Stalking and Older Adults: An Overview

Stalking Prevention, Awareness & Resource Center (SPARC) and National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL) and National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ)

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Disclaimer

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NCALL and SPARC
NCALL is committed to creating a world that respects the dignity of older adults and enhances the safety and quality of life of older victims and survivors of abuse. We engage communities to foster a collaborative, inclusive, survivor-centered response to abuse in later life.

Learning Objectives

As a result of attending this session, participants will be better able to:

- Recognize stalking behavior
- Understand how stalking impacts older adults
- Identify resources to improve their response to stalking
Overview

- Elder Abuse: An Overview
- Define stalking
  - Prevalence
  - Dynamics
  - Implications
- Resources

**Understanding Elder Abuse**

**The Elder Justice Roadmap**

Definition of Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is:
- physical, sexual, or psychological abuse, as well as neglect, abandonment, and financial exploitation of an older person by another person or entity,
- that occurs in any setting (e.g., home, community, or facility),
- either in a relationship where there is an expectation of trust and/or when an older person is targeted based on age or disability.
1 in 10 community-residing older adults reported experiencing elder abuse in the past year.

Elder Abuse: Under the Radar

For every one case of elder abuse that comes to the attention of a responsible entity...

A Survivor's Story: Velva
Poll

That you are aware of, have you ever worked with an elder adult who was experiencing stalking?

Stalking: Definition & Dynamics

Stalking is:

- CRIMINAL
- TRAUMATIC
- DANGEROUS
Stalking is CRIMINAL

- Federal
- All 50 States; District of Columbia; U.S. Territories
- Tribal Codes
- UCMJ

Stalking is TRAUMATIC

Many stalking victims:
- Experience mental health issues including depression, anxiety, insomnia and social dysfunction.
- Lose time from work. 1 in 8 employed stalking victims lose time from work and more than half lose 5 days of work or more.
- Relocate. 1 in 7 stalking victims move.

From a Survivor

"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."
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.


“Stalking is homicide in slow motion.”

- Patrick Brady, Criminology Dept. University of West Georgia

Stalking is one of the few crimes where early intervention can prevent violence and death.
Less than 40% of stalking victims report to law enforcement.


Domestic Violence Crimes Study

• 1785 cases of domestic violence
• 298 involve stalking (1 in 6)

How many cases were charged as stalking?


Defining Stalking

Legal

Behavioral
Poll: Is this Stalking?

1. A staff member hides a camera in the women's locker room to watch the women undress. It goes undiscovered for months.
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.

Behavioral Definition

Stalking:
A pattern of behavior directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear.

A Pattern of Behavior…

• Not a single incident or “one off” event.
• Called a “course of conduct” in most stalking statutes.
...Directed at a Specific Person

...That Would Cause a Reasonable Person to Feel Fear.

What's So Scary?
Context

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

Victim Reaction: Is it Fear?

More than 1 in 17 MEN

More than 1 in 6 WOMEN

Prevalence in a Lifetime

Perpetrators

The majority of victims report that the offender is male – including 87% of stalkers over age 60.

Victims

Women report stalking at higher rates than men do.

Image Results for “Stalking”
**Relationships**

The majority of the time, the victim knows the perpetrator.

**Victim & Offender Relationship**

- **Current/Former IP**: 43% for Male victims, 52% for Female victims
- **Acquaintance**: 24% for Male victims, 37% for Female victims
- **Stranger**: 11% for Male victims, 15% for Female victims
- **Family member**: 2% for Male victims, 5% for Female victims
- **Person of authority**: 2% for Male victims, 2% for Female victims

**Stalker Relationships: Older Stalkers (60+)**

- **Ex-intimates**: 24%
- **Acquaintances**: 52%
- **Strangers**: 24%
Age of Stalking Victims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65 or older</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-49</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stalking Victimization in the United States, NCVS (2009)

Stalking Behaviors

She got a ride from an elderly St. Paul man, then stalked him for more, charges say

Man steals more than $4,000 from elderly victim with 'almost daily' loan requests, police say

Stalking and Older Adults: An Overview
Stalking and Older Adults: An Overview

Identifying Course of Conduct

SLII
- Surveillance
- Life Invasion
- Interference
- Intimidation

Stalking Behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>unwanted phone calls and messages</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spreading rumors</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>following or spying</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>showing up at places</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unwanted letters and email</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waiting for victim</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leaving unwanted presents</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multiple Behaviors

- 78% of stalkers use more than one means of approach.
- 66% of stalkers pursue their victim at least once per week.
- 20% of stalkers use weapons to threaten or harm victims.
Co-occurrence with Other Crimes

Intersection with Other Crimes

- Domestic violence
- Sexual assault
- Sexual abuse
- Stalking
- OP violations
- Assault
- Harassment
- Home invasion
- Attempted murder

- Kidnapping
- Vandalism
- Wiretapping or utility theft
- Burglary
- Theft
- Identity theft
- Child Abuse
- Hate Crimes

Stalking and IPV
Adapted from the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project’s Power and Control Wheel

Point When Stalking Occurs

During Relationship 21%
During & After Relationship 36%
After relationship ends 43%

IP Stalkers are More Likely To...
- Physically approach the victim
- Be insulting, threatening and interfering
- Use weapons
- Quickly escalate behaviors
- Assault third parties
- Re-offend
Study of Women with Protective Orders

Women who were abused and stalked experienced significantly higher rates of the following than women who were abused but not stalked:

- Verbal abuse, degradation, jealousy and control
- Serious threats
- Moderate and severe physical violence
- Sexual violence and sexual assault
- Threats to kill and threats with a weapon
- Being beat up, attacks with a weapon and injury


Intersections of Sexual Violence and Stalking

A stalker may:

- Threaten to sexually assault the victim
- Sexually assault the victim.
- Attempt to get someone else to sexually assault the victim.
How Offenders Groom for Sexual Violence

1. Research and identify vulnerable victims
2. Establish relationships: contact, build trust
3. Meet in-person and isolate the victim
4. Coerce into sexual act(s)
5. Contact after

The Use of Technology to Stalk

- 80% own cell phones, 40% own smartphones
- 67% of adults ages 65 use the internet
- 34% use social media
- Younger seniors (65-69) have significantly higher rates of technology use than older seniors

Forms of Technology Used to Stalk

- Phones – calls, messages, texts, pics, video
- Cameras
- Global Positioning Systems (GPS)
- Computers
- Social networking sites
- Email & IM
- Spyware
- Assistive technologies

Warning Signs: Stalkers’ Use of Technology

- Knows where victim is
- Has access to information that victim never shared with him/her
- Victim is locked out of accounts, passwords changed, etc.
Older Adult Stalkers

- Least likely to target same-sex victims (10%)
- Most likely to actually injure victims
- More likely to target victims outside of their own age group, like younger acquaintances
Reporting & Response

Reporting Rates

- Less than half of stalking victims report to the police.
- Why might elderly victims be hesitant to report?
- What barriers might they face?

Specific Challenges

What are some of the challenges older victims of stalking face?
- Confusion around technology
- Minimizing the threat
- Perceived dementia/Alzheimer’s
- Medications
- What else?
- Others can’t comprehend
Reaction to Older Stalking Victims

77% of older victims were told they were overreacting

66.7% of older victims were not taken seriously by the police

Victim Help Seeking

- Enlisted help of friends/family: 43%
- Talked to boss/employer: 22%
- Talked to an attorney: 20%
- Obtained a restraining, protection, or stay-away order: 16%
- Talked to a mental health professional: 12%
- Contacted building/office security: 7%
- Talked to clergy/faith leader: 7%
- Contacted victim services, a shelter, or a help line: 7%
- Talked to a doctor or nurse: 7%
- Talked to a mental health professional: 7%
- Obtained a restraining, protection, or stay-away order: 7%
- Contacted building/office security: 7%
- Talked to clergy/faith leader: 7%
- Contacted victim services, a shelter, or a help line: 7%
- Talked to a doctor or nurse: 7%

Stalking is Rarely Charged

Between 5 and 16% of stalking cases are actually charged as stalking when police already have all the information they need to charge.
Reasons For Non-Disclosure

- Victim is minimizing or is uncertain of the behaviors
- Victim did report to someone but had a negative response
- Victim is isolated

Reasons For Non-Disclosure

- Fear of loss of independence
- The offender is a family member, intimate partner, or caretaker
- Lack of understanding technology

Older Stalking Victims

- Least likely to be aided by family and friends
- Less likely to access sources of support

Stalking and Age: Sheridan et al. (2015)
Elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation victims are three times more likely to die prematurely than non-abused older adults.


Implications

• Are we recognizing stalking in older adults?
• Or, are we calling it elder abuse?
• Are there disadvantages of labeling it as elder abuse?

Strategies & Resources
Responding to Victims

- Advise disengagement
- Documentation
- Safety needs and support services

Documentation Log

STALKING INCIDENT LOG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description of Incident</th>
<th>Location of Incident</th>
<th>Witness(s) (Name, Phone, Email)</th>
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SHARP Assessment

www.CoerciveControl.org
StalkingAwareness.org

- Documentation Log
- Information/Fact Sheets
- Safety Planning Tips
- Resources for victims, service providers & law enforcement

For Stalking Victims

www.AEquitasResource.org

Champions for Justice
Staying Connected to NCALL
The National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL)
Website: www.ncall.us
@ncall.us @ncall_us

National Resource Center on Reaching Victims
• Website: www.reachingvictims.org
• Funded by Office for Victims of Crime (OVC)
• Focused on underserved populations of crime victims, including older adults
• Provides technical assistance, training, consultation, mini-grants

Lifting Up the Voices of Older Survivors (LUV)
• Website: www.liftingupvoices.net
• Nine videos produced by NCALL and Terra Nova Films with funding by the Office for Victims of Crime
Thank You!

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