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The Impact of Anti-Stalking Training on Front Line Service Providers: Using the Anti-Stalking Training Evaluation Protocol (ASTEP)*

ABSTRACT: The Anti-Stalking Training Evaluation Protocol (ASTEP) was developed to provide Safe Horizon, a large victim service provider, with an opportunity to evaluate and improve its anti-stalking training program. This report presents the results of this effort to measure Safe Horizon staff's knowledge and general perceptions about stalking, and to assess the impact of anti-stalking training on knowledge about the anti-stalking law, and stalking in general. Although these trainees appeared familiar with stalking issues, they were able to benefit from information about different types of stalkers and stalking, and about the legal options available to victims. The implication of the findings is that, if relatively well-informed staff members of a large victim services agency can benefit from training about stalking behavior, anti-stalking legislation and the needs of stalking victims, there is almost certainly a need for such training among a wider population of victim service providers, law enforcement professionals, and the general public.

KEYWORDS: forensic science, stalking, criminal justice, victim services, evaluation

In 1999, New York became the last of the 50 states to enact legislation specifically designating stalking as a criminal offense. The enactment of anti-stalking legislation was considered necessary to increase recognition of this serious threat to individuals and society, and to facilitate the prosecution of offenders engaging in this conduct (1). The Anti-Stalking Training Evaluation Protocol (ASTEP) was developed to provide Safe Horizon, Inc., a large victim service provider, with an opportunity to evaluate and improve its in-house anti-stalking training program. This report presents the results of this effort to measure Safe Horizon, Inc. staff's knowledge and general perceptions about stalking, and to assess the impact of the agency's anti-stalking training on knowledge about the anti-stalking law, and about stalking in general.

Definitions and Background

Stalking can be broadly defined as unsolicited and unwelcome behavior initiated more than two times by one individual against

another, that is at minimum alarming, annoying, or harassing to the individual who has been singled out and/or to his or her family and friends.

Almost anyone can become the target of obsessional harassment for any of a number of reasons. The National Violence Against Women Survey (2) noted that 42% of the women and 70% of the men who reported being stalked said that their stalker had been an acquaintance or a stranger rather than an intimate partner. Individuals can be stalked by former neighbors, landlords, employers, employees, or total strangers. The incidents and relationships that can trigger such victimization can be related to the desire for personal intimacy, or can be connected to perceived professional or employment-related wrongs. The latter type of stalking may be perpetrated by the client of a service professional like an attorney, a doctor, a therapist, or an accountant, who is dissatisfied with the services provided. A tenant may be angered by his or her landlord's management of the property. A constituent may wish that a politician would act differently on a sensitive issue. Behavior in this type of case may consist of actions that are similar in kind and intensity to actions taken in pursuit of romantic involvement, including letters, phone calls, threats and more serious actions. Finally, stalkers can be delusional and mentally disabled, or they can be otherwise rational individuals who have difficulty controlling their behavior (3).

For many years, stalking was prosecuted in New York under the menacing and harassment statutes, which were strengthened in 1992 and again in 1994 for that purpose. In 1996, additional penalties for the violation of orders of protection were imposed after a woman named Galina Komar was publicly murdered by an ex-boyfriend who had stalked her, threatened her, and repeatedly violated orders of protection with relative immunity. Menacing and harassment remained misdemeanor offenses.

From 1997 through 1999, there were several attempts to introduce measures into New York's criminal code that would specifically identify and target stalking behavior. Once again, a high

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profile act of violence preceded the enactment of legislation. In October 1999, Buffalo obstetrician Barnett Slepian was murdered by an anti-abortion activist. State legislators moved quickly to implement legislation making it illegal for protestors to block access to an abortion clinic. The resulting statute was the Clinic Access and Anti-Stalking Act of 1999, which also included tougher criminal penalties for stalking. The link between stalking and abortion rights comes from the common denominator of freedom of assembly. Measures designed to keep anti-abortion activists from blocking access to legitimate clinics have been challenged on constitutional grounds for possibly restricting an individual's constitutional right to assemble. Measures designed to prohibit a stalker from standing outside a targeted individual's home, school or office have been challenged on similar grounds.

Effective Dec. 1, 1999, the statute created four new sections of the New York State Penal Law under Article 120: Assault and related offenses.

Stalking in the fourth degree (Article 120.45) is a misdemeanor. Some key elements of the statute include: (1) There is a specific targeted victim, but threats towards members of the victim's immediate family or towards an acquaintance of the victim are covered; (2) The behavior is intentional, and takes place over more than one occasion (it is a "course of conduct"); (3) The stalker either "knows or reasonably should know" that the stalking behavior either causes fear of harm to the physical health, safety or property, or causes actual harm to the mental or emotional health, or threatens the business or career of a reasonable individual at risk; and (4) The stalker has been "clearly informed" to stop the behavior.

Stalking in the third degree (Article 120.50), is a more serious misdemeanor. The statute punishes the simultaneous stalking of multiple individuals. It also establishes stronger penalties for types of stalking that are more threatening than others, and for stalking recidivism. These intentional behaviors cause reasonable fear not just of "material harm" but also of "physical injury or serious physical injury, the commission of a sex offense against, or the kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment or death of such person or a member of such person's immediate family."

Stalking in the second degree (Article 120.55) is a felony offense. This is stalking that could otherwise be considered third degree, but in which a weapon is used or the victim is a minor being stalked by an adult. This section also continues to impose stronger penalties on recidivist stalking.

Stalking in the first degree (Article 120.60) is the most serious of the stalking offenses. This is confined to an offense otherwise classifiable as third degree stalking, in the course of which the targeted individual is intentionally or recklessly injured, or sexually assaulted.

Safe Horizon—Services to Stalking Victims

Safe Horizon, Inc., a private, not-for-profit agency, was one of the earliest providers of support services for victims of crime and abuse. The organization (formerly known as the Victim Services Agency) celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2002.

During 2002, more than 1000 staff members and volunteers provided services in 100 programs based at 80 locations throughout the City of New York. Two 24-h a day, seven-day a week crime victim hotlines are available to respond to questions and provide assistance. One of these is specifically for victims of domestic violence and another is for rape and sexual assault survivors. The agency also provides counseling, safety planning, assistance with navigating the legal system, referrals for housing, crisis interven-

tion, mental health consultations, education in conflict resolution, and many other services, to an estimated 350,000 victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, stalking and war trauma annually (4).

Safe Horizon introduced a special anti-stalking unit in 1996, offering crisis intervention, short term counseling, information, referrals, advocacy during interactions with the criminal justice system, assistance with documenting incidences of stalking, emergency services, shelter placement and relocation, safety planning, risk assessment, community outreach, and informational presentations on stalking. After passage of the New York State Clinic Access and Anti-Stalking Act in 1999, the number of inquiries from victims of stalking substantially increased. Administration began requiring all direct service staff to receive specialized training designed to correct misconceptions about stalking, to educate staff and volunteers about the new anti-stalking legislation, and to improve responses to stalking inquiries.

Methods

Experienced Safe Horizon staff conducted a full day of anti-stalking training titled "Dynamics of Stalking" five times during Safe Horizon's 2000–2001 academic year.

The training day revolved around a series of directed discussions, in which participants were asked to present their views, and were provided with information. Topics included definitions of stalking, typologies of stalking, characteristics of stalkers and their victims, and New York State's anti-stalking legislation. Differences and similarities between stalking and domestic violence were reviewed, and a film clip from the 1991 movie "Sleeping with the Enemy" was played and discussed. Three or four short stalking scenarios were distributed, and participants conducted role-playing exercises, with pairs playing the roles of the counselor and victim. Finally, victimization issues and safety planning were reviewed.

The Anti-Stalking Training Evaluation Protocol consisted of a consent form approved by the City University of New York's Institutional Review Board, and two brief survey forms. At the start of the training day, researchers explained that a study was being conducted to assist the development of the Safe Horizon Anti-Stalking Training Protocol by evaluating the impact of the training on attendees' perceptions about stalking. Participants were advised that the findings of the study would be shared with Safe Horizon administration, and would be used to develop a series of scholarly publications intended to improve the management of stalking cases. They were also told that their participation was optional, their responses would be completely confidential, and that they could terminate their involvement with the project at any time. In all, 72 individuals agreed to participate in the ASTEP process.

In order to assess their knowledge base at the beginning of the process, the training day began with participants being given approximately 15 min to complete a questionnaire ("pretest") in which they were to read and react to two stalking scenarios. The questionnaire presented the participants with two short vignettes designed to depict incidents that could be charged in New York State as Stalking in the 3rd Degree or Stalking in the 4th Degree. Harmon, Rosner and Owens (3), classified stalkers according to the prior relationship between the stalker and the targeted victim (intimates, acquaintances or strangers), and the motive for stalking ("persecutory" or "amorous"). Examples from this classification system include the jealous ex-spouse (intimate/amorous), the angry former employee (acquaintance/persecutory), the erotomaniac fan (stranger/amorous), and the angry political constituent (stranger/persecutory). Working from this classification scheme, the ASTEP fourth degree stalking

scenarios depicted incidents of stalking by an amorous acquaintance, and the third degree stalking scenarios depicted incidents of vengeful (persecutory) stalking committed by a stranger. Participants were asked to read the vignettes and record their reactions to a series of statements about them. The statements explored familiarity with the provisions of New York's anti-stalking law. Responses were solicited on a Likert Scale from 1–5, where (1) = Completely Disagree; (2) = Disagree; (3) = Neither agree nor disagree; (4) = Agree; and (5) = Completely Agree.

Both pretest scenarios were suggested by the case files of the NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation's Bellevue Hospital Center Forensic Psychiatry Clinic for the Criminal and Supreme Courts (the Forensic Psychiatry Clinic).

In the pretest 4th degree stalking scenario, the stranger was an intelligent young man who developed an obsessive attraction to a woman from a wealthy, well-known family, after seeing her once from a distance. He relocated to the city where she lived and worked, and took a low-level job, to pursue her. The stalking consisted of gifts, telephone calls, notes, and at least one visit to her home. The scenario implied the possibility of danger to the woman's current boyfriend.

In the pretest 3rd degree stalking scenario, the victim was a secretary who was targeted due to her position as a receptionist. The perpetrator had become enraged at what he perceived was her law firm's mishandling of his case, bombarding the office with letters and emails, and directing angry phone calls at this woman, whose job it was to answer the phone. The violation of an order of protection escalated this case to stalking in the 3rd degree.

Participants were also asked to respond to a series of questions designed to elicit information about their pre-training assumptions about stalking. The statements used for this part of the exercise were developed from the professional experiences and knowledge of two co-authors (MC and RH), and from material discussed in stalking research literature to date, in consultation with the legal staff of Safe Horizon.

At the end of the training day, participants were asked to complete a second similarly brief post-test questionnaire. In the post-test, they were asked to read and react to two scenarios that contained different fact patterns from the pretest questionnaire, but tracked the same elements and dimensions of the anti-stalking law. The stranger in the post-test 4th degree stalking scenario (amorous acquaintance) had actually met his target, and made his presence known to her. Otherwise, the fact pattern was similar: travel to pursue her, notes, gifts, telephone calls to her home and office, and threats against the victim and others around her. The post-test 3rd degree stalking scenario (vengeful stranger) was set in a retail business. A possibly delusional man demanded compensation from the business for reasons that were unclear. The victim in question was singled out because she was in a visible, vulnerable position behind the sales counter. This time stalking consisted of telephone calls and visits to the location. Threats of violence, and the perpetrator's history of criminal convictions, escalated this scenario to stalking in the third degree.

The post-test questionnaire also included a series of questions about the participants and their personal experiences with stalking.

Findings

Of those participants who responded to the question about age, over half were under 30 years old. The majority (90%) of the participants were female. Three quarters of the respondents were self-defined racial minorities as follows: 38% Latina, 32% African American, and 6% Asian. The remaining 24% were White.

TABLE 1—*Participants' personal experiences with stalking.**

Have you or anyone you know ever:	Percent
Received unsolicited phone calls	65%
Received other unwelcome communication	53%
Been followed or spied on	44%
Had someone show up with no business	42%
Been sent unsolicited letters	39%
Had property vandalized or destroyed	38%
Noticed someone standing outside	35%
Had someone leave unwanted items	25%

* $N = 72$.

Seventy-four percent (74%) of the participants reported having had some exposure to stalking prior to participating in the training, either directly as a victim, or indirectly by knowing someone who had that experience. Some appeared to indicate familiarity with multiple types of stalking victimization, noting that the stalking perpetrator had been both a friend and a stranger, or both an intimate and a stranger. Including this duplication, 25 reported exposure to stalking by a former intimate partner, 15 by a stranger, and 13 by an acquaintance or friend. These individuals reported being (or knowing) the targets of multiple types of stalking behavior (Table 1: Participants' Personal Experiences with Stalking). Most reported unsolicited phone calls and/or other types of communication, many reported that the stalker appeared in close proximity to the victim (followed, stood outside, showed up), and a substantial minority (38%) said that the stalker exhibited aggressive behavior by vandalizing or destroying property. In addition, nearly two thirds reported having provided some type of stalking advocacy services prior to taking the Dynamics of Stalking training. Over 30% said they had counseled more than ten people about stalking before taking the full day training program.

Pre-Training Assumptions About Stalking

The participants displayed considerable insight into the realities of stalking (See Table 2a: Pre-training beliefs that are consistent with current research literature). Substantial majorities knew that individuals other than the targeted victims of stalking could be harmed in these situations (5), and that whether the stalker intended to frighten the victim is not germane to the commission of the crime of stalking in New York State (6). Most also knew that it was important for the stalker to be told to stop (7), although it is not clear that they knew that this issue was relevant as a part of the anti-stalking statute. With regard to the management of stalking cases, nearly two thirds of the participants knew that it is important for the victim to keep letters and gifts received from the stalker so that they may be used as evidence (8), and that orders of protection are not known to be particularly effective against stalkers (9). Most (86%) knew that Safe Horizon has special resources for stalking victims. Almost as many knew that stalking is against the law in New York State; however, it is not clear whether they were aware prior to the training of the existence of an actual anti-stalking statute apart from laws prohibiting harassment and menacing. Not even two thirds of these experienced victim services counselors were confident that domestic violence is the most prevalent form of stalking (10).

Of the eight assumptions about stalking which may be incorrectly believed by the general public (Table 2b: Pre-training beliefs that run counter to prevailing research literature) there were five items in which a substantial proportion of the participants may not have

TABLE 2—Pre-training beliefs.

a. Pre-training beliefs that are consistent with current research literature*	Respondents Agree
Stalking related to domestic violence is the most common type of stalking.	60.0%
Stalking is against the law in New York State.	84.3%
It is important for the stalker to be clearly informed to stop the behavior.	72.8%
Stalking can occur whether or not the stalker intended to frighten the victim.	87.2%
People who are being stalked should keep letters and gifts they receive from stalkers.	74.3%
Safe Horizon has resources and services for stalking victims.	85.7%
b. Pre-training beliefs that are counter to prevailing research literature**	Respondents Disagree
Stalkers are always mentally ill.	71.4%
Stalking is only dangerous for the person being stalked.	68.6%
Stalkers are less educated than the general population of arrested individuals.	82.9%
Stalkers who are strangers to their targets are more dangerous than known stalkers.	45.7%
Stalkers who make threats are more dangerous than stalkers who do not make threats.	50.0%
Orders of protection are effective against stalkers in all cases.	72.9%
People who believe they are being stalked should confront their stalker.	65.7%
A person's purpose for pursuing someone is irrelevant in a stalking case.	22.9%

* Agreement with these statements indicates understanding of the assumptions about stalking.

** Disagreement with these statements indicates understanding of the assumptions about stalking.

appreciated the implications for stalking victims. Research has confirmed that it is stalking by a former intimate partner that comprises the largest percentage of the problem (11), and the most likely situation in which there is danger of harm to the victim (3,12,13). Fewer than half of the participants appreciate that strangers are not more dangerous than known stalkers, and nearly one third were unsure. Researchers also understand that it is not possible to predict whether (or when) orders of protection will be successful (3), but over one quarter of these experienced victim services advocates believed that such orders were always effective against stalkers.

Only half of the participants knew that threats from stalkers do not necessarily coincide with violent actions. Eleven percent actually thought that stalkers who made threats were more dangerous than stalkers who did not make threats. The general consensus in current research findings is that stalkers who do not threaten may still act violently, and stalkers who do threaten their targets may never actually approach them (14). Two thirds of the participants understood that the victim of a stalker should not attempt to confront her pursuer directly (15), but substantial numbers either thought that confrontation was appropriate, or were unsure about the issue. Substantial majorities of the participants knew that stalkers tend to be more rather than less educated than the average offender, and that they do not always suffer from a mental disorder (16). Participants were divided about the issue of relevancy of purpose of the stalking pursuit behavior, with one quarter feeling that the reason for pursuit was relevant, just over half feeling that it was not relevant, and 13% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Responses to Stalking Vignettes

Responses to the scenarios presented in the morning (pretest) questionnaire were compared to the comparable post-test scenarios (presented in the afternoon) using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, to determine the extent to which the day's training program significantly changed the perceptions of participants. There were some situations in which participants indicated multiple responses, or in which participants indicated no responses. These were omitted from the analysis. Question pairs with statistically significant *z* scores on the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test were then evaluated using cross-tabulation to provide additional information to assist with the interpretation of the findings.

Twenty-one out of 36 pair relationships exhibited statistical significance at the .01 level or greater (See Table 3: Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test: Pretest v. Post-test Significant Pairs). Twelve of these were for the scenarios representing stalking in the fourth degree, nine were for the scenarios representing stalking in the third degree.

Discussion

The participants in Safe Horizon's Dynamics of Stalking seminars during the 2000–2001 instructional year were very knowledgeable about stalking, even before they were trained. In part, this could have been due to prior personal exposure to stalking. Other influences probably included their background in handling domestic violence cases and their special sensitivity (as victim service providers) to victims' concerns. It should also be noted that, to some extent, there was a self-selection process at work here: many of the participants stated that they chose to attend the Dynamics of Stalking training session because of personal and professional interests. Most participants did not adhere to erroneous assumptions about stalkers and stalking, with some notable exceptions.

The issue of the legitimacy of the actions of the stalkers seemed to cause some confusion for the participants. This may be especially true when stalking consists of waiting for the targeted individual in a public place. Unless an order of protection exists that prohibits the stalker from being near the victim's place of residence or work, constitutional protections (freedom of assembly) make it difficult to keep the perpetrator from lingering nearby. Advocates for the homeless raised this issue during the preparation of New York's anti-stalking statute (17). Labor unions also feared that anti-stalking laws in which this matter was not clear could hamper their ability to strike. This legal issue, technically known as "overbreadth," was the subject of litigation, judicial rulings and the redrafting of early anti-stalking legislation in many jurisdictions (18). Most anti-stalking legislation, including New York's, now incorporates some provision excluding legitimate behavior, so that labor unions can picket, demonstrators can voice their opinions, and the homeless can pan-handle on street corners, without risking arrest for stalking. New York State case law has established that behavior that has "no purpose of legitimate communication," that is, "the absence of expression of ideas or thoughts other than threats and/or intimidating or coercive utterances," is not constitutionally protected (14,19).

TABLE 3—Wilcoxon signed ranks test: pretest versus post-test significant pairs.

	z-scores	Number of non-tied responses	Mean of Negative Ranks	Mean of Positive Ranks	Sig. (two-tailed)
Stalking in the 4th Degree (amorous stranger):					
Pair 1: [Perpetrator] is stalking [victim].	-3.710	18	9.53	9	.000
Pair 3: [Perpetrator] may harm [victim].	-4.970	35	18.3	10.5	.000
Pair 4: [Perpetrator] knows or should know that his behavior is causing [victim] to be afraid.	-4.223	42	21.56	18.7	.000
Pair 6: [Perpetrator's] behavior could hurt [victim's] career.	-3.024	38	18.98	13	.002
Pair 7: [Perpetrator's] behavior could be considered a crime under New York law.	-5.104	39	20.79	16.67	.000
Pair 8: [Perpetrator's] behavior could be considered stalking under New York law.	-4.256	38	19.62	15.13	.000
Pair 10: I would tell [victim] she needs special counseling or advocacy.	-3.825	33	17.89	21.44	.000
Pair 11: I would tell [victim] she should move.	-2.833	35	18.46	14	.005
Pair 12: I would tell her she needs an order of protection.	-4.563	38	20.33	10	.000
Pair 13: I would tell her she should call the police.	-3.649	21	11.11	17.25	.000
Pair 17: I would tell [her] she should change jobs.	-3.847	31	16.13	13	.000
Pair 19: I would tell [her] she should try to speak to the person bothering her.	-3.317	31	11.71	21.17	.001
Stalking in the Third Degree (vengeful acquaintance):					
Pair 1: [Perpetrator] is stalking [victim].	-4.828	41	22.8	10.5	.000
Pair 2: [Victim's] fears about the events described in the story are reasonable.	-3.247	21	10.55	15.25	.001
Pair 3: [Perpetrator] may harm [victim].	-4.036	30	16.12	11.5	.000
Pair 6: [Perpetrator's] behavior could hurt [victim's] career.	-3.604	42	22/24	18.78	.000
Pair 9: [Perpetrator's] behavior was caused by a mental illness.	-3.523	38	20.17	17	.000
Pair 10: I would tell [victim] she needs special counseling or advocacy.	-4.304	33	17.41	14	.000
Pair 12: I would tell her she needs an order of protection.	-3.774	38	20.83	14.5	.000
Pair 13: I would tell her she should call the police.	-4.170	27	13.73	21	.000
Pair 15: I would tell her to tell her family and friends about this behavior.	-2.840	15	8	8	.000
Pair 17: I would tell [her] she should change jobs.	-3.239	39	21.17	16.6	.001

Only 23% of the training participants recognized the relevancy of the subject's purpose.

The fourth degree stalking scenarios depicted amorous stalkers attempting to force their attentions on their victims. In the third degree stalking scenarios, the perpetrator was angry at his target for reasons that did not involve the desire either for the commencement or the continuation of an intimate relationship. The motive for stalking was revenge coupled with feelings of persecution. Neither of these types of stalking behavior represented the "typical" patterns of former intimate partner or celebrity/fan stalking that is most familiar to the general public. The anti-stalking training increased the participants' recognition that both of these types of behavior could be considered stalking.

For both types of stalking behavior, the anti-stalking training also increased the participants' awareness that the situations could pose the possibility of harm to the victim. In the pretest responses, approximately 60% of the participants agreed that harm was possible for either victim; the post-test responses indicated that approximately 90% of the participants (for the 4th degree scenario) and 80% of the participants (for the 3rd degree scenario) either agreed or completely agreed that harm was possible. There were also some significant shifts in the type of safety planning advice that participants would provide to the victims in these vignettes. The victims in the pretest scenarios were less likely to be advised to seek special anti-stalking counseling or advocacy than the victims in the post-test scenarios. After training, more of the participants would have recommended to victims of both types of stalking that they contact the police and try to obtain orders of protection from their stalkers. There was also better awareness that the stalking behavior could be damaging to the victims' careers, and more of the participants would have suggested that the victims in the post-test scenarios look for different employment. The victim of the amorous acquaintance stalker was more likely to be advised to move after training (there was no indication that the persecutory stalkers knew where their victims lived).

The issues of whether the stalker should have known that he was causing his victim to be afraid, or whether the victims' fears were reasonable, touch on parts of the anti-stalking legislation that have been the subject of a great deal of case law. In New York state, stalkers do not have to intend to cause fear, they merely have to intentionally execute the course of conduct that would be likely to cause fear in the target of the behavior (13,20). In the third degree, persecutory stalking scenarios, both before and after training, participants were divided over the question of the perpetrators' knowledge of the victims' fear, with approximately two thirds agreeing, 16–17% disagreeing, and the remaining 18–19% undecided. With regard to the fourth degree, amorous scenarios, there was greater disparity on the stalkers' knowledge before training (23% disagreeing, 54% agreeing, 23% undecided), but much greater clarity after training (80% agreement). Almost all of the participants thought, both before and after training, that these victims were appropriately afraid of their stalkers.

Before training, 61% of the participants reported knowing that the depicted behavior would violate the law in New York State, and 77% reported that they felt that the behavior described could specifically be considered stalking under New York State law. This recognition improved significantly after training, with over 98% of the participants recognizing that the behavior violated some New York State law, and agreeing that it could be considered stalking. This finding highlights one of the more important aspects of the training process—the provision of information about the anti-stalking law.

In spite of efforts to imply the possibility that the perpetrators in the scenarios may have been delusional, most of the victim services providers participating in this training process were ambivalent about whether the stalking behavior in these scenarios was caused by mental illness. In the "amorous stranger" scenarios, those that did have an opinion were more likely to feel that mental illness was not a factor. Both "vengeful acquaintance" scenarios were derived from actual cases referred to the Bellevue Hospital Center Forensic Psychiatry Clinic for evaluation; however, in both

pre- and post-tests, the majority of the respondents did not concur with the statement that the behavior was caused by a mental disorder.

Conclusions

This study was designed primarily to assist Safe Horizon, Inc. in developing its anti-stalking training program, and as such, was limited to a small, non-random sample of victim services professionals, who had varying levels of experience with the phenomenon of stalking in a major metropolitan area. The decision to use different, although parallel, scenarios for the pretest and the post-test has limited our ability to interpret some of the significant findings of this research; however, the short duration of the training made it seem inadvisable to repeat the exact same scenario. With less than 7 h separating the pre- and post-tests, it was felt that participants might simply duplicate earlier responses, rather than rethinking their answers in the context of the information provided to them during the day. Different fact patterns were used with the hope that this could be avoided. It is possible that some changes that appeared statistically significant may have been the result of the different fact patterns presented. For instance, the perpetrator in the 4th degree post-test scenario was depicted as somewhat more hostile and aggressive than the perpetrator in the comparable pretest scenario. Also, the perpetrator in the 4th degree post-test scenario was known to the victim. These changes could account for the shift towards more agreement on the Pair 3 (possibility of harm to victim) and Pair 4 (knowledge of fear) statements.

Further investigation is needed into the role of personal experiences in the responses of victim services professionals to stalking victims. Many of the participants in these training sessions appear to have been self-selected, with prior experience about stalking, and an interest in learning more about the subject matter. The great majority of the participants were minority women. Because of these factors, it is difficult to generalize from the findings here to the impact of future trainings on other, less interested, individuals.

Stalking research indicates that a significant minority of stalkers are not seeking intimacy with the targets of their pursuit (3). The victim services staff of Safe Horizon appeared to be generally less familiar with the form of stalking here called "vengeful." Anti-stalking training should not neglect this very real aspect of stalking behavior.

Psychiatric problems can play a major part in the development and continuation of stalking behavior (3,21). Responses to this issue may indicate a lack of sensitivity on the part of the participants to this factor. These responses may also reflect ambivalence about the link between mental illness and criminal responsibility. This suggests the need for further training and research targeted towards this topic.

Although this particular group of trainees appeared to already be familiar with stalking issues, it still appears that they were able to benefit from information provided about different types of stalking, and about the legal options available to their clients in New York State. The implication of the findings of this research is that, if relatively well-informed staff members of a large victim services agency can benefit from training about recognizing stalking behavior, interpreting anti-stalking legislation and understanding the needs of stalking victims, there is almost certainly a need for such training among a wider population of victim

service providers, law enforcement professionals and the general public.

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