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January is National Stalking Awareness Month

Topeka, KS, 1/02/2014 – January is National Stalking Awareness Month, a time to focus on a crime that affects 6.6 million victims in one year.¹ This year’s theme—“Stalking: Know It. Name It. Stop It.”— challenges the nation to fight this dangerous crime by learning more about it.

Stalking is a crime in all 50 states, the U.S. Territories and the District of Columbia, yet many people underestimate its seriousness and impact. In one in five cases, stalkers use weapons to harm or threaten victims,² and stalking is one of the significant risk factors for homicide of women in abusive relationships.³

Stalking is difficult to recognize, investigate, and prosecute. Unlike other crimes, stalking is not a single, easily identifiable crime but a series of acts, a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause that person fear. Stalking may take many forms, such as assaults, threats, vandalism, or burglary, as well as unwanted cards, calls, gifts, or visits.

Stalkers fit no standard psychological profile, and many stalkers follow their victims from one jurisdiction to another, making it difficult for authorities to investigate and prosecute their crimes. Most stalkers are known to their victims, such as friends, family members, acquaintances, spouses, or ex-partners or ex-spouses. In Kansas in 2012, 90 percent of stalking cases reported to law enforcement involved stalkers that were known to the victims. The majority of these cases involved female victims (83.7 percent) and male stalkers (81.8 percent).⁴

“One aspect of stalking that we are seeing more of in Kansas is the use of technology to stalk,” says Joyce Grover, Executive Director of KCSDV. “With the rapid progression and availability of smartphones, tablets, downloadable apps, and GPS-enabled devices comes the misuse of these technologies by stalkers to stalk and harass their victims,” continues Grover. Nationally, one in four victims report that the stalker uses technology, such as computers, GPS devices, or hidden cameras, to track the victim’s daily activities.⁵ To help address this issue in Kansas, KCSDV has developed and provides training on investigating and collecting digital or electronic evidence in stalking cases.

Communities that understand stalking can support victims and combat the crime. “If more people learn to recognize stalking,” says Grover, “we have a better chance to protect victims, hold offenders accountable, and prevent tragedies.”

For additional resources or to learn more about stalking visit www.kcsdv.org or www.stalkingawarenessmonth.org.

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Founded in 1982, the purpose of KCSDV is the prevention and elimination of sexual and domestic violence through a statewide network of programs providing support and safety for all victims of sexual and domestic violence and stalking, with primary focus on women and their children; direct services; public awareness and education; advocacy for victims; comprehensive prevention; and, social change efforts. Learn more at www.kcsdv.org.

¹ Michele C. Black et al., “The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Summary Report,” (Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011).

² Katrina Baum et al., “Stalking Victimization in the United States,” (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009).

³ Jacquelyn C. Campbell et al., “Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results from a Multi-site Case Control Study,” *American Journal of Public Health* 93 (2003): 7.

⁴ Kansas Bureau of Investigation, “Domestic Violence, Stalking, and Rape in Kansas As Reported by Law Enforcement Agencies, 2012.”

⁵ Baum, Stalking Victimization in the United States.