**Stalking Victims**

Name

Institution Affiliate

Date

**Introduction**

Taking a career in criminology or criminal justice means that you want to help other people and make a difference. For a long time, criminology and other related studies have focused on studying the criminal: how he commits the crime, where it happened, who his accomplices were, and how to catch and arrest him. The victims are not considered as much; most of the time, the officers are only sympathetic to them. They are left vulnerable with no one on nowhere to turn to. Similarly, stalking victims are also vulnerable and in need of help. They need protection from the stalkers who continually harass them. Therefore, it is important to recognize signs of stalking and remedies to protect a victims of stalking, as discussed in this paper. Before then, let us understand what stalking is all about.

**Criminal definition of stalking**

Generally, stalking is defined as the behavior where an individual intentionally or willfully engages repeatedly in a series of acts that causes another individual to fear serious bodily injury or death. In other words, stalking is intentionally and repeatedly following a person to harass the person with implied or express violence or death threats (Pinals, 2007, p. 15). Stalking also includes instances where the stalker claims a romantic or equivalent interest and is sufficient to invoke the protection of the law. Stalking often begins as threatening, annoying, or obscene calls, messages, emails, or letters. The calls start once or twice per day but increase quickly in frequency. Stalkers also conduct surveillance of the victim by following them and targeting their moves. Most of the stalkers only stop when they are arrested and prosecuted or convicted.

Staking is prohibited in every state. Except under certain situations, such as stalking while armed or stalking while breaking a restraining order, stalking is considered a first-degree or Class A felony in most cases., or repeated stalking. However, every state has its stalking statutes that classify what they consider as harassment or stalking. The variations relate primarily to the victim’s reaction, age of the victim, the intention of the stalker, the type of prohibited repeated behavior, and whether there is a required threat as part of stalking.

**Importance of Recognizing Signs of Stalking**

We have all hear or read stories of celebrities being stalking victims by fans becoming obsessed with their attention. There are also stories of jilted spouses or lovers being obsessed with their ex-spouse or lovers. Scarier stories of strangers or coworkers stalking people are also common in society. It is usually annoying when you are a victim of such acts. To some individuals, their lives are fraught with fear leading to physical symptoms like stress even when the stalkers have not physically injured the victim. Therefore, it is important to recognize the stalking signs early enough to protect the victims from harassing activity. The concept is that instead of waiting for the stalker to hurt the victim, they are stopped before harassing or assaulting the victim.

**Signs of Stalking**

If you are a movie lover, then you've probably seen it in the movies where a mysterious man hides somewhere watching his victim from a distance. Unfortunately, this happens in real life too. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), in one year, 14 in every 1000 people over 18 years old are victims of stalking. BJS further reports that 3 in 4 victims of stalking know their stalkers in some capacity. 1 in 4 stalking victims are victims of cyberstalking ("Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) - Stalking," n.d.). So, how do you know when or if someone is stalking you?

According to Michigan's stalking statute ("Michigan legislature," n.d.), unconsented contact or stalking includes but not limited to the following:

* Following and appearing within sight of that person.
* Confronting or approaching that person on private property or in a public place.
* Appearing to that person’s residence or workplace.
* Contacting that person often on the phone without their consent.
* Entering into a property occupied, leased, or owned by that person.
* Sending unwanted emails to that person.
* Leaving that person unwanted gifts.

**Remedies to Help a Stalking Victim**

As indicated in the introduction, stalking can have dire consequences on the victims, leaving them vulnerable. They need help to regain control of their life. Some stalkers are hard to let go leaving the victim with no choice but to notify law enforcement bodies. The victims should obtain a protective or restraining order against the stalker. The police can then arrest the person if the stalker does not stop.

Another strategy of helping the victim is by documenting everything. Encourage the victims to take pictures or videos of the stalker if it's safe to do so. The victims should also keep all the communications between them and the stalker if it's online stalking. This includes information on cards, emails, notes, letters, and taped phone messages. Keeping legal documents like protective orders is also important.

It would help if you also encouraged the victims to inform their friends, relatives, and coworkers about the stalker. Then train them to make it hard for the stalkers to track them down. Some strategies of doing so include altering travel routines and routes, avoiding online strangers, and giving their addresses and phone number to few people.

In conclusion, stalking has been on the rise recently, especially with advancements in technology. The victims of stalking suffer a wide range of social, psychological, occupational, and general lifestyle effects. Most of the victims also do not seek help because they don't understand what is happening. Many states have identified the need to have a stalking statute to help the victims understand and identify the stalkers to help save themselves or their friends and families.

References

*Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) - Stalking*. (n.d.). Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=973>

*Michigan legislature*. (n.d.). Michigan Legislature. <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(zvt5beqfcpyz5thgj3p32wpf))/mileg.aspx?page=getObject&objectName=mcl-750-411h>

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