



# **SAFETY AWARENESS**

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The Safety suggestions in this document have been compiled from various safety plans. These are only some safety recommendations and/or considerations.

- Stranger violence is defined as assaults and attempts in which the victim did not know any of the offenders.
- Acquaintance violence is defined as assaults and attempts in which the victim knew one or more of the offenders by sight (not included partners, ex-partners, household members or other relatives).
- The risk of stranger violence is comparatively low, but it can occur to anyone at any time.

Overall, violence committed by strangers is less likely than other types of violence to result in physical injury (41% of strangers compared to 52% non-strangers: Stats Canada 1996).

Acquaintance and stranger violence is most likely to take place during the evening or at night and most violence by strangers does not occur in the home.

**Some Feelings and emotions you may experience:**

- Feeling as if the incident is happening again, constant and intrusive thoughts about the event and nightmares.
- Withdrawal consequences include attempts not to think about or to feel emotions connected to the incident. These attempts can include depression, avoidance of reminders of the incident, withdrawal from family and friends, not being able to go back to work (or overworking), self-medicating with alcohol or drugs.
- Other consequences include such things as anger, irritability, sleep problems, difficulty concentrating and an exaggerated startle response.

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER  
IT IS NEVER YOUR FAULT*****Building a Safer Environment At home:***

People expect to feel safe and secure in their own homes and statistically the likelihood of a physical encounter with an intruder is low. The chances of such an event happening can be reduced by installing appropriate security devices. This will increase the level of protection in the home, and potential risks to personal safety can be further minimized by observing sensible security practices.

**GENERAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS:**

It is unwise to leave door keys under a flowerpot, mat, in a mail box or similar hiding place that are easily accessible to burglars.

Be wary of leaving keys with trades people - keys can be copied. Items left lying around such as ladders, tools, gardening implements, lawnmowers, and bicycles, can attract a criminal onto the property, and some of the items may be used to enter the home or shed.

Open garage doors and open windows can also be attractive to criminals. Windows should have security fittings, particularly if left open. Example - a piece of wood to secure the window from being opened further.

Have cell phone with you and charged at all times.

If you arrive home and you think there has been a burglary, do not enter, an intruder may still be inside. Go to a neighbour and contact the Police.

When arriving home alone it can be a good idea to carry a personal or remote alarm for your car or house. If your safety is threatened, you can easily activate your alarm.

Carry your house keys in your hand for quick entry if needed.

Let trusted friends and neighbours know of your situation and develop a code so they know to call for help. Identify emergency meeting place should you need to leave quickly.

Know all exits and potential exits, develop an escape plan and review/revise it often.

## EXTERNAL SECURITY

Be aware that large shrubs, plants, or high fencing can provide a place for prowlers to hide.

Thorny plants along fence lines can discourage prowlers from climbing over, and having fully enclosed fencing with a gate creates a barrier. Prowlers are less likely to target such a property with restricted access and restricted escape routes.

Ensure your house number can always be clearly seen from the road.

Visibility of a street number at night is important for Police and other services responding to any emergency.

Many people choose to display their names on letterboxes or doorplates. A person living alone might consider using their initials rather than identifying gender by use of their first name.

## EMERGENCY ACTION

Try to avoid any contact with the intruder.

Call 9-1-1 at the earliest opportunity that it is safe to do so. If you are unable to speak leave the phone off the hook once connected to 911 so dispatch can hear what is going on and police will be dispatched to your address.

A quick decision must be made to either secure yourself (children) in a safe room, or to escape from the home.

If you decide to secure yourself in a safe room, phone your neighbours as well as the Police.

If you do encounter the intruder, try and move out of the way.

Call out to somebody else in the house to telephone the Police, even if you are alone.

You can attract attention by breaking windows and loudly shouting things like “Go away”, “Get out of my home”, “Somebody call the Police”.

If you cannot avoid the intruder and shouting and making a noise has no effect, an alternative is to make yourself calm, then in a firm manner tell the intruder to leave. Being assertive is an important self defence technique.

Display a confident manner, hold your head up, pull your shoulders back, stand tall.

Be prepared to physically defend yourself. The most vulnerable parts of an attacker's body are the eyes, nose, and genital area.

You can use force against your attacker when defending yourself, but be aware that if you use something as a weapon in self defence, it could be turned against you.

You can find out about self defence classes in your area.

During an emergency activate any available, fitted, remote or personal alarm system when it is practical and safe to do so.

## TELEPHONE SECURITY

When using the telephone, do not give personal information to strangers or callers representing themselves as market research or telemarketing companies as they may not be genuine.

When answering the telephone, it may be better to use "Hello" rather than reveal your name or telephone number. Do not let strangers know that you are at home alone.

When it appears a caller has dialed your number by mistake, do not supply your name, address or telephone number. Ask the caller the number wanted then advise that a dialing error was made.

When recording an answering machine message, do not indicate what times you will be in or out, and keep personal information to a minimum.

A woman living alone could consider using the term "we" on the recording tape, or have a male friend record the message.

Consider fitting exterior sensor lights to deter prowlers. If returning home at night a sensor light installed near the front door will provide good visibility of the surrounding area.

Joining Neighbourhood Watch and displaying Neighbourhood Watch, Beware of Dog and burglar alarm signs, can discourage criminal activity.

## INTERNAL SECURITY

A home that has security features will increase the level of protection against intrusion. Basic measures to increase security are:

Fitting deadlocks to outer doors and internal access garage doors.

Fitting lockable bolts to sliding doors and French doors.

Fitting door viewers and security chains.

## OTHER MEASURES

Installing a system alarm.

Keeping your car keys with an alarm button with you in your bedroom.

Having a light switch within reach of your bed and a telephone with a list of emergency contact numbers.

Replacing any hollow external doors with solid core ones fitted into sturdy framing, or installing security screen doors on the outside.

## RESPONDING TO PEOPLE AT THE DOOR

Observe first. Always check by looking through a window or door viewer.

Only open your door partly with security chain connected.

Refuse entry if in doubt and telephone the Police or a neighbor.

Switch on outside lights when dark to see who is there.

Think “suspicious”. Strangers may be thieves trying to gain entry.

Only open the door after examining identification and satisfying yourself it is genuine.

If you are alone you can create the impression that someone else is present by shouting out that you will answer the door.

## WAYS PEOPLE MAY ATTEMPT TO GAIN ENTRY TO YOUR HOUSE:

Asking to use the telephone; Indicating there is an emergency.

Asking for a glass of water.

Asking for donations or conducting a survey.

Impersonating sales representatives, officials, trades people and others.

## *Internet, Technology Safety*

### Internet:

Consider changing your e-mail address/password – your abuser may know how to access your accounts.

Update emails with your doctor, vet, dentist, etc. with a new email so that abuser is not aware of your upcoming appointments and whereabouts.

Protect accounts with strong passwords.

Consider removing yourself from social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter).

Set your boundaries: think about how public you want your profile or blog to be –check your privacy settings.

Be very selective about who you accept as friends.

Don't share personal information such as your full name, social insurance number, address, bank information, credit card numbers or your photo. Talk to your children, family members and friends about your need to maintain your safety and privacy on social networking sites.

Do not post your full name, social insurance number, address, personal information or photos of you and your family.

If you are adamant about meeting someone from the internet in person, meet in a busy public area and bring someone along. If you can't, make sure someone knows where you are going. If you feel the person you meet is not truthful, leave immediately.

Abusers often monitor their partner's computer use. Remember your "history" is traceable. It is almost impossible to clear a computer of all your activities. It may be safer to use a computer outside your home - work, friend's, family member's or the local library.

Learn how to 'cover your tracks'. When you clear the cache and history list, you erase ALL information that had been previously stored there. If your partner notices that the cache and history list have been deleted; they may be suspicious. Visit some 'safe' sites and leave them in the history to avoid suspicion. Go to [www.victimserviceshuron.ca](http://www.victimserviceshuron.ca) and learn from our website how to clear your history.

### Cell Phones:

Check your settings. Your abuser can use your cell phone as a tracking device if it has Global Positioning System (GPS).

Be aware that there are ways to track exactly where your phone is, such as "Find my iPhone" for apple products, and "Find my Phone" for android products. If someone knows your password, they may be able to access your phones location.

Search for your name on the Internet. There may be a link to your contact information or you may find out that your 'unlisted' phone number is published.

Do not answer calls from unknown, blocked or private numbers.

Erase your last call so your abuser can't find it by using 're-dial'.

### Safety Apps:

Research free safety apps for your mobile devices eg. bSafe (apple) & SOS Stay Safe (android).

Develop a 'personal safety network' of a few close friends or coworkers whom you can add to your safety app.

### GPS & Surveillance Devices:

Your abuser may be using hidden cameras, such as the "Nanny Cam", or even a baby monitor to check on you.

If your abuser knows your Apple ID, your phone is at risk. You will need a new Apple ID, and then change your SIM card.

GPS devices are cheap and easy to use. GPS devices can be hidden in your car, on your cell phone, or other objects you carry with you. Your abuser can also use your car's GPS system to see where you've been.

There are spy-ware apps available that your abuser can install on your phone, tablet or computer to monitor your activity; Educate yourself. Some warning or suspect signs that there may be spy-ware on your phone:

- Battery drains much faster on standby than ever before.
- Data usage increases. Know your normal monthly data usage.
- Device shuts Off/On by itself.
- Lights come on when device is idle.
- Device is constantly crashing.
- Device is making calls/sending texts on it's own.

-<http://spyappsmobile.com/how-to-remove-spy-apps-from-your-smart-phone-or-tablet/>

Consider that your abuser may be synced to your children's devices and may be accessing your information in that way.

Even light bulbs can have hidden cameras or voice recorders in them. Be Suspicious.

## *Social Media:*

Don't post information about your family and friends on social networking sites.

Ask others to not post information about you including pictures.

Never use sites like Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat to reveal your current location or where you might be going or what you are doing.

Don't tag locations in posts or pictures and ensure your 'snap map' is off on snapchat.

Keep apprised of digital safety.

## *When You Are Not Living With The Abuser*

### IN AN EMERGENCY AT HOME

1. Stay away from the kitchen & garage (the abuser can find weapons such as knives & tools).
2. Stay away from bathrooms, closets or spaces where the abuser can trap you.
3. Go to your 'safe room' with a phone and door or window to escape.
4. Lock the abuser outside if you can.
5. Call 911 immediately for help.
6. Think of a neighbour or friend you can run to for help.

### AT HOME

1. Change the locks (deadbolts on outside doors) or codes on the doors, windows,



garage and mailbox. If you live in an apartment, you must speak with your landlord before changing the locks.

2. Have window bars, sensors/alarms installed.
3. Install a peephole in the door.
4. Steel/metal doors are better than wooden doors.
5. Either disconnect the automatic garage door opener or change the code. If you do not have an automatic opener, reinforce the door (large nail, metal rod, etc.).
6. If possible, install a security system.
7. Install carbon monoxide & smoke detectors and fire extinguishers on each floor; install rope ladders to be used for escape from upper floors.
8. Install an outside motion lighting system (available in solar as well); Leave the outside light on at night so you can see someone coming to the door.
9. If you live in an apartment, do not use the laundry facilities when you are alone.
10. Teach your children not to answer the door to anyone but to let you know someone is there.
11. If you have a no-communication order, keep it near you at all times. Make sure that the police, school and day care have a copy of all court orders including restraining orders, custody and access orders, as well as a picture of the abuser.
12. Change your cell phone number. Have your phone charged and with you at all times: If you have a land line, get an unpublished and unlisted number.
13. Do not identify yourself on your answering machine, especially if you live alone.
14. Use timers on your lights so your abuser will not know when you are in or out.
15. If you have a vehicle with a panic button on the remote, keep it by your bed.

## COURT ORDERS, THE POLICE AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

1. Ask what personal information is available about you to the abuser via any court orders and request that this information be removed wherever possible.
2. Notify the police about every infraction of a court order. You can get an occurrence report number from the police each time.
3. If the abuser has been charged by the police, contact the investigating officer to keep you informed of what is going to happen.
4. If the abuser is going to be released or has been released, ask the police, courts or Victim Witness Assistance Program for a copy of his/her conditions of release.
5. Call and register with the Victim Support Line (1-888-579-2888) if the abuser has been sentenced to a detention center. Initially, when you register, a 4 digit PIN is required. You can expect to receive notifications from any one of 10 numbers, which are confidential and not traceable (provided by VWAP). For more information, go to [Ontario.ca/victimservices](http://Ontario.ca/victimservices).

## *While Living With Your Partner*

Having a safety plan can be a way to increase your own, as well as your children's safety, if there is a risk that you could experience abuse. You do not have control over your partner's violence, but you can map out action steps to increase your safety & prepare in advance for the possibility of future violence/ harassment. Don't try to do everything right away, take it a step at a time and start with ideas that seem realistic and right for you. Keep in mind that it is important to review and/or update your safety plan regularly. Abusive situations & risks can change very quickly.

### Preparations for an Emergency Escape

- Take a photocopy of these items and leave them with someone you trust. Hide the originals somewhere else if you can.
- Passports, birth certificates, immigration papers, for all family members.
- School and immunization records.
- Medications, prescriptions, health cards & medical records for all.
- Driver's license and vehicle registration.
- Social assistance (OW/ODSP) Identification.
- Work permits.
- Marriage certificate, divorce papers, custody documentation, court orders, restraining order, last CRA tax return(s).
- Lease/rental agreement, house deed, mortgage payment record.
- Bank statements & any financial papers related to family assets.
- Insurance policies.
- Addresses and telephone numbers.
- All the cards you normally use, for example, phone card, Social Insurance, bank cards and credit cards.
- Picture of your children and (ex) partner/abuser.
- Try to keep all the cards that you normally use, in your wallet. For example:
  - Driver's license, Social Insurance Card, Birth Certificate.
  - Bank Debit / Credit cards.
  - Health cards/Phone card.

### EMOTIONAL SAFETY

1. Take time for yourself – meditate, play music, go to a movie, etc..
2. Spend time with people who make you feel good and provide support.
3. Take care of your sleep and nutritional needs.
4. Try to exercise or just go for a walk.
5. Join support groups to avoid feelings of isolation.

6. Keep a personal journal – write about your feelings and something positive about yourself everyday (keep it in a safe place).
7. Take time to prepare yourself emotionally before stressful situations like meeting with lawyers, attending court.
8. Try not to overbook yourself – you can limit yourself to one appointment per day to reduce stress.
9. Do not find comfort in excessive use of alcohol, drugs, food, and/or gambling.
10. Avoid excessive shopping or impulse buying.
11. It is okay to feel angry, find positive and constructive ways to express your anger.
12. Your local place of worship may also offer additional support services.

## *Children's Safety Plan*

This plan was developed to help a parent teach her/his children some basic safety planning. It is based on the belief that the most important thing that children can do for their parent is to get away from the area of violence and keep themselves safe.

- Teach your child/children that abuse is ALWAYS wrong, but it is not their fault.
- Stress the importance of being safe, and that it is not his/her responsibility to make their parent/caregiver safe. They must not put themselves in danger.
- Have your child identify a safe room/place in the house, preferably with a lock on the door and a phone. The first step of any plan is for the children to get out of the room where the abuse is occurring.
- Teach your children not to open the door to anyone but to let you know someone is there.
- Teach your child how to answer the phone and instruct them not to reveal information to the caller.
- Teach your children how to call for help. It is important that children know they should not use a phone that is in view of the abuser. This would put them at risk. They may have to run to the neighbour's to call for help.
- If you have a cell phone, teach your children how to use it.
- Teach them how to contact the police by dialing 911.
- Ensure that children know their address and full name (rural children need to know their emergency number and rural route number).
- Rehearse what they will say after dialing 911. In the case of young children it should be something simple and specific. An example of what your child could rehearse is:

An operator will answer: "POLICE, FIRE, AMBULANCE"

Your child says: "Police"

"My name is \_\_\_\_\_"

I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

I need help. Send the police. Someone is hurting my (mom/dad)

The address here is \_\_\_\_\_

The phone number here is \_\_\_\_\_

If children call the police, they need know it may not be safe for them to stay on the phone. If it is not safe, they should tell the operator that and just put the phone down. **DO NOT HANG UP.** The police may call the number back if they hang up and the abuser could answer the phone. This could create a dangerous situation for yourself and your child.

- Keep emergency numbers by all phones.
- Know if there is a Neighbourhood Block Parents Program in your neighbourhood and teach your children how to use it.
- Pick a safe place to meet your children out of the home after the situation is safe for you (so you can easily find each other). Teach them the safest route to that place.
- Have a code word with your children that they can use with you - a word that no one else will know what it means.
- Develop a visual or other code for your children to know that there is a danger in the house so they will not enter the house or room if they see the code.
- Advise your children's schools, doctors and childcare providers of your situation and give them a copy of any court order you have. Develop a code word for someone you trust to pick up the children at school. Only a school authority and the person you designate will know this code word.
- Advise these same people about who is allowed to pick the children up or who is to have contact with them. Request that they report any suspicious persons or activity to you and/or the police.
- Ensure that your children are accompanied to and from school and any other places they go to.
- If the abuser has legal access to your child or children, you can talk to a lawyer or Children's Aid Society about the possibility of getting supervised access or having access denied.

## *Teen Safety*

### **Safety at Home**

Make sure all the doors and windows are locked.

If someone comes to the door, check to see who is there. If you don't know who it is, don't answer. Never let a stranger into the house.

Keep the curtains drawn.

At night, leave the outdoor lights on.

Don't let anyone know if you are home alone.

If you answer the phone and you don't know who it is, do not let them know if you are by yourself. Tell the caller that whoever they asked for is busy at the moment.

Know your neighbours in case there was an emergency. Do you feel comfortable going to them? Have a plan and phone numbers handy.

### Safety at School

If you or another student have been threatened or harmed in any way, you need to report it to teacher, counsellor, coach, principal or police.

If you are concerned for your safety, try to remain with other students when walking to class, eating lunch or any extracurricular activities.

Make sure that you call your parents or caregiver to let them know where you are and what you are doing.

If needed, make arrangements for trusted adult to drop you off or pick you up at school.

If there is an emergency during the day and your parent(s) or caregiver work, do you have someone to call and somewhere to go.

### Safety Outside the Home or School

Be aware of your surroundings when you go out at anytime but especially at night. You may be a little more vulnerable when you are attending a concert, going to the movies or the shopping mall. Avoid being alone.

Try to plan for a ride home or keep extra money for a taxi.

If you take public transportation, sit near the bus driver.

Carry a charged cell phone & portable charger.

Do not walk around with headphones.

Don't wear a hoodie or keep your head down texting/using your cell.

Carry a personal alarm or whistle.

You need to be aware of your location should you have to call 911.

### Emotional Safety

You can talk to a family member or trusted friend about what is going on.

Surround yourself with people who are a positive influence.

Take care of your sleep and nutritional needs.

Keep a journal & write at least one positive thing about yourself everyday.

Use Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868) or [www.wesforyouthonline.ca](http://www.wesforyouthonline.ca) (online counsellors available with pre-registration).

## *A Safety Plan for Older Persons*

- If you are being abused you should know that it is not your fault.
- Tell someone you trust about what is happening to you.
- Ask for help. There are a number of resources within your community that can support you through this difficult time.

### Things to pack & to consider before leaving the abusive environment:

- Emergency numbers and originals/copies of important documents which may include:
  - Marriage certificate, recent bank statements, passport, birth certificate, lease agreement, house deed, insurance papers.
  - Medications, prescriptions, glasses and mobility devices.
  - A picture of the abuser & the abuser's license plate number to show the police, neighbours, etc..
  - Extra clothing.
  - Photographs of abuse such as bruises or cuts.
  - Bank records if available, to show patterns of withdrawal that you did not make.
  - Emergency money (\$10-\$20, change for payphone), cheque book, debit, credit, health, and drug cards.
  - Cell phone/laptop/tablet and chargers.

### Things to pack & to consider while living in the abusive environment:

- Get a cell phone, keep it charged, and program numbers in speed dial-family, friends, doctors, local shelter, non-emergency police (1-888-310-1122).
- Call 9-1-1 if in immediate danger; do not hang up after the call is made, and make a lot of noise.
- Create a code word or a signal with a trusted friend, relative or neighbour to signal distress and ask them to call 9-1-1 if they think you are in danger.
- Open your own bank account at a different bank and/or branch than the one used by the abuser.
- Keep your bank and credit cards safe & do not tell anyone what your PIN is.
- Ensure that no sensitive mail (e.g., mail from your bank or lawyer) is sent to your home – consider having it sent to a trusted friend or relative.
- Ask a third party, such as a neighbour, who witnesses the abuse to write and store notes/pictures as evidence.
- **Carefully document all incidents - dates, times, details of what happened and who may have witnessed the event.**

## *A Safety Plan for Older Persons*

- If needed, identify someone who can help you with transportation and accompany you to appointments.
- Be aware of your surroundings especially if you go out at night.
- Carry extra money for a taxi.
- If you take public transportation, sit near the driver.
- You can carry a personal alarm or a whistle.
- Don't carry a purse if possible. If it is necessary, try a cross body purse or fanny pack.
- Don't carry large amounts of cash.
- Be aware of telemarketers, romance scams, bank related scams and thefts by deception, door to door.
- Don't sign anything until you have let a trusted friend or family member read the contract.
- Don't give out any personal information over the phone.
- Use a shredder to dispose of personal paperwork.

**IT'S OK TO SAY NO – DON'T LET ANYONE PRESSURE YOU INTO ANYTHING!**

## *While Travelling*

- Always have a cell phone and keep it charged and available while traveling.
- Always keep your car locked even when you are in the vehicle.
- Let someone know when you are traveling, when you anticipate arriving and check in when you are there.
- Carry the keys within your hands and scan the parking lot for unusual circumstances.
- Before entering your car, walk around the outside and check for signs your vehicle has been tampered with ensure the tires are not flat. Check the back seat of the car before getting in and test your breaks before starting out.
- Change your routes to familiar places and the time at which you attend wherever possible.
- Be aware of where you are—including the street names and local landmarks—**the first thing you should tell the 911 operator when you call 911 is who you are and where you are, as you may only have a few seconds to get any information out.**
- Check your mirrors frequently and be aware of the cars/trucks around you.
- Whenever possible back into a parking spot and park in a well-lit area close to the building or parking security.

- If someone is following you, consider going directly to a drive-thru or to a public place and do not exit the car until you draw attention to yourself (i.e. use your horn, speak to someone, etc).
- Consider having a “call police” sign in your car, accessible to take out if leaving the car in an emergency.
- If walking, take a well-lit route and walk with others whenever possible.
- If taking public transit—wait in designated areas or well back from train/subway platforms, sit close to the driver or in an area of surveillance and scan the area for those around you.

## *In the Community*

- Use common sense; if something does not appear right, then it probably isn't.
- Familiarize yourself with where you are.
- Scan your environment and make mental note of where you are and landmarks around you.
- Where are the closest houses, businesses, people, windows, exits, entrances, etc.
- At night, walk in well light areas with a friend, if possible.
- Carry a charged cell phone.
- Carry a whistle, bell, personal alarm, and/or mini flashlight to call attention to yourself and request help.
- Avoid shortcuts through parking lots, parks and deserted spaces.
- Use different stores and frequent different social spots—don't be too routine or predictable.
- Use the buddy system. Invite friends or family member to join you so you aren't alone.
- Let someone know where you are going, when you will be expected back, which route, stores, and direction you are going.

## *At the Bar*

- Use the buddy system. When you are with a friend at a bar, pub, or party, plan to watch out for one another and arrange to leave the event together or in a group.
- If you're persistently being harassed, report the person harassing you to a staff member, and manager before leaving.
- Never leave your drink unattended.
- Trust your gut instinct about people. If someone is persistent or harassing you, then do not continue to talk to them. Tell trusted friend or bar personnel about your situation.
- Be aware of who you invite back to your home.
- If you suspect you have been given the Date Rape Drug and cannot remember anything, notify the police immediately and seek medical attention.
- If you believe you were sexually assaulted, notify the police immediately.



## *At the Bank Machine*

- Don't go into an ATM area at night or alone.
- Have your card ready and complete your transaction as quickly as possible.
- Scan the bank machine area prior to using it. If you see anyone suspicious in the area, don't use it.
- Always be aware of your surroundings while you are making a transaction especially if withdrawing large sums of money.
- When entering your PIN information, cover up the area so no one around you can see your private information.
- If the machine is malfunctioning or you begin to have problems with your card, get your card returned to you and use a different machine.
- If someone comes up to you to help you or to ask you a question, step back and in a loud, strong voice, tell them you do not want to talk to them.
- If you are in trouble or feel like someone is watching you, call police immediately from a safe location.

## *Criminal Harassment*

Criminal harassment – sometimes called “stalking” – is any form of harassment, which causes the person being harassed to have a reasonable fear for their safety.

Under the Criminal Code of Canada, the following behaviours are defined as harassment;

- Repeatedly following from place to place another person or anyone known to that other person;
- Repeatedly communicating, directly or indirectly, with another person or anyone known to them;
- Besetting or watching the dwelling-house, or place where another person, or anyone known to that person, resides, works carries on business, or happens to be; or
- Engaging in threatening conduct directed at another person or any member of their family.

Where someone knowingly or recklessly harasses another person and causes that person to reasonably fear for their safety or the safety of anyone known to them, the conduct constitutes a criminal offence, and is punishable by a range of sanctions up to and including imprisonment.

## What are examples of criminal harassment?

Criminal harassment is usually committed by someone whom you know; often it is someone whom you have been close to. It frequently occurs during a breakup or divorce. It often goes unreported because the person to whom it is directed hopes that it will die down or that they can deal with it alone. Sometimes romantic behaviour, which at first seems acceptable changes or starts to feel inappropriate, strange or unaccepted over time. If someone repeatedly contacts you, follows you, lies in wait for you, will not take “no” for an answer and behaves in ways that you find unsettling, you should seek assistance. The unwanted behaviour may escalate; it may become threatening or frightening.

The following are examples of harassment that can escalate into criminal behaviour. You should seek assistance in a situation of this kind:

- **Unwanted Gifts** - You receive a weekly presents- flowers and other gifts-from a colleague, ex-partner. This person has asked you out on dates. You have indicated that you are not interested and do not want any more gifts; however, this person continues to send presents. You are feeling uncomfortable and are concerned about the gift bearer’s intentions.
- **Repeated Contact** (Phone calls, messages, emails, letters) - You are receiving many emails from an ex-partner that have left you feeling unsettled and confused. The messages are sometimes friendly, and ask if you can work things out; at other times they are hostile and insulting. Some of your friends and family have also started getting voice mail messages from the same individual attempting to contact you through them.

## These are examples of behaviour you should report immediately;

### • Threats

You are receiving threatening email from a former partner. You no longer feel safe at work or at home. You are also concerned that the individual knows where you frequently hangout and will approach you.

### • Following and/or watching

You are being harassed by a former partner. The person is approaching your friends or family asking questions about you and trying to gain personal information, has joined your fitness club, and has been seen near your home.

- **Contacting your family, friends, professors, colleagues, students**

Your former partner is outraged by the fact that you are not returning any phone calls. Now your ex is repeatedly calling your family, telling them very personal things about your relationship and implying that if they don't help the two of you to reunite they will be "at risk".

The suggestions in this booklet are based on experiences of previous clients over time as well as feedback from OPP and emergency responders that specialize in offering safety awareness suggestions. Please keep in mind every situation is unique and not all suggestions in this booklet may apply to your situation. You may also think of ways to keep safe that are not listed in this booklet which should not be discredited as long as it is legal and keeps your safety in mind at all times.

**PLEASE VISIT THE FOLLOWING SITES FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**Ontario Network of Victim Services providers**

[www.victimservicesonatrio.ca](http://www.victimservicesonatrio.ca)

**Victim Support Line**

[www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/about/vw/vsl.asp](http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/about/vw/vsl.asp)

