

January Is National Stalking Awareness Month

By Carol Price Keahey, STOP Violence Program Coordinator, University Counseling Center

January is National Stalking Awareness Month, a time to focus on a crime that affects 3.4 million victims a year. Stalking is a crime in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, yet many victims and criminal justice professionals underestimate its seriousness and impact. In one of five cases, stalkers use weapons to harm or threaten victims, and stalking is one of the significant risk factors for femicide (homicide of women) in abusive relationships. Three in 10 women, who are stalked, reported emotional or psychological injury, such as anxiety, social isolation and depression.

Stalking is difficult to recognize, investigate and prosecute. Unlike other crimes, stalking is not a single, easily identifiable crime but a series of acts, a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause that person fear. Stalking may take many forms -- assaults, threats, vandalism, burglary, or animal abuse, as well as unwanted cards, calls, gifts or visits. One in four victims reports that the stalker used technology, such as computers, GPS, or hidden cameras to track the victim's daily activities.

Stalking Facts on campus:

- 13 percent of female college students have been victims of stalking
- 80 percent of campus stalking victims knew their stalkers.
- Stalking is more prevalent among younger women.
- College campuses are relatively isolated communities, where daily routines and regular behaviors can be easily monitored and provide an ideal environment for stalking behavior.

Stalkers fit no standard psychological profile, and many stalkers follow their victims from one jurisdiction to another, making it difficult for authorities to investigate and prosecute their crimes.

Who are the stalkers?

- 42.5 percent are boyfriends or ex-boyfriends.
- 24.5 percent are classmates.
- 10.3 percent are acquaintances.
- 9.3 percent are friends.
- 5.6 percent are co-workers.

UW's STOP Violence Program purpose is to provide some of the support and resources students need to live safely on a campus setting. We strive to teach students how to avoid sexual and relationship violence and stalking. If students should become victims of violence, we also offer services to help them recover. We do this through education, assistance for healing and community collaboration. We offer free, confidential counseling for UW students and referrals to other UW departments or off campus agencies. We provide information for persons who may be victims or friends of victims of domestic/relationship violence, staking or sexual assault.

The mission of UW's STOP Violence Program is to prevent domestic/relationship violence, sexual assault and stalking on campus.

For additional resources and more information, contact Carol Price Keahey, STOP Violence Program coordinator, at the University Counseling Center, Knight Hall, Room 341, call 766-2187 or email uccstaff@uwyo.edu.