WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT STALKING

Stalking literally means to pursue prey or quarry. Legally, it is defined by state statutes, and is generally considered a course of conduct that places a person in fear for their safety.

In Colorado, stalking is defined as harassing someone (i.e., following, contacting, or watching another person) in a way that causes them to feel fearful (state statute C.R.S. 18-9-111). A first time offense is considered a Class 5 Felony, and a Class 4 Felony when there is a restraining order or injunction already in place.

According to the National Center for Victims of Crime, 1,006,970 women and 370,000 men are stalked annually in the United States. On college campuses, 3 in 10 college women report being injured emotionally or psychologically from being stalked, and 80% of campus stalking victims know their stalker.

WHAT MOTIVATES A STALKER?

Stalkers can be driven by several different reasons, and most have stalked more than one person in their lifetime. Stalkers are obsessed with their victims, and this obsession is expressed in many ways. Some common reasons for this obsession include power, control, and sometimes revenge. Most stalkers don’t take responsibility for their actions and blame others for making them do what they do. Stalkers who have had intimate relationships with their victims (the majority have) have been shown to be much more aggressive and violent (both male and female perpetrators). Relationship violence perpetrators often stalk their victims during the course of the relationship and especially after the victim leaves the relationships.

COMMON MANIPULATION TACTICS

Gifts or Notes: Stalking may start off as little gifts or notes either given to the victim or left where they will find it. The notes may be pleasant, sexually oriented, or simply off-the-wall depending on the stalker. They typically get worse as the gifts are continually rebuked.

Constant Communication: Stalkers work to harass their victims with a continual stream of information so that they know the assailant is always lurking out there.

Surveillance: Most stalkers are very good at tracking. They follow, peep, and record. They usually keep logs or diaries, or memorize as much about the victim as possible. Electronic means of stalking have increased significantly in recent years.

Threats of Violence: Threats of violence may be a way to get the victim to do the stalker’s bidding. Also, there are stalkers who make no direct threat but do in fact commit acts of violence against their victims. Even if there are no physical threats of harm, continual harassment and surveillance become a very real emotional and psychological threat to victims of stalking.
**Legal Harassment Tactics:** Stalkers may file small claims or other legal actions against their victims. These cases are usually eventually dropped, and are strictly used to harass and manipulate the victim.

**Libel and/or Slander:** Stalkers may make slanderous remarks to victims’ friends or associates, thereby causing victims damage in both interpersonal relationships and associations in the workplace.

**Harassment of Family Members:** Stalkers may resort to harassing family members if they are not able to contact the victim directly. A jealous stalker may make threats to a significant other if they view them as a barrier. Some stalkers may harass victims’ pets.

**Fraud:** A stalker may run up large bills on the victim’s calling and credit cards, or go through the mail to disrupt services.

**Vandalism:** This is a common tactic used by stalkers, causing emotional and financial burden on the victim.

**Trophy Collection:** Some stalkers will commit burglary both to further their information gathering as well as spur on their fantasies. Several types of stalkers are known to collect undergarments.

### Types of Stalkers and General Characteristics

**Domestic Violence Stalkers** (*also referred to as intimate partner stalkers*) commit over 50% of stalking crimes. These individuals have had previous relationships with their victims and this personal history allows these stalkers to exert a great deal of control and power over their victims.

Domestic Violence stalkers exhibit a variety of characteristics, including desire for extreme control, obsessive behavior, vengeful attitudes, an inability to handle rejection, and an assumption of little or no responsibility for their actions. Many dominate and live off their victims. They often charm their perspective victim at first, but begin to slowly take over and control their lives. Many of these stalkers are heavy users of pornography and exert domination and demeaning tactics in sexual relationships. They seem to believe the root of their problems lie with the victim, not the other way around.

Common manipulation tactics used by these Domestic Violence stalkers include harassing phone calls, contact with the victim or family members, and threats of violence. Domestic Violence stalkers have the greatest propensity towards violence, and may use threats of or attempts at suicide to get their victim to do what they want.

**Acquaintance Stalkers** can be quite charming and resourceful, encountering their victims in a variety of ways. In each case, the victim knows the stalker exists but has never had any kind of intimate or sexual relationship with that individual.

Acquaintance stalkers in the workplace can create a complex set of problems for victims as well as employers. Employers have a responsibility to provide safe working environments for their employees, and failure to do so in stalking cases has become a growing area of civil litigation.

**Stranger Stalkers** fixate on a particular victim, unannounced to that person. The stalker begins to make contact with the victim in a variety of ways that may initially seem harmless, but their continued presence generates fear and terror for the victim. “Peeping Toms” should not be taken lightly, and can pose a very real threat to their victims.

A survey of university undergraduates revealed that 20% had been stalked or harassed by a former dating partner. (Haugaar & Seri 2004)
Stranger stalkers are fantasy oriented and obsessive, with definite personality and/or mental disorders. Cyber-stalkers and pedophiles are also types of stranger stalkers who may use the internet to gather information on their victims.

**WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE BEING STALKED**

Trust your instincts. If something doesn’t feel right it probably isn’t. Be wary about how much information you reveal and advertise to others. Keeping a low profile, especially in regards to cyber-stalking, is important for maintaining your privacy. If possible, carry a cell phone on you at all times in case you need to call for help.

If you are being stalked, you need to make it very clear to the stalker that you are not interested. A firm “No” is a clear and concise message that you are not interested in their advances. Don’t try to be polite by making up other excuses, as this leaves open windows for the stalker to think there is a chance.

Notify family members or close friends if you believe you are being stalked, both to build support and put them on the lookout. This is especially important if you have children with your stalker. When going on trip, give trusted a friend your itinerary so that they can notify authorities if something goes wrong. Vary your habits (ex: taking different ways to work) so that you are not an easy target for your stalker to follow.

**Document Everything.** The key to prosecuting a stalker is to document. Everything this individual does must be chronicled from the moment you believe you are being stalked. Also save everything the stalker sends you and record when and where you found it. Tape record phone calls the stalker leaves you and save voicemails, emails, instant messages and text messages. Keep your records in a safe place and make a copy to leave in another location.

Consider working with law enforcement professionals as early as possible. All states have anti-stalking legislation. Also, you may want to contact victim’s rights advocate groups who specialize in domestic violence or stalking programs. Early intervention is always best when trying to stop stalking.

**LEGAL OPTIONS**

*Temporary Restraining Orders* (called Orders of Protection in Colorado) are intended to notify your stalker that they must immediately stop harassing and otherwise contacting you. You must file paperwork with the court requesting such an order. You may also petition for a *Work Place Restraining Order* which is similar to the TRO.

*Stalking Emergency Protective Orders* allows for police to immediately obtain emergency protection for victims in domestic violence and stalking cases. These can only be obtained with the help of a police officer.
Campus Resources and Options

Office of Women’s Programs and Studies

PH: (970) 491-6384

Trained Advocates are available to provide confidential emotional support and information. Advocates are volunteers (students, staff, and faculty) who complete an extensive training program. They can help students navigate decisions about reporting to police or university authorities. Ultimately, the decision is the student’s unless there is an identifiable threat to another person.

Emotional Healing - University Counseling Center

PH: (970) 491 – 6053   After Hours: (970) 491 – 7111 *ask to speak to a UCC counselor

The University Counseling Center offers a number of programs including individual therapy and 24-hour emergency services. These services are free of charge for students. Your may call or stop by Hartshorn Health Services to speak with on-call counselors.

Academic Concerns

If you are having difficulty fulfilling your academic commitments due to being victimized in a stalking situation, contact an advocate in the Office of Women’s Programs and Studies about your options.

University Disciplinary Options - Conflict Resolution & Student Conduct Services

PH: (970) 491-7165

The Colorado State University Student Conduct Code applies to all students and persons residing on university property. If the person stalking you is a student (or lives in university housing), you may choose to make a report to the Conflict Resolution & Student Conduct Services office. A Hearing Officer may determine there to be sufficient reason to conduct an additional investigation and disciplinary sanctions may be taken against the perpetrator.

Police Resources

Police Emergency (on or off campus) – 911
CSU Police Department - Non-Emergency (970) 491-6425
Fort Collins Police Department Non-Emergency (970) 221-6540
Fort Collins TTY (Deaf Accessibility Line) Emergency (970) 221-3490
Larimer County Sheriff’s Department Non-Emergency (970) 498-5141
Larimer County District Attorney’s Office Victim/Witness Division (970) 498-7285

Additional Resources

For excellent information on stalking, including stalking behavior logs, safety plan guidelines, and a complete handbook for victims, contact the National Center for Victims of Crime Stalking Resource Center online at www.ncvc.org, call 1-800-FYI-CALL (M-F 8:30 AM - 8:30 PM EST), or e-mail gethelp@ncvc.org