

# Stalking Resource Center Helps Combat a Dangerous Crime

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■ By Michelle M. Garcia

Stalking is a pervasive, dangerous, and—far too often—lethal crime. Despite the prevalence of this crime, responders and service providers are often ill-equipped to recognize and respond to victims' needs. The Stalking Resource Center (SRC) meets such challenges by working to raise national awareness of stalking and to encourage local communities throughout the country to develop and implement multidisciplinary responses to the crime.

The Stalking Resource Center, launched as a program of the National Center for Victims of Crime in 2000, encourages greater community awareness of the danger and complexity of stalking, enhanced responses to victims, and increased offender accountability. As the only national training and technical assistance center focused solely on stalking, the SRC has provided assistance, training, and resources to tens of thousands of victim service providers and criminal justice practitioners throughout the United States and has fostered innovations in programs for stalking victims and professionals who support them.

The SRC provides direct assistance to criminal justice and victim service organizations to build their capacity to respond effectively to stalking. The program helps communities develop and enhance services for victims of stalking, develop and implement effective stalking protocols and policies, assess civil and criminal remedies for stalking, and develop a coordinated community response to stalking.

*Stalking Victimization in the United States*, a major national study released by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), in January 2009, found that 3.4 million people are stalked every year. This number, based on the largest collection of data on stalking prevalence and behavior to date, is greater than the populations of Ann Arbor, Battle Creek, Canton, Dearborn, Detroit, Flint, Grand Rapids, Lansing, Livonia, St. Clair Shores, Sterling Heights, Taylor, Troy, Warren, and Westland combined.

The SRC has provided victim-centered, research-informed, and practice-based training to more than 30,000 individuals through 16 national conferences, dozens of regional trainings co-hosted with local providers, and presentations at hundreds of local, state, and national conferences. The SRC designs curricula to meet communities' specific needs and often partners with local and nationally recognized law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and other criminal justice professionals to provide training. Training topics include stalking prevalence, lethality and impact; stalking and intimate partner violence; stalking and sexual assault; stalking on campus; teens and stalking; investigating and prosecuting stalking; threat assessment and safety planning; working with victims; developing a coordinated community response to stalking; and the use of technology to stalk.

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## *Stalking Resource Center Helps Combat a Dangerous Crime continued...*

The SRC meets increasing requests for training, assistance, and resources on how stalkers use technology (e.g., e-mail, instant messaging, cell phones, text messaging, listening devices, video/digital cameras, computer spyware, and global positioning systems). Stalkers also use Internet sites (e.g., online databases, chat rooms, blogs or bulletin boards, and social networking sites) to gather information about their victims or to post information or threats. More than one in four victims of stalking report that stalkers use technology, such as e-mail or instant messaging, to follow and harass them, and one in 13 victims report that electronic devices have been used to intrude on their lives.<sup>1</sup> Such technologies, though largely not problematic in themselves, provide useful tools for stalkers. The SRC helps those who work with stalking victims to keep up with emerging technologies and aims to ensure that local services, practices, and policies effectively address these and other emerging challenges.

The SRC has also produced a range of guides, videos, and other tools to help communities respond to stalking. These resources include:

- *COPS Problem-Oriented Policing Guide*, which provides information to enhance law enforcement responses to stalking.
- "Stalking: Real Fear, Real Crime," an 18-minute training video centered on the Peggy Klinke stalking and murder case and designed to educate a wide variety of audiences about the dangers of stalking.
- "Links in the Chain: Two Communities Respond to Stalking," featuring two jurisdictions that successfully

use multidisciplinary, collaborative responses to stalking.

National Stalking Awareness Month (NSAM), also launched by the SRC, aims to increase the public's understanding about stalking. Since 2004, the SRC has produced downloadable and replicable artwork, media tools, fact sheets, brochures, activity ideas, and additional resources used by hundreds of communities nationwide to raise awareness about stalking.

For almost ten years, the SRC has enhanced national understanding of stalking dynamics, offender behaviors, and the impact of the crime on victims. The program has increased knowledge about stalkers' varied motivations and the intersection of stalking and other crimes, such as domestic violence and sexual assault. The SRC has provided law enforcement, prosecutors, victim service providers, and other allied professionals with the skills to respond more effectively to victims. The SRC will continue working to ensure that communities have access to emerging research, data, and information on stalking, and are better equipped to respond to the crime.

For more information on the Stalking Resource Center and for resources for victims and service providers, visit the SRC website at [www.ncvc.org/src](http://www.ncvc.org/src).

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<sup>1</sup> Katrina Baum, et al., *Stalking Victimization in the United States*, (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009).