

SPARC's Victim Advocate Community of Practice: Frequently Asked Questions

This Community of Practice is for victim advocates seeking to strengthen their response to stalking.

Why focus on stalking?

Victims report experiencing stalking at much higher rates than our support and legal systems identify it. In the U.S., 1 in 6 women and 1 in 17 men report experiencing stalking in their lifetimes.ⁱ Stalking is a risk factor for homicide and frequently co-occurs with other violent crimes. Stalking is one of the top ten risk factors for intimate partner homicide, with a three-fold increase in risk when present.ⁱⁱ Stalking is criminal, dangerous, and traumatic. While legal definitions of the crime of stalking vary from one jurisdiction to another, a good working definition is a course of conduct directed at a specific person that causes fear or emotional distress.

What is this advocate community of practice?

This community of practice (COP) is for community-based and systems-based victim advocates to strengthen their response to stalking. Convened by the Stalking, Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center (SPARC), meetings will be facilitated by national experts and designed to help victim advocates improve their understanding of and response to stalking. The group will meet virtually to share experiences and resources, ask questions, and discuss promising practices. The meetings provide a platform for building relationships that enable participants to learn from each other, receive and provide feedback, and improve their own victim-centered, trauma-informed response to stalking victims.

Meetings will cover a range of topics as defined by the needs of the group. Victim advocates and expert faculty will engage in joint discussions and activities that will include sharing stories, tools, resources, experiences, strategies, and promising practices for working with victims of stalking. Potential topics include: identifying stalking and a course of conduct; common tactics and behaviors used by stalkers; stalking's co-occurrence with other crimes; promising practices for supporting stalking survivors with a trauma-informed lens; effective coordinated responses to stalking; strategies and tools to recognize stalking behaviors; victim-centered safety planning; documenting stalking incidents; protection/restraining orders; technology-facilitated stalking and abuse; responding to stalking victims from specific communities; working with the criminal legal system; working with the civil legal system; developing and strengthening partnerships; and raising awareness around stalking.

Who should join?

Community-based and systems-based advocates in the U.S., its territories, and tribal nations are invited to join. Many advocates are not explicitly tasked with responding to stalking victims, but due to the prevalence of stalking and its co-occurrence with many other crimes, this community of practice is open to all. This includes advocates embedded within the criminal and civil legal systems—at law enforcement agencies, prosecution offices, courts, or others—as well as those based in community organizations. In particular, victim advocates serving survivors of domestic and sexual violence are encouraged to join. **If you are interested in joining, please fill out the online application here:** <https://forms.gle/EHKBBLkxRCiNwmq87>

What can I expect as a member of this COP?

- Quarterly virtual learning opportunities with peers that are tailored to your work as a victim advocate, no longer than 60 minutes.
- Discussions with guest speakers and subject matter experts on responding to victims of stalking.
- Opportunities to build relationships with victim advocate peers.
- Opportunities for peer-to-peer mentoring.

How else does being a COP member support my work?

- Opportunities to suggest resources and information that would help victim advocates better support stalking victims.
- Opportunities to help your peers by sharing your own experiences.
- Regular check-ins with and feedback from knowledgeable, trained facilitators and staff who want to support your work, understand your challenges, identify your strengths, and provide suggestions for improvement.

Who manages this COP?

The Stalking Prevention, Awareness, & Resource Center (SPARC) is a federally funded project providing education and resources about the crime of stalking. SPARC aims to enhance the response to stalking by educating the professionals tasked with keeping stalking victims safe and holding offenders accountable. SPARC ensures that allied professionals have the specialized knowledge to identify and respond to the crime of stalking. To learn more about SPARC and the COP team, visit our website at www.StalkingAwareness.org

How do I join?

Fill out the online application at <https://forms.gle/EHKBBLkxRCiNwmq87> or contact Julia Holtemeyer at jholtemeyer@stalkingawareness.org.

To learn more about this community of practice,
contact Julia Holtemeyer at jholtemeyer@stalkingawareness.org.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Smith, S.G., Zhang, X., Basile, K.C., Merrick, M.T., Wang, J., Kresnow, M., & Chen, J. (2018). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2015 Data Brief. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

ⁱⁱ Spencer, C.M. & Stith, S.M. (2018). Risk Factors for Male Perpetration and Female Victimization of Intimate Partner Homicide: A Meta-Analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 21(3), 527-540.