STALKING:



Image: Canva

What is it,
why does it matter,
&
what can we do about it?

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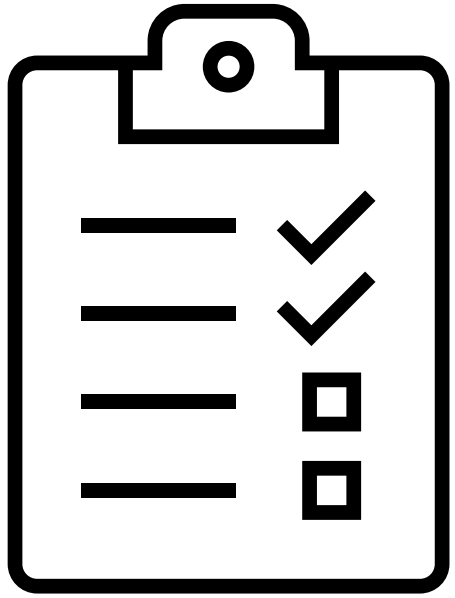
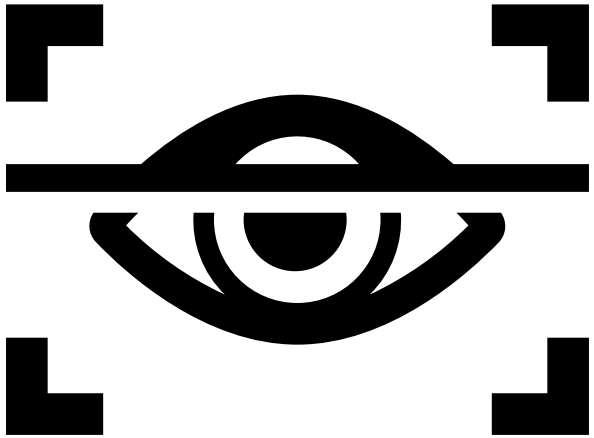
with special thanks to SPARC

Agenda

1. What is it?
2. Why does it matter?
3. What can we do about it?





1 – What is it?

Stalking (verb): Definition



Image: Tanzania Safaris Facebook Page (2024)

"to follow an animal or person
as closely as possible
without being seen or heard,
usually in order to
catch or kill them"

- Cambridge Dictionary (2026)

Criminalization of Stalking

- **1989:**
  - murder of actress Rebecca Shaffer by obsessed fan who stalked her
  - 5 other women murdered by stalker ex-partners in close time and proximity (CA)
- **1990:** California adopts first stalking law
- **1993:** PA adopts stalking law
- **1994:** VAWA (federal crime)

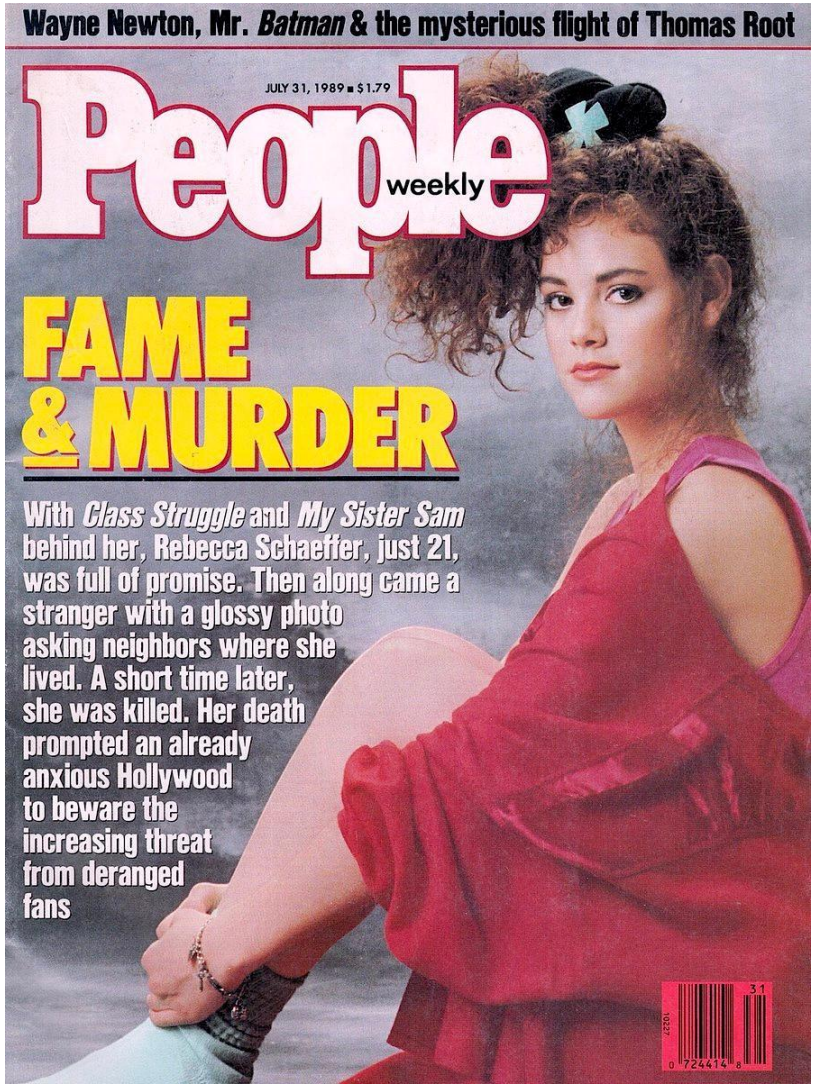


Image: IMDB (Internet Movie Data Base)

Stalking Under PA Law



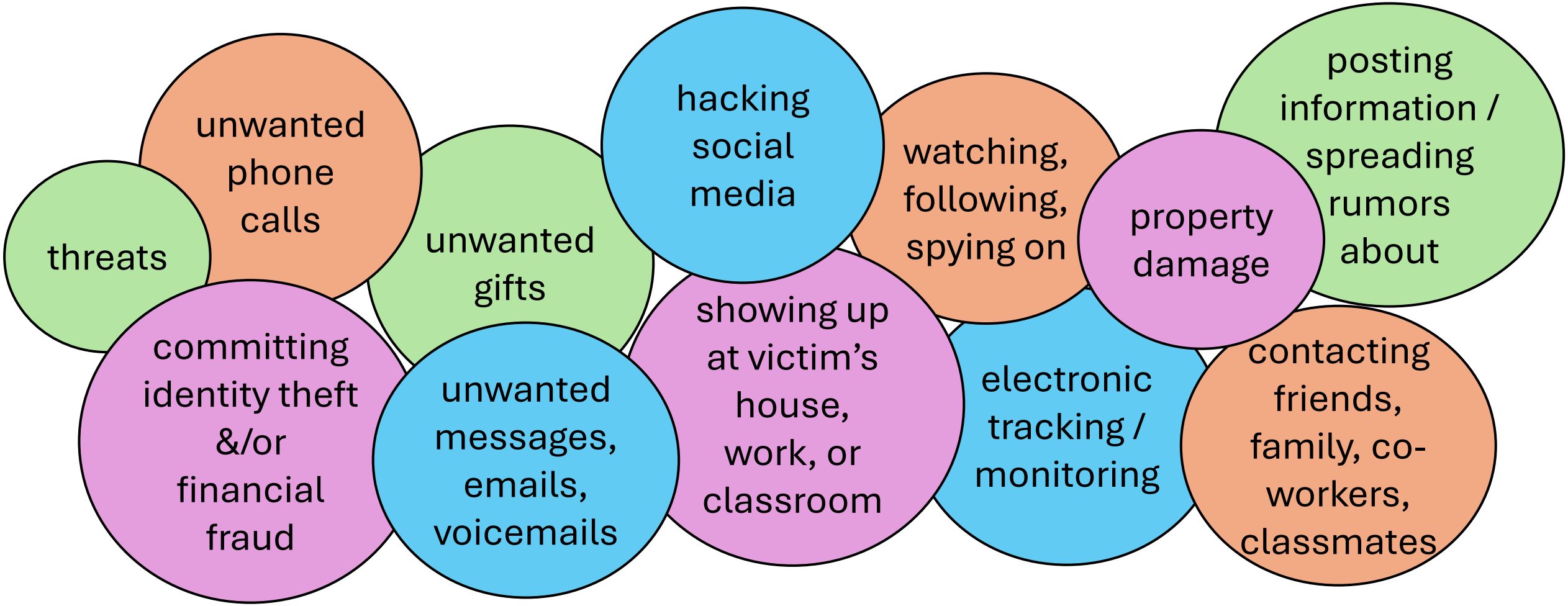
- Engages in a course of conduct /
  Repeatedly commits acts, inc. following /
  Repeatedly communicates

- To or toward another person

- Demonstrates intent to cause
- Fear for safety &/or emotional distress

PA Statutes Title 18 Pa.C.S.A. Crimes and Offenses § 2709.1

What Does Stalking Look Like?



Adapted from SPARC, CASA

Most Common Perpetrators of Stalking



- Current/Past Intimate Partner
- Acquaintance
- Stranger
- Brief Encounter
- Family Member
- Person of Authority

Adapted from SPARC

Why is Stalking Hard to Spot Sometimes?

Context Matters

- Tuxedo example



- May not sound scary or threatening (or even make sense) without context

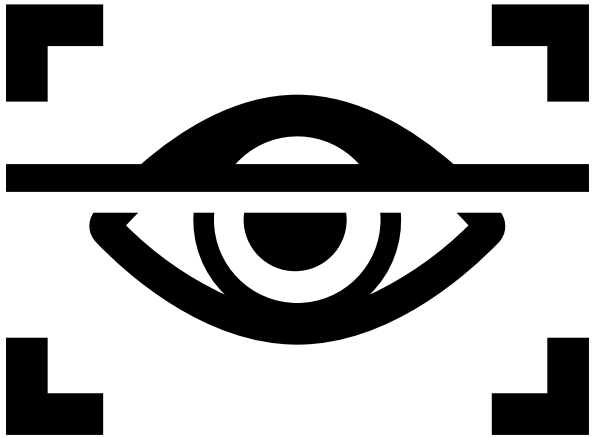
Victim language to describe:

"annoying"

"frustrating"

(not "fearful" or "distress")

Adapted from SPARC



2 – Why does it matter?

Impacts

- Long-lasting impact on life of victim
  - Fear of not knowing what will happen next
  - Fear it will never end
  - Miss work and school
  - Physically move/re-locate (1 in 7)
  - Depression, anxiety, insomnia, social dysfunction

- Risk of harm to health and safety of victim and others
  - Predictor for escalating violence



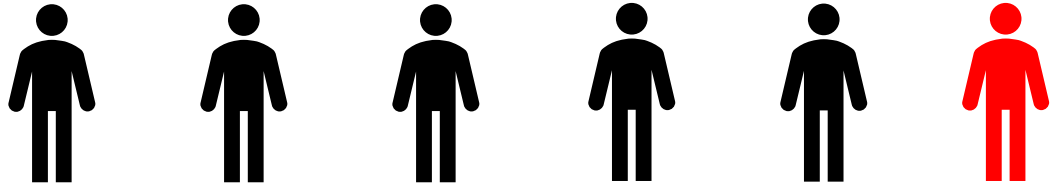
image: "Fear" by Olena Panasovska, The Noun Project

Adapted from SPARC

Surprisingly Common



1 in 3 women

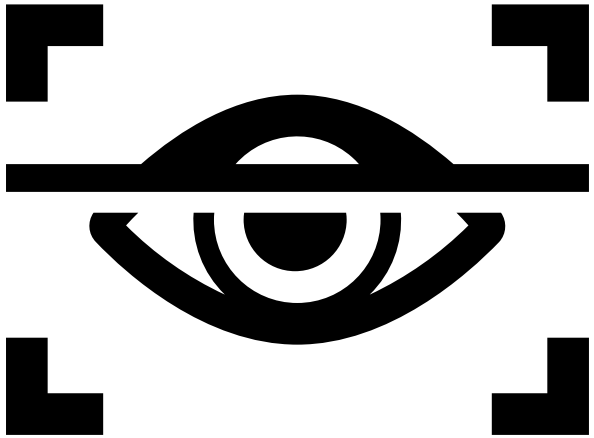


1 in 6 men

Most Impacted Age Group

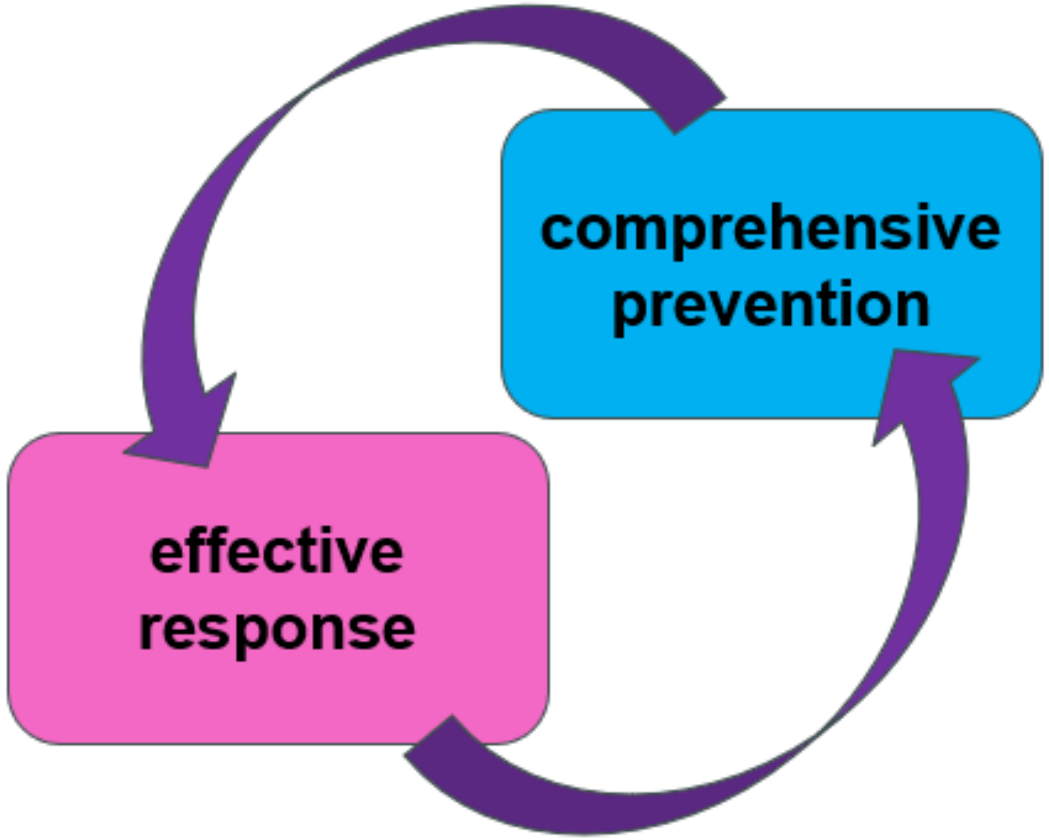
18-24

Adapted from SPARC



3 – What can we do about it?

What Can We Do About Stalking?



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Preventing Stalking (Society/Institutional)

- Raise stalking awareness.
- Debunk harmful myths
- Stop normalizing/trivializing stalking
- Strong policy & easy reporting
- Building skills
  - Effective communication; setting & respecting boundaries; etc.



(CDC 2016; UN 2018)

Image: SPARC

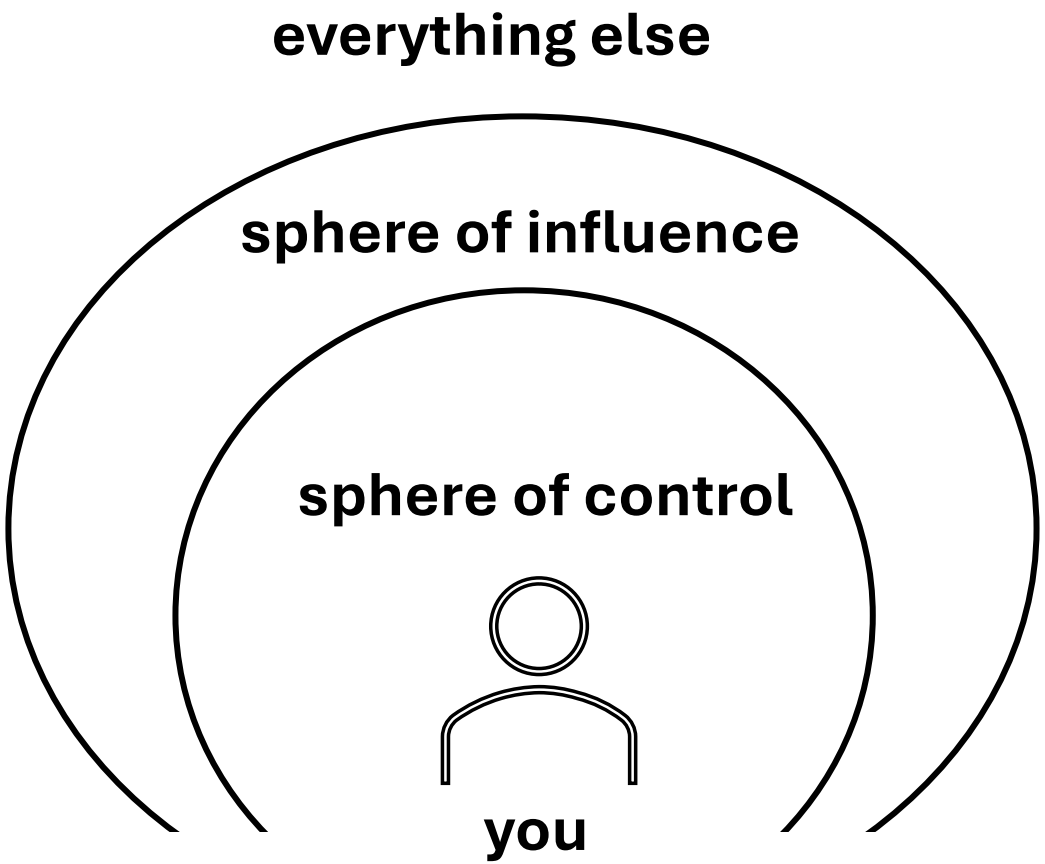
Reducing Risk of Perpetration



- Make sure to get consent prior to physical, sexual and/or virtual interactions
- If someone stops responding – or tells you that they don't want to communicate – take the hint and stop contacting them
  - You are NOT entitled to a response
- Never resort to violence or threats

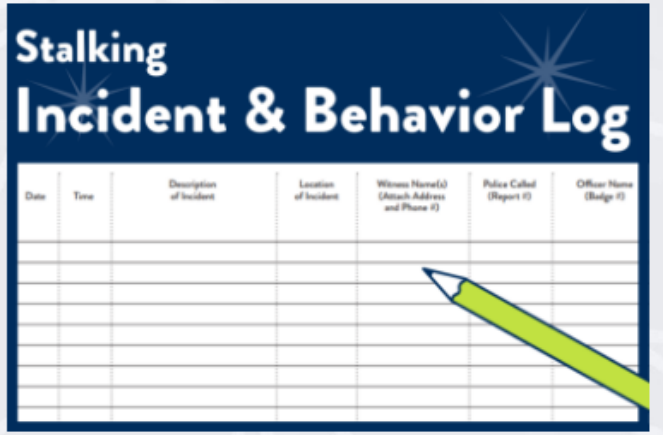
Reducing Risk of Victimization (Individual)

- Avoid posting personal contact information and whereabouts
- Listen to your gut: if it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't
- It's okay to lie to protect your safety
- If you do not want to communicate with someone:
  - Let them know
  - Do not communicate further



What To Do If You Are Being Stalked

- Contact Crisis Hotline, Victim Services Agency, Title IX Office
- Develop safety plan
- Keep track of the contacts if possible
  - Keep a log
  - Preserve evidence when/where possible
- Consider advising the person not to contact you further
  - No further contact
- Consider contacting law enforcement



Stalking Documentation Log



Safety Planning Strategies

Adapted from SPARC

Response / Intervention with Stalker



- Victim is expert – defer to wishes whenever possible
- **Depending on case, intervention may:**
  1. **STOP** stalking behavior in some cases (at least temporarily);
  2. Have **NO IMPACT** on the behavior; OR
  3. Cause the stalker to **ESCALATE** their behavior

Response / Intervention with Stalker

- Research suggests there are 5 types of stalker profiles:

1	2	3	4	5
Intimacy - Seeking	Incompetent	Resentful	Predatory	Rejected

- No “One – Size –Fits – All” Approach

- <u>Promising Interventions are Multidisciplinary</u>
  - punishment/sanctions
  - mental health treatment, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy
  - restrictions such as restraining orders
  - social skills training

(Mackenzie & James 2011; Spence-Diehl 1999)

Questions, Concerns, Ideas?

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Mackenzie, R.D. & James, D.V., "Management and Treatment of Stalkers: Problems, Options, and Solutions," *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* (2011)

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Stalking Prevention Awareness & Resource Center ("SPARC"): stalkingawareness.org