



January is National Stalking Awareness Month

Stalking is not just something that happens to celebrities – it happens to three and a half million people every year in the United States. Three people become victims of stalking every minute.

American Indians and Alaska Natives are stalked more than any one other ethnic group.

Stalking is a crime in all 50 states. It is a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear. Stalking behavior can range from annoying and intrusive to terrifying and dangerous. It can escalate to violence and frequently ends in murder. Stalkers are not easy to identify – they come from every level of society. Men and women may be stalkers. Both women and men may be stalked, though it happens more often to women. Stalking happens to kids through elders. While most stalking occurs during or after a relationship, or because the stalker imagines a relationship, it may have nothing at all to do with a romantic relationship. It is about power and control. Children may stalk another child to bully them. Native American tribal leaders may be stalked by people who want to influence their decisions.

Stalkers may: Follow you and show up wherever you are. Repeatedly call you, including hang-ups. Damage your home, car, or other property. Send unwanted gifts, letters, cards, or e-mails. Monitor your phone calls or computer use. Use technology to track where you go. Drive by or hang out at your home, school, or work. Threaten to hurt you, your family, friends, or pets. Find out about you by using public records or on-line search services, hiring investigators, going through your garbage, or contacting friends, family, neighbors, or co-workers.

What can you do about it? If you are in **immediate danger**, call 911. **Don't communicate with the stalker**, because even negative attention will encourage them. Trust your instincts. Take **threats** seriously. Keep **evidence** of the stalking. Develop a **safety plan**. Tell **family, friends, and co-workers** about the stalking and seek their support. And if someone you know is being stalked: listen, show support, and don't blame the victim for the crime.

We can help you at Community and Family Services (487-2089); call for more information. Or call the Stalking Resource Center (1-800-394-2255).