

Stalking and Harassment

WHAT IS STALKING?

Stalking most frequently occurs between two people who have had an intimate relationship, although it can occur in other kinds of situations as well. It can include a variety of behaviours and actions and is usually a pattern of behaviour rather than one single incident. Stalking is intended to frighten the victim. Stalking is a form of abuse because it is used to scare, threaten and control the victim. Stalking often escalates-at first, it may be harassing and annoying, but it can and often does develop into frightening and eventually physically dangerous behaviour.

DANGER TIMES

What times are especially dangerous?

The first three months after a woman leaves a relationship; dates or anniversaries related to the relationship, the victim or the stalker; when the stalker thinks the other person is seeing someone new; when the stalker receives court orders related to the separation or the stalking

Stalking can happen anytime; these are just a few examples of times that may be particularly dangerous.

STALKING BEHAVIOURS

Repeated phone calls...repeated emails...sending the person things they do not want...following the person...following their children, friends or family...taking the person's mail...trying to get private information about the person from other people...entering the person's home when she is not there...vandalism...threats or assaults...threatening or harming family pets or farm animals

STAGES OF STALKING

Not all stalkers follow this pattern, but it is common for stalking behaviour to follow these steps as it escalates:

Courtship: The stalker sends flowers, love letters and signs of affection in order to "win back" the affections of the victim. At this point the victim may not realize where the stalker's behavior is headed.

Surveillance: The stalker begins to watch and follow the victim. They may sit outside their work or their home.

Communication: Phone calls, writes or emails repeatedly without the affection previously displayed in communication.

Symbolic Violence: The stalker's tone changes-they may send the victim dead flowers, leaves scary gifts, scratches to their car, hurts or kills pets.

Physical Violence: The stalker assaults the victim, physically, or sexually, kidnaps the victim and holds them hostage,

Safety Planning Tips

Decide on a place you can get to quickly if the stalker appears...decide what you need to take with you (keys) and have those things ready to grab quickly...install a security system...tell neighbors...take a self defense course...keep a record of what's going on...call the police if you need to.

LEGAL OPTIONS FOR VICTIMS OF STALKING

If someone is being stalked by their former partner, they may not want to involve the police and have a criminal charge laid or there may not be enough evidence to lay a charge. There are other legal options for people to consider:

In family court, they can apply for a restraining order that can keep the stalker away from their as well as other family members

A victim can apply for a peace bond through the justice of the Peace in criminal court. This order can keep the stalker away for up to 12 months

In very, very extreme cases, one can consider changing her identity and moving away from the area

REFERRALS

Victim Services of Huron County.....524-4108

Women's Shelter Crisis Line.....1-800-265-5506

Huron Perth Crisis Intervention Program Crisis Line.....1-888-829-7484