STALKING OF ELDER ADULTS: AN OVERVIEW

Stalking Resource Center and National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL)

Presenter Information

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Learning Objectives

As a result of attending this session, participants will be able to:
1) Understand stalking behavior: what stalking behavior is, why it matters, and the role of technology in aiding/abetting stalking behaviors.
2) Identify stalking behaviors within the context of elder/vulnerable adult abuse, particularly with reference to domestic/sexual violence.
3) Apply their understanding of stalking in elder abuse cases. Using a hypothetical fact pattern, participants will work to identify specific facts and behaviors of concern.
Overview

- Elder Abuse: An Overview
- Define stalking
  - Prevalence
  - Dynamics
- Intersection of elder abuse and stalking
- Implications
- Case scenario
- Resources

Right Issue, Right Time: Intersection of Elder Abuse and Stalking

The Elder Justice Roadmap

- Released in 2014 by the U.S. Department of Justice
- A strategic planning resource created by the field, for the field.
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.

Priority 107: “Ongoing multi-disciplinary training (bringing together professionals from various disciplines) about effective approaches, collaboration, and other matters, at the local, state and national levels.”

1 in 10 community-residing older adults reported experiencing elder abuse in the past year.

For every one case of elder abuse that comes to the attention of a responsible entity, another twenty-three cases never come to light.

10,000 Americans turn 65 every day.
Three international studies found overall rates of abuse of people with dementia by their caregivers ranged from 34 – 62%.

Discussion

- When you think of elder abuse what do you typically think of?
- How many of you have worked with an older adult victim who has experienced stalking?

Defining Stalking

- Behavioral definition
- Statutory
Behavioral Definition of Stalking

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

Context is critical!
Understanding Stalking – Context

- Something may be frightening for the victim but not to you
- Stalking behaviors often have specific meaning that is only understood between offender & victim
- Stalking criminalizes otherwise non-criminal behavior

Age of Stalking Victims

Older Stalker & Victim Relationship
Stalker Tactics

- Sent unwanted emails, instant messages, & messages through social media
- Left strange or threatening items
- Left victim unwanted cards, letters, flowers, or presents
- Sneaked into victim’s car/home; did things to scare
- Watched, followed, or spied on victim
- Left unwanted text or voice messages
- Made unwanted telephone calls & hang-ups
- Approached victim/showed up places where victim was.

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

Older Adult Tech Use

- 77% of older adults have a cell phone
- 59% of older adults go online
- Of these, 29% use SNS
Stalking and 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

Among stalking cases...

- 24% involve property damage
- 21% involve a direct attack on the victim
- 15% involve an attack on another person or pet

Identity theft

- Charged items to credit card: 30%
- Took money from accounts: 52%
- Opened/closed accounts: 34%
Power and Control Wheel

ALL and Domestic Violence: Similarities

- Use of threats
- Isolation
- Use of privilege
- Use of family member
- Power and control in the center of the wheel
- Physical and sexual abuse on the outer rim

ALL and Domestic Violence: Differences

- ALL targets vulnerabilities and neglect opportunities unique to later life
- Frequently committed by intimate partners, adult children, siblings and caretakers
Stalking and Domestic Violence

81% of stalking victims who were stalked by an intimate partner reported that they had also been physically assaulted by that partner.

National Violence Against Women Survey (1998)
SRC and NCALL, 2015

ALL and Sexual Violence: Similarities

- Emotional impact of abuse
- Need for advocacy support
- Use of threats
- Isolation
- Use of privilege
- Denying, blaming and minimizing
- Power and control in the center of the wheel
- Physical and sexual abuse on the outer rim

SRC and NCALL, 2015

ALL and Sexual Violence: Differences

- Elder victims of sexual violence face a heightened risk of serious physical injury
- Forms of sexual violence can look different for older adults
- Healthcare providers and others frequently do not recognize physical symptoms of sexual abuse in older victims

SRC and NCALL, 2015
Abuse in Later Life Power and Control Wheel

Intimate Partner Stalkers: Increased Risk for Victims

More likely to physically approach victim
More insulting, interfering and threatening
More likely to use weapons
Behaviors more likely to escalate quickly
More likely to re-offend

Discussion

Thinking about what we just discussed, how many of you now think you have worked with an older victim of stalking?

What are some of the challenges older stalking victims may face?
Do Most Stalking Victims Report to Law Enforcement?

- 37% of male stalking victims
- 41% of female stalking victims

Reporting to Law Enforcement
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.

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Reaction to Older Stalking Victims

**77%** of older victims were told they are overreacting

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

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Are there also reasons why an older adult victim may not disclose to anyone the abuse and/or stalking?
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

 SRC and NCALL, 2015

Reasons For Non-Disclosure

 Fear of loss of independence

 The offender is a family member, intimate partner, or care-taker

 Lack of understanding technology

 SRC and NCALL, 2015

Victims of Stalking

 SRC and NCALL, 2015
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: 9%
- Talked to clergy/faith leader: 9%
- Talked to a doctor or nurse: 9%
- Talked to an attorney: 9%
- Enlisted help of friends/family: 7%

Contacted victim services, a shelter, or a help line

Stalking Victimization in the United States, BJS (2009)

Older Stalking Victims

Least likely to be aided by family and friends

Less likely to access sources of support

SRC and NCALL, 2015

What effect(s) have you seen abuse and/or stalking have on older adults?

SRC and NCALL, 2015
Impact of Stalking

- Decreased ability to perform at work or school, or accomplish daily tasks
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Sleep disturbances, nightmares
- Sexual dysfunction
- Fatigue
- Fluctuations in weight
- Self-medication with alcohol/drugs
- Feeling on guard most of the time - hypervigilance
- Minimization; Self-blame
- Guilt, shame or embarrassment
- Frustration, Irritability, Anger
- Shock and confusion
- Fear and anxiety
- Depression
- Emotional numbness
- Flashbacks
- Isolation/disconnection from other people
- Difficulties with concentration or attention
- Feeling suicidal

Impact on Stalking Victims

Afraid of:
- 46% not knowing what would happen next
- 30% bodily harm
- 29% behavior would never stop
- 13% harm or kidnap a child
- 10% loss of freedom
- 9% death
- 4% losing one’s mind

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?

Documentation Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description of Incident</th>
<th>Location of Incident</th>
<th>Witness(es) (Name, Address, Phone)</th>
<th>Police Called (Name, Phone, Badge #)</th>
<th>Officer Name (Name, Badge #)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Free to download at www.victimsofcrime.org/src

Case Scenario
Case Scenario

- Please take a few minutes to read the ‘Case Scenario’ fact pattern that has been placed on your table. Review the facts, then look up when you are finished.

Case Scenario: Challenges

- What challenges are presented to Sylvia under this scenario? If she asked you if you thought she was safe, what would your response be?

Case Scenario (Read Behind)

Challenges
- Older offenders may not be perceived as dangerous
- Extensive network of family, friends, loved ones in common
- Proof/Documentation
- Lack of social media savvy – is ‘Tim’ an actual former classmate? Could this be a fake account that Tom is using to track Sylvia’s activities?
- Traditional options may or may not work
  - Shelter
  - Relocation
Case Scenario: Options

- What else could you do in this scenario?
- What other options or resources would you provide to Sylvia?
- Would you encourage Sylvia to make a police report regarding her concerns? Why or why not? If so, what details would you want her to mention? Who, if anyone, should follow up? And, if not, what next steps (if any) would you recommend to her?
Technical Assistance and Consultation

The National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL) provides technical assistance on elder abuse and abuse in later life. Staff respond to questions by phone, email, or in person and are also available to review materials and participate on state and national advisory committees. NCALL provides information on programming, outreach, collaboration, and policy development.

Training

NCALL provides training to many audiences, including domestic violence and sexual assault programs, aging bureaus, adult protective services, health care providers, criminal and civil justice system agencies and representatives, and other legal personnel.

OVW Abuse in Later Life Program

- 8 – 9 communities a year
- $400,000 for 3 years
- Projects
  - Provide training and cross training
  - Create or enhance a CCR team
  - Develop victim services