



Stalking Behaviors Targeting Immigrant Victims

Stalking is a complex, traumatic victimization that frequently intersects with other violence and abuse and often goes unrecognized by responders and victims. To help identify stalking, consider that **stalking includes a wide range of threatening and disturbing behaviors that can be classified into four categories: Surveillance, Life invasion, Intimidation, and Interference through sabotage or attack (SLII).**¹ These categories overlap and build on each other.

When victims talk about what they are experiencing, they are unlikely to use the word “stalking.” Instead of asking victims if they are being stalked or harassed, it is better to ask specific questions about stalking SLII behaviors.

Responders should be familiar with SLII behaviors broadly as well as the unique ways that SLII behaviors can express themselves for immigrant stalking victims, including the below.



- Stalkers may exploit immigrant victims’ cultural differences, undocumented or temporary immigration status, limited English proficiency, and lack of knowledge or understanding of U.S. laws and legal protections.
- The fact that immigrant victims may live in insular communities and depend on shared family and friends for support can impact their ability to seek outside help.
- When an immigrant does seek help, law enforcement, victim services, and attorneys may not be equipped to provide adequate language access or culturally-specific support services, and may not be fully knowledgeable about immigrant victims’ legal rights.
- Stalkers may be motivated by prejudice against immigrant victims because they are immigrants or because they are from a specific country, culture, religion, or ethnic/racial background.
- Stalkers may target immigrant victims and harass, discriminate, or perpetrate violence against them in public places (public transportation, public parks, stores, bars, businesses) or in locations known to be neighborhoods, stores, organizations, places of worship, community centers, etc. that immigrants frequent.
- When stalking is part of the intimate partner violence that a current or former partner [perpetrates against an immigrant victim](#), the intersecting intimate partner violence may also present [with unique immigrant-specific factors](#).

The following are examples of how stalking SLII behaviors may present with immigrant victims. Remember that nearly all of these can be done in-person and/or through technology.

¹ SLII Framework Attributed to: Logan, T.K. & Walker, R. (2017). Stalking: A Multidimensional Framework for Assessment and Safety Planning. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse, 18*(2), 200-222.

SURVEILLANCE

Surveillance is the most commonly identified stalking tactic and includes watching and gathering information about the victim. Ways that a stalker could specifically target immigrant victims include:



- Leverage a small, insular community to monitor, find the victim
- Wait for, find the victim in venues, businesses, neighborhoods, or online spaces known for attracting immigrant community members
- Leverage cultural norms to obtain information about the victim from community members
- Use one's privilege as an English speaker to communicate on behalf of the victim and gain access to privileged, private, or confidential information and places (e.g. doctor's office)

LIFE INVASION

Life invasion describes ways that the offender shows up in the victim's life without the victim's consent. Ways that a stalker could specifically target immigrant victims include:

- Purposely and publicly mispronounce the victim's name or use a name they don't want to be used (e.g. English/American-ized name or name from country/language of origin)
- Publicly use anti-immigrant slurs against the victim, or more specific slurs against their culture, country of origin, religion, or ethnic/racial background
- Slander the victim in culturally-specific, faith-based, or immigrant spaces
- Show up at culturally-specific, faith-based, or immigrant events, knowing the victim will be there
- Show up at the victim's only legally authorized work place
- Join culturally-specific, faith-based, or immigrant groups, events, and/or spaces with the intent to upset, worry, frighten, slander, monitor, or humiliate the victim
- Create online profiles of the victim with the intent to humiliate them and/or ruin their reputation in culturally-specific, faith-based, or immigrant groups and spaces



INTIMIDATION

Many behaviors are intimidating when considered within the totality of stalking behaviors and with the victim and offender's relationship and history in mind. Threats can be explicit or implicit. Ways that a stalker could specifically target immigrant victims include:

- Threats to interfere with immigration processes (e.g. withdraw petitions or papers, fail to file immigration papers for the victim, make false allegations on legal forms filed on the victim's behalf, withhold information about case filings and case status)
- Threats to report victim, their children, or their family members to immigration and/or to get them deported
- Threats to withhold language interpretation and/or falsely interpret
- Threats to destroy important documents (e.g. birth certificates, passports, immigration documents, ID cards/documents)
- Threats to destroy items from the victim's country of origin that are important to them
- Symbolic violence, such as cutting up the flag from the victim's country of origin or destroying traditional/culturally-significant clothing, memorabilia, or items important to the victim, or buying the flag from the victim's country of origin to display at the victim's home when they don't want that information to be clear and public
- Deface a car or other property with anti-immigrant epithets or slurs (or more specific slurs against their culture, country of origin, ethnic/racial background)
- Threats to ruin the victim's reputation with their immigrant/cultural community in the U.S. and/or in their home country
- Threats to divulge family secrets within the victim's community
- Threats to take children away from the victim, or to remove the children or the victim from the U.S.
- Threats to report any undocumented/untaxed work
- Show up/cause problems/harassment at the only job the victim can legally work in the U.S.





INTERFERENCE THROUGH SABOTAGE OR ATTACK

Stalkers may interfere in a victim's life in many ways, affecting everything from the victim's reputation to their employment and/or physical safety.

Ways that a stalker could specifically target immigrant victims include:

- Interfere with immigration process (e.g. withdraw petitions or papers, fail to file immigration papers for the victim, make false allegations on legal forms filed on the victim's behalf, withhold information about case filings and case status, lying about the victim's immigration status)
- Provide false information about immigration processes and/or U.S. laws and legal protections
- Damage or destroy documents vital to the victim's immigration status or process (e.g. birth certificates, passports, immigration documents, ID cards/documents)
- Attempt to report the victim, their children, or their family members to immigration
- Withhold language interpretation and/or falsely interpret (e.g., in legal, medical, work, community settings)
- Force the victim to sign papers in English they do not understand (e.g., immigration papers, court papers, government forms)
- Spread rumors about a victim's immigration status or country of origin
- Spread rumors or ruin the victim's reputation with their immigrant/cultural community in the U.S. and/or in their home country
- Slander the victim to their family members or friends in the U.S. and/or in their home country
- Share/post private information, photos, videos about a victim's immigration status or cultural identity
- Intentionally argue in public to disclose a victim's immigration status and information with others
- Limit, withhold, or destroy access to clothing, items, or memorabilia vital to the victim's cultural identity or expression
- Restrict or sabotage access to culturally important traditions, communities, spaces, events, or locations (including international travel)
- Prohibit or interfere with the victim's ability to travel internationally (e.g. by destroying passports)
- Trick, force, or coerce a victim with a pending immigration case to travel outside of the U.S. leaving them stranded abroad with no legal avenue to return to the U.S. for many years
- Use the victim's immigration status and/or cultural identity as part of emotional and psychological abuse/control
- Exploit service providers' and responders' lack of knowledge about immigrants and the victim's specific culture to harm the victim and/or prevent them from getting help

