



TM

Safety Plan

Stranger Violence

Stranger Violence

BACKGROUND



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

Overall, violence committed by strangers is less likely than other types of violence to result in physical injury (41% for 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**

PERSONAL SAFETY PLAN

IN AN EMERGENCY:

- Call **911** right away for help
- Go to the closest house, business, or person for help/yell, scream, kick, bite, or anything else to deter the attacker/stranger
- Get medical help if you are injured

IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD:

- Use common sense; if something does not appear right, then it probably is not
- Familiarize yourself with where you are
- Where are the closest houses, businesses, people, windows, exits, entrances, etc?
- At night, walk in well-lit 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 the buddy system. Invite a friend 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

IN PARKING LOTS AND YOUR CAR:

- When you know you will be returning to your car late at night; try to park close to a lamp standard or well lit area
- Scan the parking lot/area for any unusual people or activity
- Before getting into your car, visually check the interior and exterior
- Have your car keys ready and in your hand, so you don't have to search for them when you reach your car
- Don't roll down the windows to any strangers that approach your car. Keep your car locked
- If you feel safe talking to the person, roll your window down an inch, just enough to hear them
- If your car won't start or has a flat tire, stay in your car with the doors locked and call for help immediately
- Keep a safety kit in your vehicle with candles, blanket, flashlight, flares, first aid kit, including a "Call Police" sign
- If you believe you are being followed, drive to the nearest police station, hospital or fire department — beep your horn and flash your lights to get someone's attention

PERSONAL SAFETY PLAN

AT A BAR OR PUB:

- 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 are persistently 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 don't continue to talk to them. Tell a 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 can't remember anything, notify the police immediately and seek medical attention
- If you believe you were sexually assaulted, notify 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 don't want to talk to them
 - If you are in trouble or feel like someone is watching you, call the police immediately from a safe location

PERSONAL SAFETY PLAN

IN YOUR HOME (WHEN YOU ARE NOT THERE):

- Always lock your doors and windows when you leave your home
- Place a pole or wedge against doors and windows
- Keep your curtains closed and use timers on your lights to create an impression that someone is home
- Tell a family member or trusted friend when you are leaving and expected to return
- Have a trusted friend or family member check the house periodically to gather mail, newspapers, and flyers
- Leave a phone number with a friend or family member so they'll know where you are
- Change your locks if you lost your house keys or suspect there is a duplicate out there
- Ensure your security system is on and working properly
- Carry a small flashlight in case the porch lights have been tampered with
- When you arrive back home, check all windows, doors, valuables and other property to ensure nothing is damaged or missing
- If you suspect your house was broken into, call police immediately and do not enter
- Be especially aware of maintaining security in your building or residence during holidays, vacation periods
- Keep dead bolts on all outside doors

IN YOUR HOME (WHEN YOU ARE THERE):

- Keep your doors and windows locked when you are home
- Install a peephole in the door and use it when someone comes to your door
- Should someone ask to use your telephone, offer to place the call for them — do not let them in
- Cut back trees/bushes that make a hiding place or obstruct the view of your house
- Install motion sensitive lighting, as it draws attention to suspects
- Have an unlisted and unpublished phone number
- Get call display on your phone, and only answer phone numbers you are familiar with
- If you live alone, be careful how you list your name in the telephone book and directory
- Keep your answering machine message short and business like and without personal information

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 at 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 unacceptable 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.

CRIMINAL HARASSMENT

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 present — flowers and other gifts — from a colleague, ex-partners. 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.

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

THREATS

- You are receiving threatening emails from a former partner. You no longer feel safe either 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".





Caledon \ Dufferin
Victim Services
Support, Information, Referrals