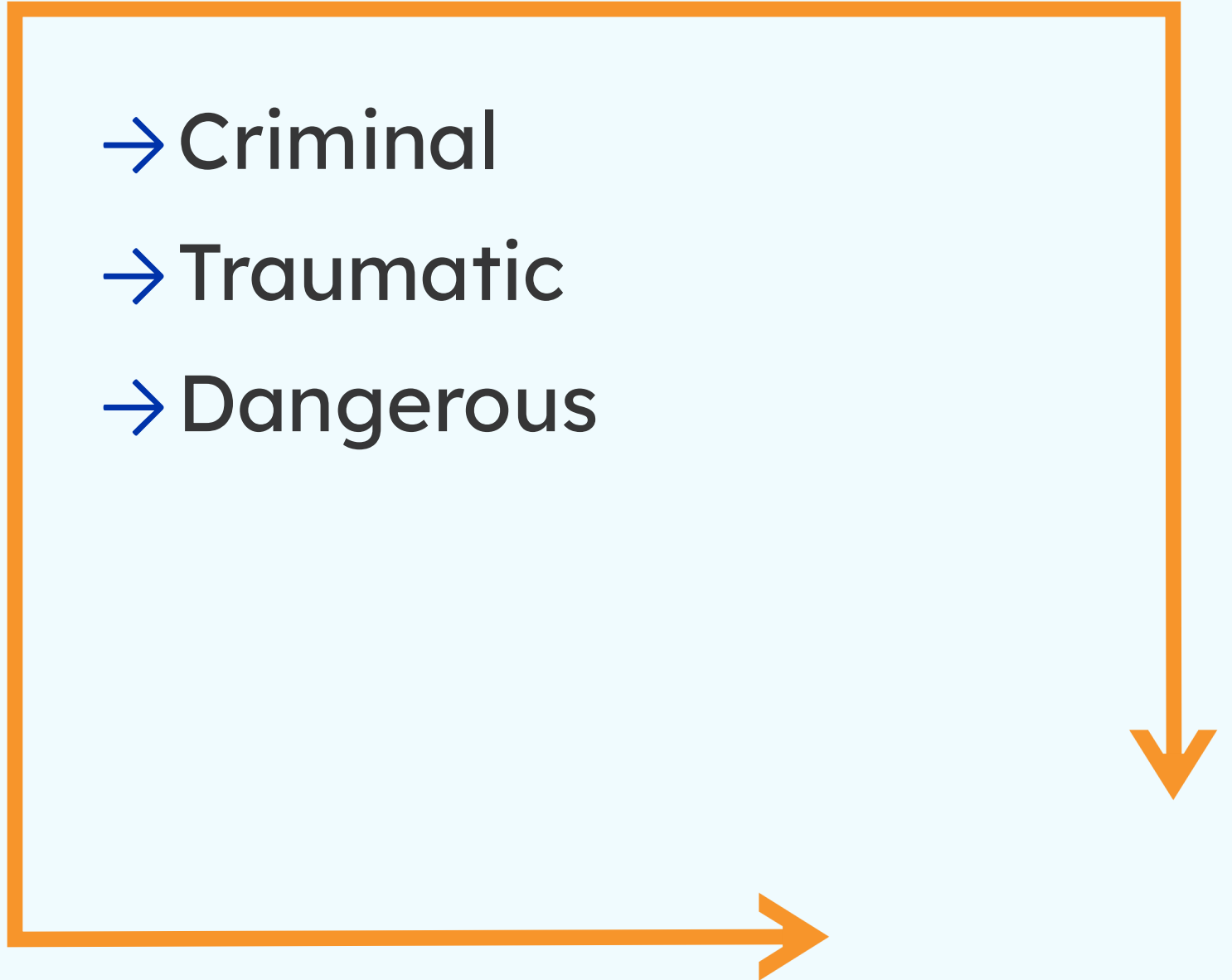
What is Stalking?

You may think...

- You may think of stranger danger.
- You may think it only happens to celebrities.
- You may think of romance.
- Or maybe that it's not that big of a deal.

Stalking Is:

- Criminal
- Traumatic
- Dangerous



Stalking is Criminal

- Federal level
- All 50 states, D.C., and U.S. Territories
- Tribal codes
- Uniform Code of Military Justice

Stalking is Traumatic

- Many stalking victims:
 - Experience mental health issues
 - Lose time from work
 - 1 in 8 employed stalking victims lose time from work
 - Relocate
 - 1 in 7 stalking victims move

References:

Baum, K., Catalano, S., Rand, M. (2009). *Stalking Victimization in the United States*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Blaauw, E., Arensman, E., Winkel, F.W., Freeve, A., & Sheridan, L. (2002). The Toll of Stalking. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 17(1): 50-63.

Stalking is Dangerous

- Stalking often co-occurs with physical assault and sexual violence, including rape.
- 20% of stalkers use weapons to threaten or harm victims.
- 76% of intimate partner femicides included stalking in the year prior.

References:

McFarlane, J., Campbell, J.C., Wilt, S., Ulrich, Y., & Xu, X. (1999.) Stalking and Intimate Partner Femicide. *Homicide Studies* 3(4), 300-316.

Mohandie, K., Meloy, J.R., McGowan, M.G., & Williams, J. (2006). The RECON Typology of Stalking: Reliability and Validity Based upon a Large Sample of North American Stalkers. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 51 (1), 147-155.

Victim Quote

“It’s not easy to describe the fear you have when you see the stalker, or signs of the stalker, everywhere you go. I have given up all hopes of ever having a safe life.

For the rest of my life, I will be looking over my shoulder, expecting to see him there.”



Defining Stalking

→ Legal/Statutory

→ Behavioral

Stalking

Definition: Behavioral

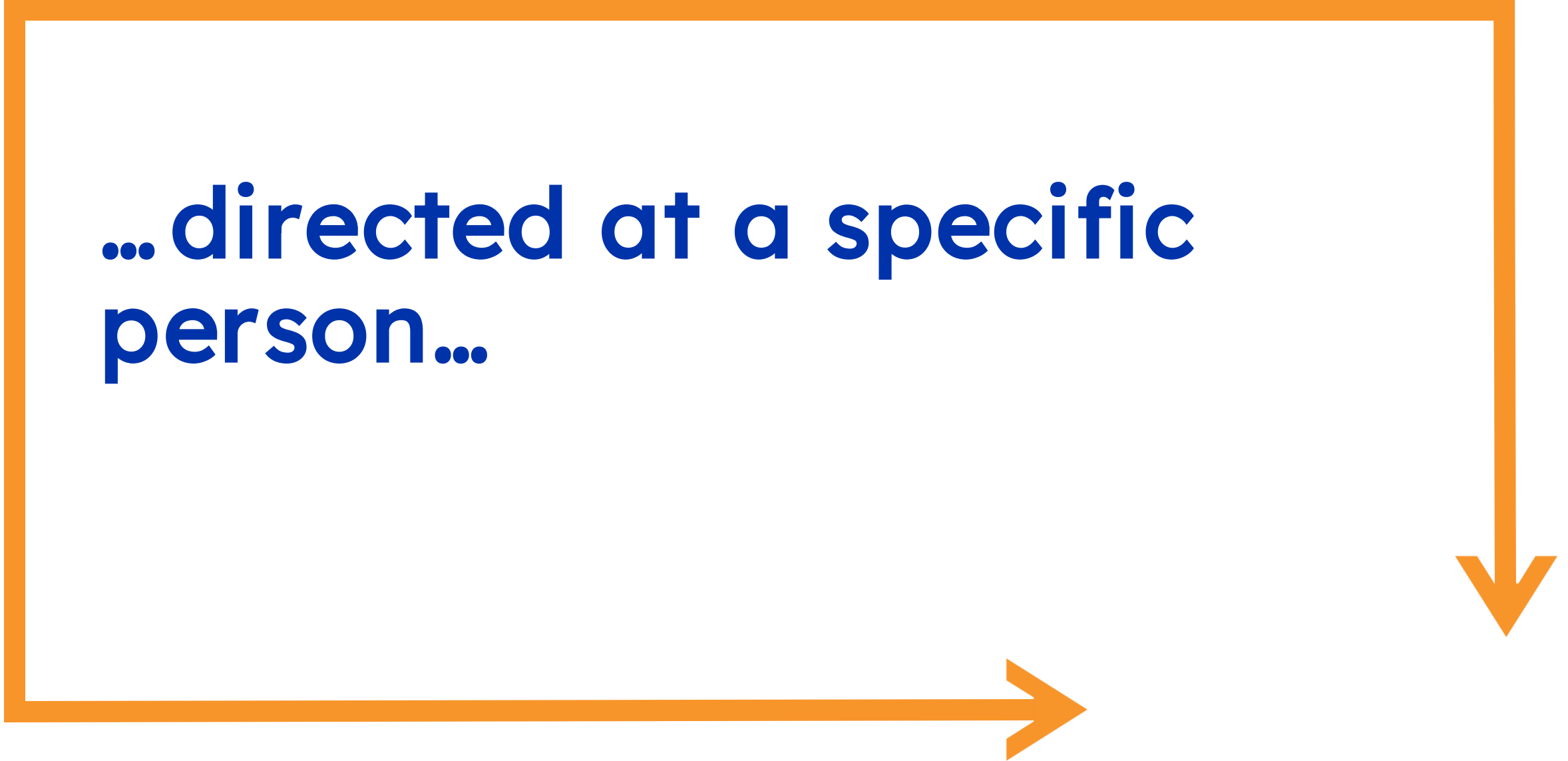
Stalking is a pattern of behavior directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear for the person's safety or the safety of others; or suffer substantial emotional distress.

A pattern of behavior..

→ Not a single incident or “one off” event

→ Called a “course of conduct” in most statutes

**...directed at a specific
person...**



...that would cause a reasonable person to:

→ Feel fear for the person's safety or the safety of others;

→ Or suffer substantial emotional distress.

Discuss: Is this stalking?

1. A student peeks into the women's locker room to watch the women undress.
2. An ex-partner repeatedly spreads vicious rumors about their former partner on social media.
3. A supervisor regularly asks her employee personal questions, mocks him in meetings, sends e-mails at odd hours and is verbally abusive when he doesn't respond right away.

Stalking Prevalence

- Nearly 1 in 3 women experience stalking in their lifetime
- Nearly 1 in 6 men experience stalking in their lifetime

Reference:

Smith, S.G., & Kresnow, M. (2022). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2016/2017 Report on Stalking. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Stalking Duration

Among all stalking victims:

- 18% - less than 1 month
- 44% - 1 month to less than 1 year
- 13% - 1 year to less than 2 years
- 24% - 2 years or more
- 2% - unknown

Reference:

Truman, J.L., & Morgan, R.E. (2022). Stalking Victimization, 2019. Washington, DC: US DOJ, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Special Report

Pattern of Behavior

- 2 out of 3 of stalkers pursue their victim at least once per week
- 3 out of 4 of stalkers use more than one means of approach

Reference:

Mohandie, K., Meloy, J.R., McGowan, M.G., & Williams, J. (2006). The RECON Typology of Stalking: Reliability and Validity Based upon a Large Sample of North American Stalkers. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 51 (1), 147-155.

Victim and Offender Relationships

Current/Former Intimate Partner

43% Female Victims

32% Male Victims

Acquaintance

41% Female Victims

44% Male Victims

Stranger

19% Female Victims

20% Male Victims

Brief Encounter

8% Female Victims

9% Male Victims

Family Member

9% Female Victims

6% Male Victims

Person of Authority

4% Female Victims

3% Male Victims

Data Divergence

Situations
when a person
experiences
stalking



Only some of
those report
stalking



Only some of
those result in
stalking
charges

Perceptions Affect Reporting

→ Research suggests that victims rely on notions of what a “real” or “legitimate” crime looks like, and these perceptions may impact reporting decisions

Reference:

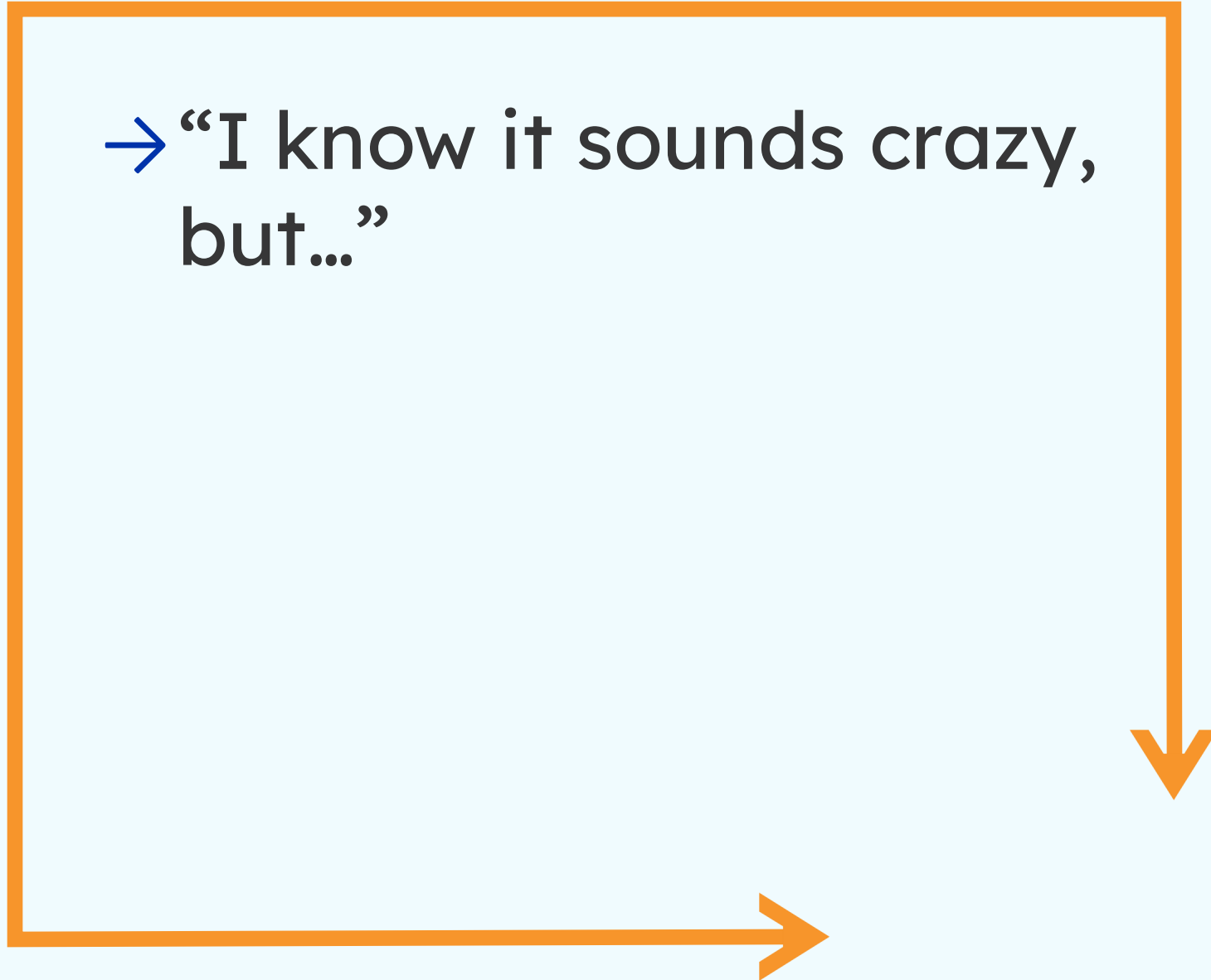
Reynes, B.W., & Englebrecht, C.M. (2012). The Fear Factor: Exploring Predictors of Fear Among Stalking Victims Throughout the Stalking Encounter. *Crime & Delinquency* 59(5): 788-808. DOI: 10.1177/0011128712461123

The majority of stalking victims do not report or seek services.



Listen for Stalking

→ “I know it sounds crazy,
but...”



How do Victims Cope?

- Move inward
- Move away
- Move towards
- Move against
- Move outward

Reference:

Spitzberg, B.H. & Cupach, W. (2007) The State of the Art of Stalking: Taking Stock of the Emerging Literature. *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 12(1): 64-86.

Victim Blaming

- Victims of stalking, intimate partner violence, and/or sexual violence experience similar types of victim blaming

Considerations for Victims of Stalking With Disabilities



Misconceptions Hinder Support

Stalking victims with disabilities face unique hurdles and are often dismissed because authorities believe:

- The victim is misunderstanding the situation
- The victim is uncooperative
- The victim is poorly recalling the situation
- The victim is misinterpreting the situation
- The victim is changing their story

Increased Risk for Victimization

- Stalkers may target individuals with disabilities because of a belief that they are less likely to resist, report, or be taken seriously if they do report.
- Individuals with disabilities may have less access to social and emotional support and may not recognize that the stalking they experience is problematic.
- Individuals with disabilities may have less access to resources, law enforcement response, and support.

What are other ways or reasons an individual with disabilities has an increased risk for victimization?



Other Risks to Consider:

- Social control from external entities
- More predictable patterns in their lives
- Online presence for social connections can lead to cyberstalking



How Do We Identify Stalking?

SLII Framework

- Surveillance
- Life invasion
- Interference
- Intimidation (through sabotage or attack)

Reference:

Logan, TK & Walker, R. (2017). Stalking: A Multidimensional Framework for Assessment and Safety Planning. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse* 18(2): 200-222.

SLII Framework: Surveillance

- Surveillance
- Follow
- Watch
- Wait
- Show up
- Tracking software
- Obtain info about victim
- Proxy stalking

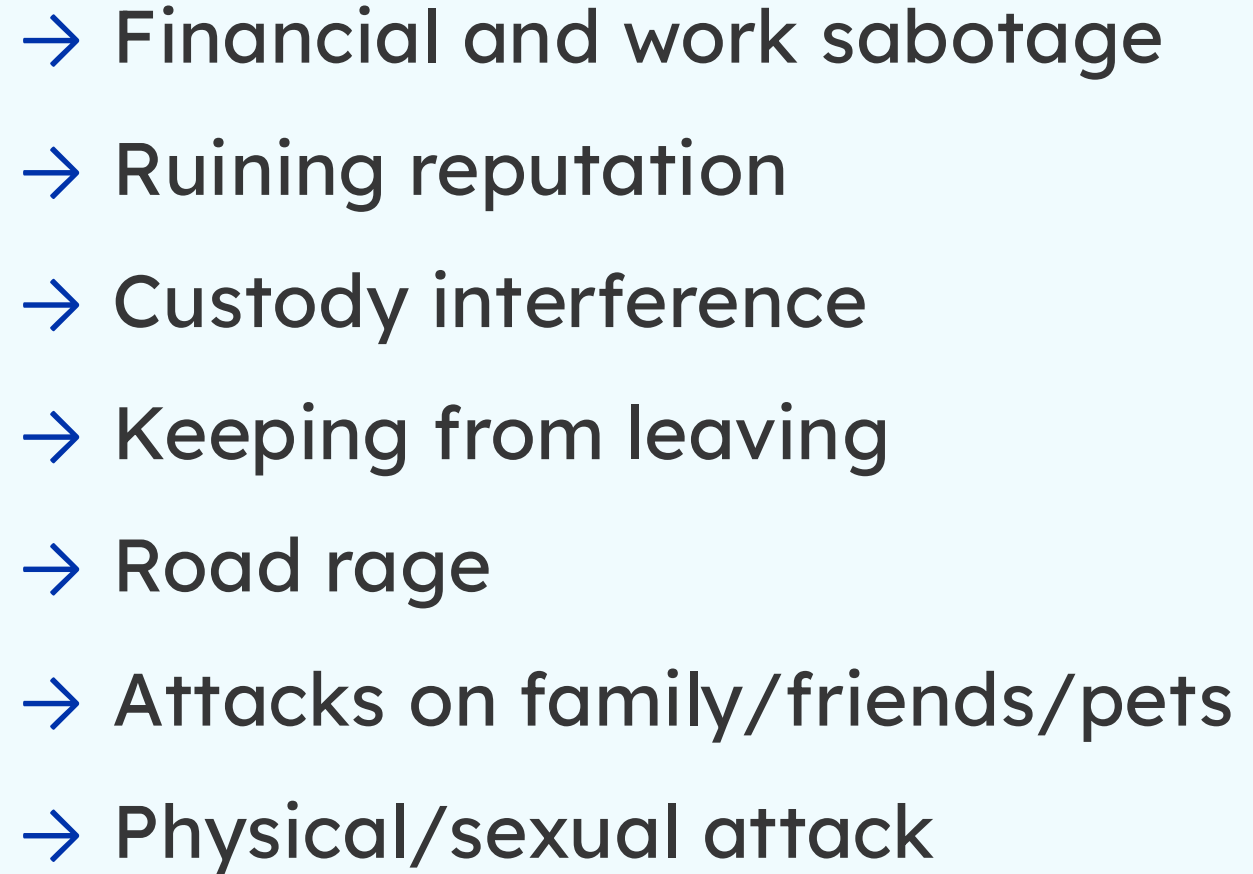
SLII Framework: Life Invasion

- Unwanted contact, often across locations and platforms
- Showing up
- Phone calls
- Property invasion
- Public humiliation
- Harassing family/friends

SLII Framework: Intimidation

- Threats
- Property damage
- Symbolic violence
- Forced confrontations
- Threatened or actual harm to self
- Threats to harm others

SLII Framework: Interference

- Financial and work sabotage
 - Ruining reputation
 - Custody interference
 - Keeping from leaving
 - Road rage
 - Attacks on family/friends/pets
 - Physical/sexual attack
- 

Screening for Stalking 1

→ Has the offender:

- Been tracking, following, or monitoring the Victim in any way?
- Repeatedly invaded the Victim's life or privacy by initiating unwanted contact with the Victim?
- Significantly and directly interfered with the Victim's life?
- More than one time, intimidated or scared the Victim through threats, property damage, threatening or actual harming of pets, or other means?

Reference:

Logan, TK & Walker, R. (2017). Stalking: A Multidimensional Framework for Assessment and Safety Planning. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse* 18(2): 200-222.

Screening for Stalking 2

If **YES** to any of the previous questions:

- Did these actions make the Victim afraid or concerned for **their safety or the safety of their children, family, and/or coworkers?**
- Did the Victim make **significant life changes for safety reasons** because of these actions? (change day-to-day routines, spend money on home safety, took time off work?)
- Did these actions make the Victim afraid or concerned about **significant financial or social impact?** (loss of job, loss of housing, financial harm?)
- Not at all? Somewhat? Extremely?

Reference: Logan, TK & Walker, R. (2017). Stalking: A Multidimensional Framework for Assessment and Safety Planning. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse* 18(2): 200-222.

Excerpt from Police Report (1 of 2)

*She called the
police because
of a beer cap?*

“[Victim] advised on today’s date at approximately 0800 hours when she got into her car to head to work, her doors were locked and on the driver’s seat was a Corona beer bottle cap.”

**Context is Critical in Stalking
Cases**



Context Considerations

- Something may be frightening to the victim but not to you
- Stalking behaviors often have specific meanings
- Stalking criminalizes otherwise non-criminal behavior

Excerpt from Police Report (2 of 2)

“[Victim] advised on today’s date at approximately 0800 hours when she got into her car to head to work, her doors were locked and on the driver’s seat was a Corona beer bottle cap.”

“[Victim] shared yesterday she celebrated her two-year anniversary of being sober and she had received messages from people in her AA group congratulating her on her two-year sobriety. She believes that [suspect] placed the beer cap in her car to mess with her emotionally as seeing anything related to alcohol is a trigger to her. She believes that [suspect] is monitoring her messages as that is the only way [suspect] would know about the anniversary.”

Reasonable Fear: Evidence

- Describe victim statements of fear
 - Describe any accommodation made for safety
- Document evidence of accommodations and/or safety measures taken:
 - Time spent obtaining protection order, relocation, efforts to keep address or location secret

Responding to Victims and Safety Planning



Describe, Document, Contextualize

- Describe the big picture, beyond individual incidents
- Document victim fear and harm
- Contextualize the threats. Why this victim? Why this time?

Stalking Incident and Behavior Log

- Date and Time
- Description of Incident
- Location of Incident (physical location, technology used, online platform)
- Witness Name(s) (attached address and phone number)
- Evidence Attached? (photos, videos, screenshots, items, etc.)
- Report Made to (name, office/org, badge or identification number)
- Information from Assistive Technology

Advise Disengagement

- Recommend no contact with the stalker
 - Explain intermittent reinforcement
- BUT realize victims engage in behaviors to keep themselves safe:
 - Maintain contact, negotiation, minimizing threat
 - Contact may be a safety strategy

Possibility of Escalation

Reference:

Quinn-Evans, L.,
Keatley, D.A.,
Arntfield, M., &
Sheridan, L. (2019). A
Behavior Sequence
Analysis of Victims'
Accounts of Stalking
Behaviors. *Journal of
Interpersonal
Violence* 00(0): 1-19.

“...the victim’s attempts to distance themselves from their stalker actually frustrate or anger the stalker, leading to an increase in the physical threat to their lives.”

What is Safety Planning?

An individualized plan that identifies specific strategies and interventions that may increase safety.

- Provides practical ways to decrease risk
- Puts victims in contact with a variety of services, agencies, and individuals who can help
- Focuses on physical AND emotional well-being

Effective Safety Planning

→ Flexible

- Works for survivor

- Responsive to offender behavior

→ Comprehensive

- Consider all aspects of victim's life

→ Contextual

- What has happened, is happening, and might happen?

Lena

42-year-old woman with low vision

Lena's neighbor, Paul, has been offering to "help" Lena, even when she doesn't need it. His offers are persistent, and he will not take "No" for an answer. Paul starts leaving notes for Lena and making comments about her whereabouts and personal habits that make Lena uncomfortable. Lena is unsure how to handle the situation. She doesn't always see him approaching. Her limited ability to detect social cues also makes it harder for her to recognize when Paul's behavior is crossing a line.

Lena
42-year-old
woman with
low vision

How does Lena's disability impact her experience?

What support would you offer Lena?

What stalking behaviors are present?

What community or social resource could help Lena?

What else do you want to know about Lena's situation?

Recommendations and Resources



Policies and Procedures

- Does your agency have a stalking policy?
- How are non-intimate partner cases identified?
 - What training exists for your agency and community partners?
 - What resources are available- call logs, incident report models
- Property crimes vs. crimes against persons
- Report reviews to screen for stalking
- Consider the intersection of policies
 - Service animals
 - Mandatory reporting
 - Working with a guardian

Stalking Coordinated Community Response

- Victim Services
- Court
- Education
- Community-Specific Resources
- Culturally Relevant Services
- Law Enforcement
- Medical Services
- Disability Organizations

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