Understanding Stalking
Stalking

- A pattern of behavior directed specifically at one person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear.
- “Any person who willfully harasses another person with the intent to injure, terrify, threaten, or intimidate commits the offense of stalking.” ~Section 28-311.03 NE Statute
- Stalking is a crime in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the US Territories and the Federal government.
Definition of Stalking

- Stalking criminalizes otherwise non-criminal behaviors, such as sending letters or making phone calls, when the behavior is part of a pattern that creates an implicit or explicit threat to the victim.
- Generally, stalking is an escalating series of actions and incidents.
Creative Charging Related to Stalking

- Vandalism
- Criminal Mischief
- Protection Order Violation
- Terroristic Threats
- Criminal Trespassing
- Unlawful Intrusion
- Sexual Assault
- Domestic Assault
- Cruelty to Animals
- Tampering with a Witness
- Probation Violation
- Assault
- Graffiti
Can you threaten someone without using any threatening words?
How can non-criminal acts be stalking?
Context is CRITICAL to understanding the dynamics of stalking.
The “CONTEXT”

- What does it mean to you?
- What does it mean to the victim?
- History
- Symbolism
- What is it leading to?
- What does victim feel might happen?
What is Stalking?

- Persistent phone calls, messages, hang ups
- Following or watching
- Showing up where you are
- Sending unwanted cards, gifts, letters, emails, etc.
- Vandalism, breaking and entering, theft
- Monitoring phone calls or computer use
- Use technology, hidden cameras, GPS, etc.
- Drive by, hang out at your school or work
- Threaten to harm you, your family or your pets
Unwanted Contacts

- Can start off seeming innocent
- Telephone used as a tool—hang-ups, multiple messages,
- Seems to show up wherever the victim goes
- This behavior can lead to leaving dead flowers, ripped photos, dead animals
- Can be difficult to elude— the stalker uses resources to get new addresses and phone numbers
Prevalence of Stalking

3.4 million people are stalked annually

- Women are at nearly 3 times the greater risk of being stalked than men. (7 per 1000 males and 20 per 1000 females)
- Persons aged 18-24 experienced the highest rates of stalking victimization.
- Nearly half experienced at least 1 unwanted contact per week.
- 11% had been stalked for five or more years.
Characteristics of a Stalker

- Jealous
- Narcissistic
- Obsessive and Compulsive
- Falls ‘instantly’ in love
- Does not take responsibility for own feelings or actions
- Needs to have control over others
- Socially awkward or uncomfortable
- Views self as a victim of society, family and others
- Unable to take ‘no’ for an answer
- Deceptive
- Often switches between rage and ‘love’
- Difficulty distinguishing between fantasy and reality
- Sense of entitlement (‘You owe me…’)
- Unable to cope with rejection
- Dependent on others for sense of ‘self’
- Views his or her problems as someone else’s fault
- May be of above average intelligence
Cyberstalking

- Threatening behavior or unwanted advances directed at another using the Internet and other forms of online & computer communications
- More than 1 in 4 victims reported some form of technology used by their stalker
Technologies Used to Stalk

- Phones
- Cameras
- Global Positioning Systems (GPS)
- Computers
- Email and Instant Messaging
- Spyware
- Assistive Technologies (keystroke logger, spoofcard, etc.)
- Social Networking Sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
Technology is not the enemy!

- Criminals exploit situations to create an advantage for themselves.

- We need to keep up with the criminals to understand their methods of stalking in reference to technology!
Intimate Partner Violence & Stalking

- 90% of victims are stalked by someone they know
- 81% of victims stalked by their intimate partners report previous physical assaults by the same offender
- Stalking occurs in most abusive relationships
- Stalker already knows victim’s routine, schedule, and “life”
- Power and control already exists
- Victim knows what a stalker is capable of
- Often the most dangerous
When Stalking of Women Occurs in Intimate Partner Relationships

- After relationship ends: 43%
- Before relationship ends: 21%
- Before & after relationship ends: 36%
Escalation—Vandalism, Threats, Violence

- Threats to loved ones or pets
- Symbolic threats—torn or altered photos, abduction of pets
- Homicide is rare, yet difficult to predict homicidal stalkers
- The most reliable predictor is the stalker’s previous behavior

***history of violent behavior (especially d.v.) is a strong predictor of violence
Why victims are reluctant to tell

- Don’t know it’s stalking
- Won’t be taken seriously
- Not believed
- Fear
- Escalates stalker
- Put self at greater risk
- Embarrassed & ashamed
- Previous efforts to seek help resulted in negative experience
Impact of Stalking on Victims

- Constant fear/terror
- Constant Paranoia & Hyper-vigilance
- Eating/sleeping problems
- Confusion & frustration
- Isolation
- Life feels out-of-control
- “Crazy-making” feeling
Risk & Lethality

- Signs of Escalation
- Symbolic threats
- Threats/fantasies homicide/suicide
- Stalker’s previous behavior w/ victim or other victim

- Gut instinct
- Violations of Protection Order
- History of DV
- Sexual Assault
What do victims need?

- To be believed and listened to
- Stalking to stop
- Safety & protection
- Regain a sense of control over their life
  - Get their life back
Steps for Stalking Victim to Take

• Tell stalker “I want no contact at all from you”
  ◦ It’s needed, but caution must be used
  ◦ ANY contact by victim, even negative contact, is often reinforcing for stalker

• Officers issue verbal “no contact” to stalker
  ◦ Officers can also issue a “no contact” letter

• Avoid the “last talk” with stalker; often it can literally be the victim’s last talk
Remember...

- Any **ACTION** the victim takes will cause one of the following **REACTIONS**:
  - The stalking will stop
  - The stalking will continue
  - The stalker will escalate
Documentation / Evidence

- Stalking Kit and Stalking Log
- Photographs
  - Texts, vandalism, gifts…
- Other physical evidence
  - Letters, gifts, phone logs, items left…
- Emails: content with full header
- Cell phone
  - Message, original number, contact list
Increasing Safety for Stalking Victims

- Get connected to an advocate at Bright Horizons
- Use stalking log/documentation
- Protection Order – pros & cons
- Travel different routes
- Inform work, school, neighbors…
- Screen calls / Caller ID
- Use safe computer (i.e. Library)
Increasing Safety for Stalking Victims

- New email/cell phone
- Keep old email/cell phone active
- Save texts, voicemails, Facebook feeds, etc…
- Trust “gut instinct”
- Stalking Kit
- Address Confidentiality Program (prior to moving)
- Avoid the “last talk”
- Contact information on websites or other publicly known entities (Google yourself)