

# VICTIM SAFETY PLANNING FOR STALKING

## Victim in Imminent Danger

The primary goal when in imminent danger should be to get help as quickly as possible by calling 911 and to locate a safe place to stay. Safety can be found in the following places:

- Police stations
- Residences of family / friends (location unknown to suspect)
- Domestic violence shelters, churches
- Public areas where the stalker may be less inclined toward violence

If departure from their current location is not possible, contact 911 or another police contact number. Family or friends may be able to assist emergency departure. Caution should be exercised when confronting the offender as stalking sometimes escalates into violence.

Upon reaching safety, communicate with local law enforcement, victim services, mental health professionals and or social services in order to receive additional assistance and referrals. If the stalker caused property damage or physical harm, you should file a report with law enforcement as soon as possible.

## When at Risk, But Not in Immediate Danger

If you are not in immediate danger, you need to assess the probability of impending danger. To determine if you are in a potentially harmful or violent situation, the following options may be considered:

### Restraining / Protective / Stay Away Orders

- These orders are only punishable on violation, but set boundaries for conduct
- These orders are not fool proof and should not provide a false sense of security

### Stalking Laws

- Educate yourself about the legislation that may be applicable to your situation

### Illegal Acts

- Educate yourself about legislation regarding home entries, theft, or property damage, physical and sexual assault and threatening behaviour. Notifying police of these acts. Charges may intimidate the offender and set clear boundaries that their conduct will not be tolerated.

### Documentation

- Stalking activities should be documented and given to police
- Documentation may be useful in future complaints
- Documentation may take the form of photos of destroyed property, vandalism, any injury inflicted, answering machine messages, letters or notes, etc.
- If stalked you should keep logs of crimes and suspicious activities committed by the offender.

## Contingency Plans Considerations

- Knowledge of and quick access to critical phone numbers including police, safe places, friends, family members, shelters, attorneys, prosecutors, medical care, pet care, etc.

## Accessible Reserves of Necessities

- Pack a suitcase and leave it in a safe place for quick departure if required
- Have reserves of money that are easy to access
- Have access to other necessities such as credit card numbers, personal welfare items such as medications, birth certificates, (and for dependents) etc.
- Think in advance about other miscellaneous items, like gas in the car, back up keys for neighbours, etc.
- If you are caring for children you may want to pack a toy, book, diapers or other special items belonging to the child.

## Alert Critical People to the Situation who can Assist with Contingency Plans

- Law enforcement
- Employers
- Family, Friends and neighbours
- Other security personnel (if applicable)

## Safety in the Home

- Install dead bolts
- Install adequate outside lighting
- Inform trusted colleagues and neighbours about your situation. Provide them with a photo or description of the suspect and possible vehicle information
- If residing with an onsite manager, provide them with a suspect photo.
- Obtain locking / tamper resistant mail box
- Destroy discarded mail
- Ask law enforcement to conduct periodic checks of your residence
- Make sure your street number is clearly marked on your home for emergency response by police
- Install and use a door viewing device
- Consider placing rental agreements or leases, deeds in another name
- Consider changing mailing address
- Protect all computer passwords, change them frequently and monitor all computer accounts for unauthorized access (e.g. changes to pages or log-in not made by you)

## Managing Unwanted Phone Calls / Texts / Emails / Letters

- Maintain an unlisted phone number and screen calls with an answering machine (Have another female record a generic message)
- Treat any threats as legitimate and notify police
- If financial means exist, use a dummy answering machine connected to a published phone line. Then obtain a new private, unlisted line can be reserved for close friends and family. Only provide this number to trusted individuals who will not share it with others.
- Do not retaliate or take the law into your own hands

- Communicate clearly, and early on, that further contact is not wanted. Advising a potential stalker once that you do not want contact from them is sufficient. Telling them this message repeatedly becomes another form of contact for the stalker. Telling the stalker that you do not want any contact can also be achieved through police reporting.
- Never attempt to return letters or unwanted gifts to a stalker. Give these to police
- Have co-workers screen business calls

### Safety when Traveling

- When out of the home or business, try not to travel alone and try to stay in public areas
- Note license plates
- Do not drive home if you are being followed. Rather drive to a police station and advise police
- Check passenger compartments before entering vehicle
- Park in well lit areas.
- Never leave keys in car or with parking attendants
- Lock vehicle, gas filler port and garage doors
- Check vehicles for signs of tampering, check brakes, look for loosened bolts or hub caps, or disturbances in dust or dirt on the vehicle, check under the hood
- Use car horn to signal in the event of trouble
- Travel in groups and with friends, if possible
- When traveling, know the location of police stations, fire stations, busy shopping malls or other places of safety
- Use different routes to travel each day, if possible

### Other Considerations

- Consider relocation in extreme cases
- Have realistic expectations of the powers of courts and prosecutions
- Consider the stalking may be long term or protracted
- Never underestimate the offender or the potential for danger
- Do not rely on others to keep you safe
- Weapons have inherent risks and liabilities
- In extreme cases a change of identity may be considered

### General Safety

- Avoid any further direct or indirect contact with the stalker
- Develop alternative contingency plans.
- Have continual access to a cellular phone, even in the home
- Inform everyone about the stalker
- Carry a personal safety device or personal alarm
- Purchase and carry a flash light

### Alternative Avenues of Assistance

- Domestic violence shelters / Counselors
- Sexual Assault crisis counselors
- Victim service agencies / advocates
- Victim support groups