

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON HOW TO KEEP SAFE

People leaving an abusive relationship, and those being stalked, should know that violence and harassment can increase in severity at the point of separation, especially when the victim obtains an order of protection. **MANY OFFENDERS STAY AWAY ONCE ORDERED TO, BUT SOME DO NOT!** It is still very important to obtain an order of protection so the police can charge the offender if the order is not obeyed (e.g. the offender tries to make contact).

GETTING AN ORDER OF PROTECTION, USING A SAFETY PLAN AND CALLING THE POLICE CAN HELP PREVENT FURTHER VIOLENCE.

**WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?** Domestic violence or abuse occurs in domestic relationships when one person has more power, and uses it to cause fear to the other person. There are many different forms of abuse including: verbal/threats, psychological, physical, sexual, and destruction of property. It is against the law to physically harm or threaten another person. Domestic violence includes abuse directed at a spouse, child, sibling or senior parent.

**WHAT IS STALKING?** Stalking occurs when a person, without lawful authority, repeatedly harasses another person causing them to fear for their safety. Stalking can include following someone from place to place, communicating directly or indirectly with the other person, or anyone known to the other person, watching any place where the other person might be, or engaging in threatening conduct directed at the other person.

Stalking behavior is a criminal offence known as CRIMINAL HARASSMENT. It is against the law to repeatedly harass another person. You have a right to report this behavior to the police. If the police have enough evidence they may lay a criminal charge against the offender.

### SAFETY PLANNING TIPS:

- Make a list of local phone numbers where you can seek emergency assistance including police, victim services programs, shelters and counselling agencies. The toll-free number for the PROVINCE-WIDE CRISIS LINE is 1-877-977-0007;
- Contact the nearest shelter or victim services program. Advise them of your current situation and ask for assistance to develop a good safety plan;
- Let family, friends and others you trust know what is happening - give them a description of the offender and any identifying information such as the make and colour of vehicle;
- If children are involved, teach them to dial 911 in an emergency, and help them develop an age appropriate safety plan;
- Keep a written record of any contact the offender makes with you or people you know, including the time, date, place, what happened and your reactions;
- Save any cards, letters or messages the offender leaves on your answering machine;  
If you receive harassing/threatening phone calls, hang up and immediately press \*57 (dial 1157 on a rotary dial phone) to trace the call. Follow the instructions on the phone message;
- Develop a secret code with someone whom you speak with frequently on the phone. If you use the code word during a phone call, it will be a signal to your friend that you are in danger.
- Check your home for safety risks - locks, windows, hiding places in the yard, etc.;
- Prepare an evacuation plan. Make sure household members know what they should do in a crisis;
- Keep your car doors locked at all times. Inspect the back seat of your vehicle before you enter;
- Avoid walking alone and stay within well-travelled areas;
- If you are being followed, get someone's attention by yelling or blowing a whistle, and run to the nearest home or business;
- Obtain an order which prohibits the offender from contacting or communicating with you in any manner, and from attending at your home, school or workplace for as long as possible; and
- Once you have obtained an order prohibiting contact with you, call the police if the offender breaks any of the conditions.

**THE OFFENDER MAY PROMISE TO LEAVE YOU ALONE IF YOU JUST GO SOMEWHERE WITH HIM OR HER TO TALK PRIVATELY, BUT YOU SHOULD NEVER GO!**