

The Stop Cyberstalking and Harassment Task Force met in-person and virtually on January 23, 2025.

The following task force members were in attendance:

Tracy McCreery, State Senator
Mark James, Department of Public Safety Director
Sergeant Patrick Sublette, Missouri State Highway Patrol
Jonathan Kreuger, BJC Behavioral Health
Brenda Sites, Safe at Home, Secretary of State's Office

The following members participated virtually:

Lt. Adam Caupp, St. Charles County Police Department
Heidi Coleman, MO Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
Rhonda Stanley-Weber, Queen of Peace
Honorable Michael Randazzo, Circuit Judge 42nd Judicial Circuit
Shawn Ivy, Office of Administration
Dr. Monica Radu, Southeast Missouri State University

The following guests were in attendance:

Emily O'Laughlin, Chief of Staff for Senator McCreery
Hannah Dolan, Missouri Senate
Catherine Vannier, MO Office of Prosecution Services
Mark Kurkowski, St. Louis City Family Violence Council
Angela
Troy Murdock, Department of Public Safety, Director's Office
Connie Berhorst, Department of Public Safety, Director's Office
Jayln Talbot, Department of Public Safety, Director's Office
Judy Murray, Department of Public Safety, Director's Office

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. with Director Mark James presiding. The first item on the agenda was a welcome to attendees.

Minutes from the December 12, 2024 meeting were reviewed. Senator McCreery made a motion to accept the minutes and Sgt. Sublette seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

After discussion of electing a new Chairperson, Mark Kurkowski volunteered to serve. Mr. Kurkowski is in the process of being appointed to the task force. Sgt. Sublette made a motion to table the election until the next meeting to allow time for the appointment to be made and to have Director James continue as the interim Chairperson. Senator McCreery amended the motion to cite Director James or his designee. Jonathan Krueger seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was to discuss the status of collecting feedback from stakeholders. Senator McCreery asked to go through the statute to identify the appointments that still need to be made. Emily O'Laughlin explained the purpose of the task force which is to bring subject matter experts together and to identify resources and best practices.

Lt. Caupp explained online digital thumbprints and how they can be tracked. Angela Vories shared with the group that she did not know the identity of the person who was stalking her. The stalker used a spoofing application, which made it extremely difficult track. Lt. Caupp asked how the task force is going to define cyberstalking. Director James believes criminal statutes defining these crimes are likely

to come out of this task force. Catherine Vannier mentioned that “sextortion” happens to all ages and demographics. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to cyberstalk the elderly is rampant and recommended adding this crime to an existing statute.

Heidi Coleman reported only 16 states have cyberstalking laws; and they mainly focus on the electronic portion of the crime.

Director James believes an extensive bill would be required to cover all of the components to be addressed (AI, etc.) if there is not a criminal statute on the books to address these crimes. Lt. Caupp asked about delineating between adult crimes and crimes against children, and care should be taken to address crimes against children that are committed by children. Lt. Caupp said internet crimes against children should be defined in existing statutes.

Connie Berhorst suggested inviting a representative of youth to the task force and a board member of the Missouri Juvenile Justice Association. Director James suggested that subject matter experts could be invited to assist the task force as needed. Ms. Coleman suggested someone from a child advocacy group such as the Missouri Network Against Child Abuse (MO-NACA) should be consulted; particularly when youth are victims and/or the perpetrator.

Director James asked if other states are ahead of us in this journey. Perhaps we could tap into their resources. Mr. Kurkowski mentioned the Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center (SPARC); see stalkingawareness.org for more information from other states.

Ms. Vories stated that from a victim’s point of view, the psychological aspects of being a victim need to be addressed. There are not enough resources readily available. Mr. Krueger noted the Coalition Against Stalkerware (<https://stopstalkerware.org/>) and the National Network to End Domestic Violence (<https://nnedv.org/content/nnedv>) have resources for the task force to explore.

Sgt. Sublette noted when a person is physically stalked, the police immediately show up to assist. When a person is cyberstalked it takes months to track down the bad actor. Deputy Director Troy Murdock inquired as to how much cyberstalking comes from overseas. Lt. Caupp commented there is tremendous overseas activity, especially from Nigeria.

Director James asked if there are enough administrative tools available and state statutory changes may need to be made to beef up the punishments.

Next steps:

- Address getting the remaining appointments made to the task force
- Define the overall scope of the task force. Does it need to be broad to include resources for all victims (sexual exploitation, financial exploitation, all cybercrime and domestic violence)? Identify any gaps.
- Discuss mandatory reporting of all forms of stalking; is legislation needed?

Ms. Berhorst mentioned that the existing victims workgroup that began with the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) meets regularly and has been working on creating a one-stop shop website of victim resources. It was suggested that a state website specific to cyber victim resources could be created.

Mr. Kurkowski will send out other state’s criminal statutes to the group. The group email will be used to share information with each other.

Lt. Caupp asked if it would be helpful to bring in representatives from Facebook and Meta. He has contacts with both and they could present on legal aspects.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 20 at 1:30 p.m.

With no further discussion, Sgt. Sublette made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Senator McCreery. The motion passed unanimously.