

Crime Victims Resource Center

Serving victims in Mower County since 1977

NATIONAL STALKING AWARENESS MONTH

KNOW IT. NAME IT. STOP IT.

Stalking is a pattern of behavior, not a single incident. It includes unwanted attention, harassment, contact, or any other course of conduct that could cause someone to feel fear. It is often made up of individual acts that by themselves could be seen as harmless, but when put together and put into context of a stalking situation, can be very dangerous for the victim. Many stalking victims are followed, approached, monitored, or threatened. This can happen in person or through different forms of technology. A stalker can be someone you know well, or not at all. However, the majority of stalking victims are stalked by someone they know – and many times by a current or former intimate partner. Stalking impacts over 1 in 6 women and 1 in 17 males, and nearly 7 in 10 victims report knowing their stalker.

Common stalking behaviors include:

- Repeated phone calls (including hang-ups), voicemails, emails, or text messages
- Following someone, or somehow showing up wherever they go
- Sending unwanted gifts or letters
- Vandalizing a victim's property, car, or home
- Driving by, waiting at, or showing up at the victim's home, work, or school
- Threatening to harm the victim
- Using technology to track or watch the victim
- Monitoring a victim's phone activity or computer use

This list isn't exhaustive – and these behaviors can change or escalate over time. Unfortunately, there is no way to predict what stalkers will or will not do.

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They may start with more indirect ways of making contact (like phone calls or texts) to more direct contact (like delivering gifts or showing up where you are at). At first, victims may try to placate their stalkers by “playing nice” – hoping that will make the unwanted behavior stop. When this doesn’t work, they may confront or threaten the stalker with legal action – which can escalate the situation.

Victims of stalking often feel pressured by friends or family to downplay the stalker’s behavior. They may minimize their experiences, telling themselves that “it’s not that bad.” This can be reinforced when others may also be minimizing the behavior – telling the victim that it was so nice that they are getting presents, or that someone cares about them. It’s important to remember that stalking is dangerous – a victim’s safety is paramount.

OPTIONS AND RESOURCES

- **Report** – reporting stalking behaviors to law enforcement can help establish a pattern of behavior, and law enforcement intervention can help put a stop to the stalking.
- **Restraining Order** – depending on the circumstances, a victim of stalking may qualify for a Harassment Restraining Order (HRO).
- **Safety Planning** – work with an advocate to develop a personalized safety plan that addresses physical and emotional safety. Safety plans should evolve, change, and adapt as the situation changes.
- **Address Confidentiality Program** – Minnesota’s Safe at Home Program is an address confidentiality program that is designed to help people who fear for their safety maintain a confidential address. This program assigns participants with a PO Box address that can be used as their legal address, and their mail is forwarded to them. We have two advocates that are trained application assistants for this program.
- **Documentation** – make sure to document every incident with the stalker. This can include physical/public encounters, phone calls (including hang-up or restricted calls), emails, messages, social media posts, or any third-party contact made. We have created a stalking incident and behavior log that victims can use to easily track these incidents.
- **Cutting Off Communication** – many stalkers perceive any contact, even negative contact, as encouragement. Disengagement with the stalker is advisable – ceasing all communication with them in any way they attempt to connect with the victim. This is not always possible, especially if there is shared custody of children – cue the importance of safety planning and restraining order options. It is important that the other party is aware that no contact is wanted with them – but this only needs to occur once, and can be done in person, or over the phone. It may be beneficial to have this statement in a written form for documentation, such as a text message, email, or mailing a letter to the stalker. We have a list of sample no contact statements that victims can utilize.

In short – if you or someone you know is being harassed or stalked, contact our office at 507-437-6680. There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to stalking. Our trained advocates help navigate what approach may be most beneficial in keeping a victim safe.



COVID-19 pandemic heightens the risk for elder abuse

The Covid-19 pandemic has heightened the risk for elder abuse, leaving them socially isolated and vulnerable which can lead to exploitation. Elder abuse can take on many forms and can be hard to spot. It includes physical, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse, along with neglect and abandonment. By learning about the warning signs of elder abuse, as a community we can work together and ensure that our seniors have the support and protection they need and deserve.

Elder abuse can happen to any person, by a loved one, hired caregiver, or a stranger. Abuse can happen at home, a relative's home, or in an eldercare facility. Many of the "red flags" for elder abuse are not physically identifiable.

Educating seniors, professionals, caregivers, and the public on abuse is critical to prevention. We should never brush off the possible signs of elder abuse. Your parents, grandparents, and other elderly relatives do not deserve to suffer. If you suspect your loved one is in danger, report it. Call 911 immediately to address any urgent concerns.

Signs of Elder Abuse

If an older adult is being abused, here are some of the "red flags" that you may see:

- The person may feel depressed, confused, or withdrawn.
- They may isolate from friends and family.
- Has unexplained bruises, burns, or scars.
- They may appear dirty, underfed, dehydrated, over-or undermedicated, or not receiving the medical care they need.
- Has bed sores or other preventable conditions.
- Recent changes in their banking or spending patterns.

Call CVRC at 507-437-6680 for more information or to report elder abuse call Minnesota Adult Abuse Reporting Center at 844-880-1574.

A Day in the Life of an Advocate — What do you do? Who do you help?

“What exactly do you do?” “Who do you help?” As victim advocates, we are asked these questions often. Our job can be hard to summarize because most of what we do is determined by the victim. In other words, we don’t use a “one size fits all” approach when it comes to helping others.

Many people think of Crime Victims Resource Center (CVRC) as the agency that assists with Orders for Protection and Harassment Restraining Orders. There is so much more that CVRC does to assist all (not just domestic violence victims) crime victims.

No day is the same. Transitioning from one type of victimization to another with a phone call, email, or walk in. Working within the criminal and civil justice systems, collaboration with other agencies and organizations, providing crisis counseling and immediate assistance. The ebb and flow of crisis intervention.

A day in the life of an advocate...

Crisis line call – worked with this victim in the past, stalker has resurfaced after the restraining order expired. No current or active no contact orders. Safety planning, crisis counseling, and harassment restraining order (HRO) information and options. Voicemail light comes on. Check voicemail.

Walk-in client – wants a restraining order to evict their roommate for drug use and erratic behavior. Explain restraining order grounds, and eviction process in MN. Make referrals for further assistance.

Attend court – take notes on multiple criminal files. If attending Zoom court, responding to emails, and catching up on case notes for other client contacts while waiting for specific cases to be called.

Return voicemail – client was sexually abused as a child and looking for resources. Offered crisis counseling and referrals.

Attend meeting (County Attorney’s Office and victim of Criminal Vehicular Operation) – explained criminal justice information, victim rights, Victim Impact Statement, Restitution, and Reparations.

Crisis line call – current client that has questions about the charges and wanting to add to the police report because

they feel it’s not as accurate as it could be. Explain criminal justice system information, send an email to the prosecutor, refer to law enforcement center for a supplemental report. Voicemail light comes on.

Check voicemail & return call – client wants to write a victim impact statement for sentencing hearing in two days. Make appointment for this afternoon, email the prosecutor requesting update on the plea agreement and let them know a victim statement will be read at the hearing.

Leave for Seibel Center – provide domestic violence training to their staff bringing the Power and Control Wheel to life.

Crisis line call – domestic violence victim wants to leave their abuser. Offer safety planning and referrals, explain our transitional housing units and availability. Victim wants to leave immediately. Conference call with the Women’s Shelter to confirm a room is available. Coordinate transportation for the victim for the end of the day.

Client meeting – explain the criminal justice system, give updates regarding the plea agreement, start writing the victim impact statement.

Provide client with transportation to the Women’s Shelter.

So when we’re asked these questions – “What do you do?” “How can you help victims?” – the answers are broadly described – each case is unique and brings its own set of nuances and needs. As advocates, we have been trained

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to handle each case as it comes – as each victimization is unique, and each client has their own set of strengths and values to uphold. We believe in a victim centered response – allowing the victim to dictate the services that they need, and feel are the most essential to them in the moment. We assist them in providing intervention, support, and advocacy, and give them the knowledge and skills to empower themselves in making informed decisions about their situation.

In a nutshell – we do it all! But in all seriousness – we provide countless services to help ALL victims of crime. Contact our office if you have any questions about what we can do or the services that we provide. If we can't help, chances are we know an organization or agency that can.

Remember, referrals and word of mouth are the best way to connect victims of crime with our services. Available 24/7, call CVRC at 507-437-6680 for more information or immediate help.

Crime Victims Resource Center

101 14th Street NW, Austin • 507-437-6680

Empowering victims of crime through education, intervention, support and advocacy.

The Crime Victims Resource Center will help individuals who have been victims of many different types of crime. Some of the specific crimes we work with are:

- Accidents involving intoxicated driver
- Assault
- Burglary
- Child Abuse
- Domestic Abuse/Assault
- Elder Abuse
- Harassment
- Sexual Abuse/Assault
- Stalking
- Terroristic Threats
- Theft



Tori Miller
Director



Mandy Cain
Victim Advocate



Linnea Garness
Victim Advocate

Victim Support Services

- 24 hour crisis hotline
- Crisis counseling
- Safety planning
- Arranging emergency shelter
- Support groups
- Referrals to other agencies
- Emergency transportation
- Support during hospital examinations
- Support during police reporting
- Assistance with Orders for Protection and Harassment Restraining Orders
- Assistance with understanding the criminal justice system
- Accompaniment to court proceedings for support
- Updates on the progress of court proceedings
- Notification of victims' rights

Free and confidential service funded by The Hormel Foundation, Minnesota Department of Public Safety-Office of Justice Programs, and United Way of Mower County.