



Enriching Lives

## A.C.T. NEWSLETTER

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**National Stalking Awareness Month** – The month of January is a time to focus our awareness on a crime that affects 1.4 million victims a year. The theme for 2009 is, “Stalking: Know It. Name It. Stop It.” The intention of the 2009 theme is to challenge the nation to fight against this dangerous crime through education.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, one in 12 women and one in 45 men will be stalked in their lifetime, for an average duration of approximately two years. Contrary to popular belief most victims are ordinary Americans. Sadly, stalking victims may experience psychological trauma, financial hardship, and even death. Eighty-one percent of victims that are stalked by an intimate partner are also physically assaulted by that partner. Even more disturbing, seventy-six percent of female homicide victims were stalked prior to their death.

Yet many victims underestimate the significance of the crime. They incorrectly assume that ignoring or confronting stalkers will stop them. Stalkers usually do not stop and confronting a stalker may intensify the violence. To complicate matters, stalking may be challenging for authorities to recognize, investigate, and prosecute. In contrast to other crimes, stalking is not a single, easily identifiable crime. Rather, it is a progression of acts and conduct directed at a specific person that would cause that person fear.

**Stalking may take many forms**—such as assaults, threats, vandalism, burglary, or animal abuse—as well as unwanted cards, calls, gifts, or visits. Stalkers may use various devices—such as computers, Global Position System devices, or hidden cameras—to track their victims’ daily activities. Stalkers do not fit a standard psychological profile. A substantial number of stalkers follow their victims from one jurisdiction to another, complicating apprehension by the authorities.

**Protect and Empower Yourself.** Stalking is unpredictable and perilous. You can take various actions to increase your safety.

- If you are in **immediate danger**, call 911.
- Take **threats** seriously. Stalkers that talk about suicide or murder may follow through with their threats.
- Contact a **victim services agency**. They can assist you and refer you to other services.
- Develop a **safety plan**.
- **Do not communicate** with the stalker or respond to attempts to contact you.
- Keep **evidence** of the stalking. Note when the stalker follows and contacts you, the date and time.

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