Impact of Stalking on Victims

There is little doubt that stalking has a tremendous impact on the lives of those who are targeted. Indeed, many victim service professionals contend that the threat of violence inherent in stalking cases can take a higher toll on its victims than those who have been victims of completed acts of violence. The following are signs of stalking-related stress:

- Loss of sleep.
- Weight loss.
- Depression.
- Anxiety.
- Difficulty concentrating.

The 1998 NIJ study indicated that 30% of women and 20% of men in stalking cases sought psychological counseling as a result of the victimization (Tjaden and Theonnes 1998). Moreover, many victims experience a loss of personal support systems.

Additionally, the economic security of stalking victims may be shattered as a result of their victimization. The NIJ study provides an empirical perspective indicating that 25% of stalking victims lost time from work as a result of being targeted and another 7% said that they were unable to return to work altogether.
The Effects of Stalking

1. The victim’s life is often changed by the stalker’s use of power and control. The impact felt by the victim may be in any or all of the following: physical, psychological, legal, academic, economic and social. Certain patterns of reactions often occur. These include denial, bargaining, minimization, self-blame, anxiety, fear and finally, anger. Survivors of stalking typically experience a wide variety of responses in addition to those already mentioned, such as: depression, nightmares, guilt and shame, sleeping and eating disturbances, and an inability to concentrate in class or function at her/his usual academic level. (Campus Stalking, CALCASA, July 2002).

2. Victims often describe a feelings of anticipatory fear – they never know when the stalker will strike. This can cause them to avoid leaving the house, making long-term plans, creating friendships or starting intimate relationships.

3. Sometimes the victim is isolated from friends and family because they are fearful of the stalker and what they may do to them (or have already done).

4. The stalking may interfere with their work and ability to earn a living. Employers may not be able to keep have an employee who misses work or that increases risk for other employees.