

STALKING RESPONSE STRATEGIES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT



**13.5 million
PEOPLE are
STALKED
each year**



WHAT IS STALKING?

While legal definitions of stalking vary from one jurisdiction to another, a good working definition of stalking is:

a pattern of behavior directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear for their safety or the safety of others, and/or suffer substantial emotional distress.

DID YOU KNOW

Stalking — generally defined as a pattern of behavior directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear for their safety or the safety of others, and/or suffer substantial emotional distress — is a crime under the laws of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. territories, and the federal government. A recent, large national study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed that 13.5 million people — both women and men — were stalked in a 1-year period. Other research has shown that stalking victims reported the stalking to law enforcement in less than half of the incidents. According to a Bureau of Justice Statistics report, approximately 41 percent of female and 37 percent of male stalking victimizations were reported to law enforcement. Generally, those who do not report do not know that stalking is a crime, do not think the police can help them, or fear that reporting will make the stalker even more dangerous. By developing good relationships and establishing trust with victims and victim advocates — and by involving them in the investigation, reporting, and prosecution phases of a multidisciplinary stalking response — law enforcement officers can increase the likelihood of arrests and successful prosecutions as well as officer and victim safety.

HOW LAW ENFORCEMENT CAN HELP

1. Listen closely to victims — even if what they say sounds unbelievable — and document everything they report.
2. Substantiating the crime of stalking requires building a case that establishes a course of conduct. If you do not have enough evidence based on one incident report to charge the suspect with stalking, take the time to discuss with the victim how to document and report the offending behavior so that you may build a case.
3. Investigate other reported incidents such as vandalism, burglary, and violations of protection orders to see if these behaviors establish a pattern of conduct.
4. Consult with your local prosecutor and U.S. Attorney to learn exactly what evidence you need to collect to build and charge the case.
5. If the victim is still engaging with the offender, understand this may be the best way for the victim to remain safe.



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