

Date: March 16, 2016
Situation: an ex-partner
Interviewee: Professional
Agency: Domestic violence/rape crisis center

Stalking and Harassment Assessment and Risk Profile (SHARP) is a research-informed risk profile tool to educate and inform decision-making about stalking or harassment. This narrative report provides suggested actions that someone being targeted with stalking, harassment, and threats might take to improve their safety, based on the specific situation reported in the SHARP questions.

STEPS for Susan

Based on the information you entered into SHARP about Susan's situation with Steve there are some things you might want to tell Susan for her consideration in developing a plan to protect her safety. The suggestions below are written for Susan and are based on information from other people's experience with stalking and harassment. The five basic **STEPS** include:

See what is happening. The first step in your safety is to acknowledge what is happening. Answering the questions in SHARP and having the report above is a good interim step in understanding the bigger picture of what is happening. Steve is repeatedly engaging in a course of conduct targeting you and this course of conduct includes surveillance, life invasion, intimidation, and interference with your life. This suggests that Steve is stalking you. In general, patterns of behavior indicate intentional and deliberate actions designed to create fear in, or control over, the person being targeted with this course of conduct, which often creates stress and can have a significant impact on your life.

Threat. The key to understanding how to best protect yourself is to identify your specific vulnerabilities to threat. There are several risks of stalking and harassment including: (1) risk of violence to yourself or others close to you; (2) risk of persistence or escalation of stalking and harassment to yourself and others close to you; and (3) risk of life sabotage. Life sabotage includes stress, well-being, quality of life, social relationships, reputation, financial stability, and other life consequences. Be aware that Steve's stalking could change in the future and it may be helpful to reassess your situation with SHARP if your situation does change. Here is a summary of the serious risks you reported along with research background for why these factors increase risk:

- Escalation could be a signal that something about the situation has changed and increases the risk of harm to you and others close to you.

- Steve has threatened to harm you and those threats contain graphic details about how he plans to harm you. Steve has threatened to harm others close to you. When an explicit threat has been made, the likelihood of violence increases. When threats are detailed it may suggest even greater risk of harm to you and others close to you because it may indicate specific plans have been made.
- Steve indicates he is seeking revenge or blames you for ruining his life. Steve seems unconcerned about severe consequences of his behavior such as going to jail or dying. Steve has a history of thoughts about or attempted suicide. This suggests Steve blames you, wants revenge, and does not care about severe consequences. This mindset potentially increases risk of violence, persistence and escalation, and life sabotage. You also indicated you believe the consequences have been limited which can escalate and intensify the stalking, harassing, and threatening behavior.
- Steve has involved others in threatening, intimidating, stalking, and/or attacking you. Engaging other people to target you is a risk factor because you cannot know who to trust and it also shows that Steve is determined to make sure this behavior continues in whatever way possible.
- Steve has been stalking you for about 1 year, 0 months, 5 days. Steve approaches you and confronts you frequently, regularly contacts or harasses you in multiple ways, bothers you at multiple locations, and significantly and regularly interferes with your life. Safety planning around the locations that Steve approaches may be helpful. Also it may be helpful to consult with others to think creatively about ways to reduce Steve's ability to interfere with your life. During this time Steve has physically and/or sexually assaulted you. The longer the duration and the greater the frequency and intensity of unwanted contact the greater the risk of harm, persistence, escalation, and life sabotage. Also, given that Steve has already assaulted you, it is very likely he will assault you in the future. Being targeted with this stalking course of conduct is extremely stressful and frightening. Making time to take care of yourself, finding a safe place where you can take a break (can you stay somewhere safe even for a night), and talking with supportive others may help with the stress and with creatively thinking about safety strategies.
- Steve has threatened to destroy your property, harm your pets, or sabotage you in other ways so it may be good to think about ways to protect yourself from these harms. Safety planning around these threats and involving others may help. Talking about these concerns with others who can help you think of safety strategies or help you protect yourself may also be a good strategy.
- Steve has violated a court order banning him from contacting, harassing, or being violent toward you. When someone violates a court it suggests they do not care about consequences and the risk of violence is greater.
- Steve has a history of being controlling, extremely jealous, and physically violent toward you. Steve has been severely violent toward you in the past. When this boundary has been broken in the past it is easier to break it again in the future. If Steve was controlling and jealous he may feel he owns you and when he realizes he cannot control you, the risk of violence and harassment toward you and others close to you, persistence and escalation, and life sabotage is increased.
- Steve has a history of being physically violent toward others. Past behavior is a good predictor of future behavior. If Steve has done these things to other people he is capable of doing it to you and others close to you.

- Steve and you have a child or children in common and/or child visitation/custody/support issues. Steve and you work or attend school at the same place. Steve and you live and/or work in the same area and you feel that your home is unsafe. You also report feeling isolated and that you have limited or no access to resources and safety measures. These factors increase the likelihood of interaction, confrontation, and violence due to increased access. These factors also make safety actions much more difficult. The risk of persistence, escalation, and life sabotage are also greater due to these risk factors.
- Steve may be using, or capable of using, technology to stalk, harass, threaten and sabotage you. Technology can be used to track and monitor you or to gain access to personal accounts but it can be difficult to detect. This risk factor increases the risk of violence, persistence and escalation, and life sabotage.
- Steve has guns, has an obsession with weapons, and has been in the military or law enforcement. Having access to guns or an obsession with weapons means there is access to a deadly weapon. This, in combination with the other serious risk factors, may suggest a high level of danger.
- Steve has a criminal history, drug or alcohol problems, and serious mental health issues. Having a criminal history, substance abuse problems, and serious mental health issues can be indicators of impulse control problems and disregard for the law which are all risk factors for violence and persistence of stalking, harassment and threats. Steve is currently on probation/parole.
- Steve may believe you are sending mixed messages or may feel rewarded when you have contact with him, even if the contact is negative. You sometimes feel bad for Steve which can make it very difficult to set clear boundaries and gives Steve an opportunity to pull you into whatever it is he wants and at the same time make you more vulnerable to his manipulation and assault. Often people use things like mental health, substance abuse, and/or difficulties in life as excuses for stalking, harassing, and threatening behavior. However, this behavior is not acceptable.
- Steve may be aware that the things he is doing upsets you and that can be rewarding. When stalking, harassing, or threatening behavior is perceived as paying off or as rewarded it may continue or escalate.

Evidence. Because you are experiencing stalking, harassment, and threats it can be very helpful to write down what is happening along with preserving any evidence. You can keep detailed notes about everything that Steve does, even if you don't have evidence, and you can save evidence of his behavior when you do have it.

There are two main reasons to write everything down and keep evidence. First, writing down or documenting what is happening to you can help others understand the big picture. The narrative from the first part of this report may be a good start or help in documenting what is happening to you. Feel free to share that part of the report with law enforcement, attorneys, prosecutors, or others. Keeping evidence of what Steve is doing also helps others understand that Steve is engaging in a pattern of behavior. This evidence may show that his behavior is intentional and deliberate.

Second, having documentation can help with safety planning by showing some of your safety

vulnerabilities. Some other suggestions for recording Steve's behavior include:

- Write down and save evidence of how Steve is targeting you including his tracking, life invasion tactics, intimidation, and interference with your life. This includes date, time, incident description, and whether or not you reported the incident and who you reported it to and their response. Also any evidence of the incident you can obtain should be noted. You can do this by noting names and contact information for witnesses as well as keeping records of any evidence like voicemails, text messages, emails, letters, gifts, pictures of property damage and anything else that you can keep as evidence. Technology can be useful in collecting evidence of what Steve is doing.
- Be sure to document any direct threats, threats Steve has made to third parties, and any objects, gestures or things that he said that were not necessarily direct threats. If these objects, gestures or things Steve said are linked to prior direct threats be sure to note that as well. This link is important to talk about and to communicate to others so they can understand the bigger picture of what Steve is doing and help others understand why you are afraid or concerned for your safety or worried about the safety of others close to you.
- Describe the ways you have changed your life because of your fear or concern for your safety or the safety of others, including all of the life changes you have made for safety purposes, any work arrangements or accommodations for your safety, any money you spent for safety and to repair property damage, and any witnesses to your fear.
- Gather documentation about how Steve has negatively impacted your life such as financial interference, physical or sexual assault, and interference with housing and that Steve negatively impacts your life on a regular basis.
- Document how and when Steve was notified and his response of continued contact, harassment, threats, and/or violence. If you do this, be sure to advise friends, advocates, or other family members so they can be extra vigilant in case Steve reacts by escalating the situation. If you have an attorney, be sure to notify the attorney of this action.
- Document any violations of a court order banning Steve from contacting, harassing, or being violent toward you.
- Please note, any documentation provided to law enforcement or prosecutors could potentially be introduced as evidence or inadvertently shared with Steve at a future time, so do not include any information that you do not want Steve to see.

Protection. Active safety planning is very important. The goal is to make it as difficult as possible for Steve to continue stalking, harassing, or threatening you. You will want to put up as many barriers in his way as possible. Here are some specific things you may want to consider:

- Listen to your intuition about your concern for your safety and the safety of others close to you. One thing you can do is focus on some specific concerns and play out some different scenarios in your mind about what might happen and come up with strategies about how to protect yourself and others. The goal is to make it as hard as you can for someone to stalk, harass, and threaten you and to make yourself as safe as you can.
- Reduce or eliminate contact as much as you can and be consistent. Try not to respond or to be drawn into any conversations with Steve. For example, if Steve calls 100 times and you pick up on the 101st time he may see that as rewarding, even if you yell at him. Ask others not to respond or give any information out about you no matter how small the

request may seem. If you need to maintain contact for some reason it may be advantageous to seek advice from victim advocates or legal counsel about ways to minimize contact and increase your safety during contact.

- If you are confronted by Steve, no matter how upset you are stay calm on the outside, do not be drawn into an argument or conversation, and leave or exit the confrontation as quickly as possible. Do not let others that might report back to Steve know that he upsets or bothers you except in cases of formal or professional intervention on your behalf. It is normal to have a range of feelings in response to being stalked, harassed, and threatened. You may want to talk to a close friend, an advocate, or counselor about the feelings you have in response to Steve's behavior.
- Work with relevant agencies, businesses, financial institutions, and/or your school/workplace to reduce Steve's ability to access and interfere or sabotage you. You may want to consider changing passwords, minimizing interactions online and through social media, shredding important papers, getting a post office box, having important or private mail sent to a safe location such as a friend's address, and other privacy measures.
- Examine the patterns of when and where Steve approaches and confronts you and think about some specific strategies to minimize his ability to access you. Also, think about specific strategies to be safe when he confronts or approaches you. The goal is to communicate that you do not want to be confronted and to leave the confrontation as quickly as you can. You may want to read about self-defense strategies or consider taking a self-defense course.
- Because Steve is good with computers and technology, you may need to find ways to protect any vulnerabilities you may have that he can exploit through technology. People can be monitored and tracked through technology (e.g., cell phones, computers, GPS devices, and cameras or listening devices hidden in your home or office) and personal accounts can be accessed by various means. Financial sabotage is especially common through technology. Social networking can be used in a variety of ways to get information about you or to spread rumors about you. You may want to seek help through knowledgeable people about how best to protect yourself or read about ways to protect yourself online.
- You are concerned about some upcoming events and this presents an opportunity to play out some different scenarios in your mind about what might happen and come up with strategies about how to protect yourself and others especially around these upcoming events.
- Talk with other people that Steve is threatening or that you are concerned about in order to suggest they safety plan and tell them that they may want to talk to others about ideas to increase their safety.

Support. Support is key in taking steps to keep yourself safe and documenting what is happening. Consider telling your trusted friends and family members about what Steve is doing. You may need their emotional support or their guidance on safety. Also, other people can be on the lookout for Steve if he comes around your home, class, or work. Talking to professionals who have worked with others in your situation can also be helpful.

- Take detailed threats of harm very seriously. Consider calling your local or national domestic violence hotline, calling the police, and seeking any help you can to protect

yourself.

- Take court order violations to the police or court system. You mentioned that Steve is on probation or parole which means you may be able to contact the probation or parole officer for help. You may need to be especially persistent and creative given you feel there have been no consequences for Steve's conduct. Ask for a supervisor or try different agencies if you cannot get help.
- You and Steve live and/or work in the same area and you feel that your home is unsafe. You also report feeling isolated and that you have limited or no access to resources and safety measures. Addressing these vulnerabilities may be difficult and may require the help of a victim's advocate or a police officer or someone who has particular knowledge in safety planning.
- You and Steve have a child or children in common and/or child visitation/custody/support issues. Having child(ren) in common or having child visitation, custody, or support issues complicates the situation in a number of ways. If child safety is compromised you may want to seek the help of the court and an attorney to figure out the best way to protect the children. One option may be to ask for supervised visitation through an official organization if this is possible. Talking to an attorney may be helpful.
- You have indicated that currently you and Steve work or attend school at the same place. Because you and Steve work or go to school at the same place it is very important that you get others involved for your safety, to help develop specific safety plans, and to protect your job or your ability to attend school.

You have taken an important step just in thinking through what you are experiencing. While you have reported serious safety risks, research suggests that being assertive in protecting yourself is an effective way to reduce risk of harm. If you want to learn about other resources that might be of assistance to you visit the:

- Stalking Resource Center: www.victimsofcrime.org/src
- OutrageUs website: www.OutrageUS.org

Specific safety concerns: Supervised visitation; contact the local shelter for placement; look for safer housing; needs accountability for PO violations.