

# *Crisis Connection*

## **Stalking: Should Employers be Concerned?**

Stalking is a common problem. A National Violence against Women Survey found that 8.1% of all women and 2.2 % of all men surveyed were stalked at least once in their lifetime. This means that approximately one out of every 12 women and one out of every 45 men in America have been stalked.

Since the workplace is the one venue where the stalker is sure of the victim's whereabouts, employers should be concerned about and aware of stalking as an issue.

**What is stalking?** Though most states define stalking as the willful, malicious, and repeated following and harassing of another person, some include such activities as lying in wait, surveillance, nonconsensual communication, telephone harassment, and vandalism. Most stalking laws require that the perpetrator make a credible threat of violence against the victim; others include threats against the victim's immediate family; and others require only that the course of conduct engaged in by the alleged stalker constitute an implied threat.

**Who stalks whom?** Female victims are significantly more likely than male victims to be stalked by spouses or ex-spouses. Male victims are significantly more likely to be stalked by acquaintances and strangers. The survey found that victims of stalking are primarily between the ages of 18 to 39.

**The link to domestic violence:** The survey found strong evidence of a link between stalking and domestic violence. Eighty percent (80%) of women who were stalked by an intimate or former intimate partner reported being physically assaulted by that stalker. Survey results also indicate that in approximately 80% of the cases involving former intimate partners, the stalking either started or continued after the woman left the relationship.

Steps you can take to support employees in cases of domestic violence/stalking:

- Become familiar with stalking laws on a federal level, as well as the local and state laws in your area.
- Relocate the workstation of threatened employees.
- Alter employee work schedules.
- Provide photographs (or at a minimum, physical descriptions) of stalkers/perpetrators to receptionists and security personnel.
- Obtain a copy of the restraining order if one is issued
- Encourage law enforcement to enforce restraining orders.
- If needed, provide employees with leaves of absence.
- Limit information about employees that is disclosed by phone. Information that would help locate possible victims or which indicate what time he/she will return should not be provided. (You may want to consider this an appropriate policy to have in place at all times for all employees.)
- Provide the victim with the time off he/she may need to go to court, seek shelter, or connect with other resources.
- Above all, reassure employees that they can use company assistance and resources without their jobs being in jeopardy and that they can trust their employer.

Remember—when it comes to your workplace, you have a duty and a right to keep it safe and secure for all employees.

Please visit: <http://www.in.gov/judiciary/forms/po.html> for information on Indianan's Workplace Violence Restraining Orders or call Crisis Connection at 1.800.245.4580 for assistance.