

For Immediate Release

Spouses

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## January Is National Stalking Awareness Month Campaign

January 2023 marks the nineteenth annual National Stalking Awareness Month (NSAM), an annual call to action to recognize and respond to this prevalent, traumatic, and dangerous crime. Stalking is a dangerous and devastating victimization in its own right and often intersects with physical violence, sexual violence, and homicide. Yet, too often, stalking is trivialized, minimized, and goes unrecognized and unaddressed. It takes all of us – victims/survivors and their friends and family, advocacy and support services, and legal systems – to better recognize and respond to stalking, and this month, Hi-Line's Help for Abused Spouses (HLHAS) invites you to join our efforts to spread awareness about stalking and to **KNOW IT, NAME IT, and STOP IT.**

Stalking is one of the four major crimes under the Violence Against Women Act, and its prevalence rivals that of intimate partner violence and sexual violence: stalking impacts nearly 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men in the United States. Most stalkers target people they know, and the majority of stalkers are intimate partners or acquaintances who often have intimate knowledge about the victim's vulnerabilities and fears.<sup>1</sup>

Stalking can impact every aspect of a survivor's life. Survivors often suffer anxiety, social dysfunction, and severe depression as a result of their victimization, and many lose time from work and/or relocate.<sup>2,3</sup> 1 in 5 stalkers use weapons to threaten or harm victims,<sup>4</sup> stalking often intersects with physical and sexual violence, and stalking increases the risk of intimate partner homicide by three times.<sup>5</sup> And yet — despite its high prevalence and impacts — many victims, families, service providers, criminal and civil justice professionals, and the general public underestimate its danger and urgency.

Stalking is defined as a pattern of behavior directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear or emotional distress. As fear is highly personal, so is stalking; stalkers often engage in behaviors which seem benign to outsiders but are terrifying in context. For example, receiving a surprise flower delivery is generally a welcome experience, but when a victim has quietly relocated to escape a stalker, that flower delivery can be a terrifying and threatening message the offender has found them.

Stalkers often follow, monitor, and wait for their victims, as well as leave them unwanted gifts, spread rumors about them, and repeatedly call, text, and message them.<sup>6</sup> The majority of stalking victims experience both in-person and technology-facilitated stalking.<sup>7</sup>

NSAM's theme of "Know It. Name It. Stop It." is a call to action for everyone in Montana, as well as across the country. The vast majority of victims tell friends or family about their situation first, and how we respond influences whether they seek further help or not.

We all have a role to play in identifying stalking, intervening when necessary, and supporting victims and survivors. HLHAS will offer help, support, and resources to victims, as well as training workshops to promote awareness and public education about stalking during the annual observance. If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact us at 406-278-3342, or our 24/7 crisis line at 1-800-219-7336.

For more information about National Stalking Awareness Month, please visit <https://StalkingAwareness.org> and [www.ovw.usdoj.gov](http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov).

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Sources:

- <sup>1</sup> Smith, S.G., Basile, K.C., & Kresnow, M. (2022). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2016/2017 Report on Stalking. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease control and Prevention.
- <sup>2</sup> Blaauw, E., Arensman, E., Winkel, F.W., Freeve, A., & Sheridan, L. (2002). The Toll of Stalking. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 17(1): 50-63.
- <sup>3</sup> Baum, K., Catalano, S., & Rand, M. (2009). Stalking Victimization in the United States. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- <sup>4</sup> Mohandie, K., Meloy, J.R., McGowan, M.G., & Williams, J. (2006). The RECON Typology of Stalking: Reliability and Validity Based upon a Large Sample of North American Stalkers. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 51 (1), 147-155.
- <sup>5</sup> Spencer, C.M. & Stith, S.M. (2018). Risk Factors for Male Perpetration and Female Victimization of Intimate Partner Homicide: A Meta-Analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 21(3): 527-540.
- <sup>6</sup> Smith, S.G., Basile, K.C., & Kresnow, M. (2022). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2016/2017 Report on Stalking. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease control and Prevention.
- <sup>7</sup> Truman, J.L., & Morgan, R.E. (2021). Stalking Victimization, 2016. Washington, DC: US DOJ, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Special Report.

