Stalking is a dangerous crime that affects 6.6 million adults in the United States annually. The better we understand the facts about stalking, the more we can do to stop it.

That’s why the Stalking Resource Center, National Center for Victims of Crime, and the Office on Violence Against Women - U.S. Department of Justice, launched National Stalking Awareness Month in 2004.

Although no safety plan guarantees your safety, such plans are valuable and important tools to keep victims safer, document incidents that happen with the perpetrator, make surroundings more secure, and identify people who can help.

While victims cannot control the stalking behavior, they can be empowered to take steps to keep themselves, family and loved ones safe by first creating a Stalking Safety Plan.

**Stalking Safety Plan**

**Documentation of Stalking and Reporting to Police**

Victims are encouraged to keep a log of all stalking behaviors including e-mails and phone messages. The log, as well as any gifts or letters the stalker sends the victim, can be collected and used as evidence. The evidence will help prove what has been going on if the victim decides to report the stalking to the police or apply for a protective order.

**Rely on Trusted People**

Many victims have found simple ways to make the stalking affect them less. They may ask someone else to pick up and sort their mail, get a second phone number given only to trusted people, or have people at work or school screen phone calls or inform the police if the stalker shows up. Relying on trusted friends and family is important for victims of stalking to help keep victims safer and also reduce the isolation and feelings of desperation that stalking victims may experience.

**Technology Safety Planning**

Stalkers use technology to assist them in stalking their victims in various ways. It is important to consider how victims may be harmed by stalkers’ use of technology. Stalkers use the Internet to contact or post things about the victim on message board or discussion forums. They may also verbally attack or threaten victims in chat rooms. Some stalkers will post threatening or personal information about the victim - including the victim’s full name and address.

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Often stalkers will e-mail the victim, or fill their in-box with spam and have been known to send viruses or other harmful programs to victims’ computers. These threatening messages should be saved, especially if the victim is considering contacting the police with the case.

If stalkers have access to a victim’s computer, they can track them by looking at the history or websites visited on the computer. Also, stalkers have been known to install Spyware software on computers (sometimes sent through e-mail) that sends them a copy of every keystroke made, including passwords, websites visited, and e-mails sent. Spyware is very difficult to detect and a victim will likely not know she has it on her computer. If a victim believes s/he has a Spyware program on her/his computer, it is important the victim talk to a trained advocate.

Stalkers use cell phones enabled with Global Positioning System (GPS) to track victims. GPS technology can also be used to track or follow victims by placing them in the victim’s car and will be able to tell everywhere the car travels. When safety planning with a victim about technology issues, ask a victim if her stalker has ever had access to her phone or computer. If so, it may be important to stop using the phone or computer, or only use it in a manner that will not give the stalker any information about the victim’s location.

Stalking Safety Tips

- If possible, have a phone nearby at all times, preferably one to which the stalker has never had access. Memorize emergency numbers, and make sure that 911 and helpful family or friends are on speed dial.
- Treat all threats, direct and indirect, as legitimate and inform law enforcement immediately.
- Vary routines, including changing routes to work, school, the grocery store, and other places regularly frequented. Limit time spent alone and try to shop at different stores and visit different bank branches.
- When out of the house or work environment, try not to travel alone and try to stay in public areas.
- Get a new, unlisted phone number. Leave the old number active and connected to an answering machine or voicemail. Have a friend, advocate, or law enforcement screen the calls, and save any messages from the stalker. These messages, particularly those that are explicitly abusive or threatening, can be critical evidence for law enforcement to build a stalking case against the offender.
- Do not interact with the person stalking or harassing you. Responding to stalker’s actions may reinforce their behavior.
- Consider obtaining a protective order against the stalker. Some states offer stalking protective orders and other victims may be eligible for protective orders under their state’s domestic violence statutes.
- Trust your instincts. If you are somewhere that doesn’t feel safe, either find ways to make it safer, or leave.

Safe Places

If in imminent danger, locate a safe place. Consider going to:

- Police Station
- Residences of family or friends (locations unknown to the perpetrators)
- Domestic violence shelters
- Place of worship
- Public areas (some stalkers may be less inclined toward violence or creating a disturbance in public places).

Safety at home:

- Identify escape routes out of your house. Teach them to your family.
- Install solid core doors with dead bolts. If all keys cannot be accounted for, change the locks and secure the spare keys. Fix any broken windows or doors.
- Have a code word you use with your family that tells them when they need to leave.
- Inform neighbors and, if residing in an apartment, any on-site managers about the situation, providing them with a photo or description of a known stalker and any vehicles they may drive. Ask your neighbors to call the police if they see the stalker at your house.

Visit our website at: http://www.otterbein.edu/public/CampusLife/HealthAndSafety/Police.aspx
Silent Witness is an anonymous format for individuals to provide information to the Otterbein Police of crimes that have occurred on our campus or touched the lives of the Otterbein community. When crimes occur that affect our community, several things can be said with absolute certainty:

- Because our campus is small, it is almost certain that someone has either seen the event take place or know of someone who did.
- There is a good likelihood that someone has heard or seen something, or someone, which leads them to believe that they were either involved or know the persons who were.
- Someone wishes to provide Otterbein Police with information but does not wish to be identified as the party providing the information.

To this end, a completely anonymous method of contacting the Otterbein Police Department has been provided. Go to the Otterbein Police web site (http://www.otterbein.edu/public/CampusLife/HealthAndSafety/Police/silent-witness.aspx) and click on the Silent Witness link. The Silent Witness web page will provide you with information on the program and enable you to anonymously send information to Otterbein Police. Your email can not be traced back to you. Whether you saw, heard, or heard about it, you may be able to assist us in resolving Campus crime issues by providing us with information.

Registering your bike with Westerville Police is easy and free. Information is kept by the Westerville Police for several years so even if a student has graduated, Westerville Police would be able to provide information on the bicycle if the owner does not have the serial or model number. Additionally, if your bike is lost or stolen and is located by a law enforcement agency, the registration will direct them to the Westerville Police Department to verify ownership.

Stop by the Otterbein or Westerville Police Departments to register your bicycle or visit our website at http://www.otterbein.edu/public/CampusLife/HealthAndSafety/Police.aspx for the registration form.

Meet Otterbein Police

Darla Lipscomb, OPD’s Administrative Assistant, is the first person you see when you enter the Police Department. Sitting at the front window, Darla, is ready to help you with any question or problem you may have. She comes to us from Miami University where she worked as an Administrative Assistant for the Department of Naval ROTC. She enjoys living in Westerville and can often be seen around town with her best friend, Pebbles, an English Springer Spaniel. Darla welcomes you to stop by the office anytime.

General Information

Purchase your Parking Decal online: Students purchase a parking decal online at www.otterbein.edu/parkingpass. The student will receive an email when the order has been fulfilled advising them to pick up the parking decal at the Otterbein Police Department.

Citation Appeals: All appeals of citations must be completed within three business days of the issuance of the citation. Appeals forms are available at the Otterbein Police Department. All appeals are heard within one to two weeks by the traffic council which is made up of representatives from campus (one faculty member, one student and one administrative staff member, with no representative from Otterbein Police). You will be notified of the traffic council’s decision shortly thereafter.

Crime Prevention Classes: The Otterbein Police Department offers educational programs designed to improve and enhance your knowledge of crime and personal safety. Please check our website for a list of available classes and upcoming sessions. If there is something you’d like to learn about but don’t see, let us know. We will work to provide customized programs, as needed.