STALKING: Connecting the Dots[1]

Law Enforcement

DEFINITION: A **course of conduct** directed at a specific person that creates an implicit or explicit threat and **induces fear or concern for personal safety** or the safety of close others.

5.2 million women and 1.4 million men will be stalked each year

Many victims do not use the term "stalking" but they describe stalking behaviors including:

SURVEILLANCE

Following, showing up, spying, using technology to keep tabs on the victim.

LIFE INVASION

Repeated unwanted contact in person or by phone, text, email, card/note, message, third party, and social media.

INTIMIDATION

Implicit, explicit and third party threats, forced confrontations, property damage, and threatened suicide.

INTERFERENCE

Disruption of the victim's life professionally and socially as well as physical and sexual attacks.

ASK ABOUT:

COURSE OF CONDUCT

SURVEILLANCE

Is he/she following you, watching you, showing up unexpectedly, or communicating with you in ways that seem obsessive or make you concerned for your safety?

LIFE INVASION

Has he/she repeatedly initiated unwanted contact with you (e.g., repeated phone calls, texts, messages, emails, gifts, etc. or through third parties)?

INTIMIDATION

Has he/she threatened you or done other things to intimidate you? What has he/she done that has frightened or alarmed you?

INTERFERENCE

Has he/she significantly and directly interfered with your life? Has he/she assaulted you while he/she has been stalking, harassing, or threatening you?

NOTE: If victims describe behavior that does not superficially appear to be threatening/annoying, ask them why the behavior was frightening to them. Why does the victim perceive the behavior as a threat?

Patterns of behavior show intent

DURATION, INTENSITY, AND FREQUENCY

Duration: When did it start? How long has it been going on (including periods when it seemed to have stopped)?

Intensity: Has the behavior escalated? Has there been proxy stalking or are others involved in stalking or threatening behavior?

Frequency: How often does the stalker make his/her presence known? How often does he/she directly approach you? How often does he/she interfere with your life?

CORROBORATING EVIDENCE OF INTENTIONAL COURSE OF CONDUCT

- Documentation log;
- Witnesses to tactics/acts;
- Phone, texts, voicemail, email, other computer evidence, video, pictures, gifts, etc;
- Calls to police;
- Evidence and witnesses from victim and stalker workplace

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ASK ABOUT:

REASONABLE FEAR

Have you changed your life in any way because you are afraid? If so, how? (ex., Installed door locks, cameras, lights; moved; changed jobs; altered schedules; don't go out, etc.)

What other places have you made accommodations in your life? Work? Daycare? School? Church?

ASSESS CREDIBILITY OF THREATS:

a. Does the stalker's history, access, and/or ability suggest that he or she can carry out the threat?
b. Does the stalker's mindset present increased threat (rejection, humiliation; revenge, blame; last resort thinking; witness intimidation)?
c. Has the environment facilitated the stalking (no consequences, proxy stalking, target has areas of vulnerability that facilitate stalking)?

CORROBORATING EVIDENCE OF FEAR

- Victim exhibits fear behavior (e.g., changed routines);
- Victim spent money and significant time on safety measures;
- Witnesses to victim's fear (e.g., asked for help from others, asked for accommodations for safety);
- Other evidence of fear (e.g., receipts of money spent, job or residence changes, reports or interference from victim's workplace)

UNWANTED: VICTIM RESISTANCE AND STALKER PERSISTENCE

What kinds of things have you done to stay safe or to let the stalker know you do not want to be harassed or contact? (Ex. Told him/her you want no contact; Changed phone number, residence, workplace, locks, or social groups; Altered life to prevent contact).

In what ways has the stalker responded to your resistance? (Ex. Continued to harass and contact, escalated intensity or frequency of stalking behaviors).

LOOK FOR

Other crimes that intersect with stalking (protective order violations, partner abuse, property damage).

Women are more likely to be victims of stalking

Men are more likely to be stalkers regardless of victim gender

ENCOURAGE THE VICTIM TO:

See it/acknowledge it as stalking (complete the Stalking and Harassment Assessment and Risk Profile at www.CoerciveControl.org)	Think about the specific threats and vulnerabilities she/he has and safety plan around that.	Preserve evidence and document stalking behaviors (see websites below for documentation logs and tips for documentation)	Plan ahead for safety and think about ways to make it as difficult as possible for the perpetrator to stalker her/him.	Seek support through trusted friends and family, victim advocates through local shelters and the National Domestic Violence Hotline (www.thehotline.org), police.

Let the suspected perpetrator know that stalking is a serious crime with serious consequences: **We are watching YOU!**

Check out: the **Stalking Resource Center** at www.victimsofcrime.org/src and **OutrageUs** at www.outrageus.org.