

An Interview with...

The Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence (ICASDV)

- **Jennifer Landhuis**, Program Director

Q: Tell us about the ICASDV and your mission. What types of agencies are members of ICASDV?

A: Our mission is to engage voices to create change in the prevention of, intervention in, and response to domestic violence, dating abuse, stalking, and sexual assault. We have both member programs and member organizations. Our member programs are the 26 community-based advocacy centers, including three tribal programs, throughout the state of Idaho. Our member organizations include local and state-level partners, including: Senator Mike Crapo's office, law enforcement offices, prosecutor offices, Boise State University Women's Center, the Boys & Girls Club, Catholic Charities, Crime Victim Compensation, Family Justice Center, the Girl Scouts, Army National Guard, the Idaho Attorney General Office, the Idaho Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Idaho Council on Domestic Violence and Victim Assistance, the Idaho State Independent Living Council, the Idaho Victim Witness Association, several district health departments, and the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Q: How is the Coalition evolving to meet the emerging issues of stalking?

A: Our efforts really have evolved within the last 5 years. It started with the process of creating our mission statement. We wanted the mission statement to capture the fact that we work on stalking issues in addition to other violence against women issues, then we made a conscious decision to not list it last.

We wanted our mission to reflect our beliefs that inclusiveness and diversity are vital to this work. We believe that no one organization has all the solutions and that by engaging voices of a wide range of partners and forming new collaborations, we can create new approaches to ending stalking. We believe that everyone has the right to live in a thriving, compassionate community without fear. When we have integrated, multidisciplinary approaches to stalking, only then can we build our capacity to prevent and respond to stalking.

Q: Has the Coalition been able to involve any non-traditional partners in its efforts to combat stalking?

A: The Coalition's partnerships and collaborations are one of our biggest assets. We partner with local and statewide organizations in all areas of prevention and response. One of the most exciting things we have at the Coalition is our teen advisory board. This group is led by some fantastic teen leaders, and they spend a good part of the summer developing ideas, presentations, videos, and conferences around issues that they deem to be important to developing healthy teen relationships. One of the areas that they focused on this summer was stalking and the use of technology to stalk. They had discussions

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around what's "normal" in a relationship and when behavior becomes controlling. Many of the behaviors that they identified were stalking behaviors. We worked with them on developing ways to identify and address these behaviors.

Q: What assistance to stalking victims does the coalition provide?

A: We don't provide direct services out of our office. Instead, we are often in the position of providing technical assistance and resources or guidance to individuals working within the criminal justice system on stalking cases. One of the most exciting things that we offer, is stalking documentation sacks developed with a JAG grant we received through the Idaho State Police. These sacks have a stalking booklet, resources for victims as well as a stalking documentation log. There is also a cell phone, a digital voice recorder, a flashlight, and a personal alarm in the kit. We provide these, free of charge, to our law enforcement and our victim advocacy agencies to provide to individuals who are being stalked.

Q: When providing training on stalking, what messages are the most critical to get across to your audiences?

A: The first message would be identifying that stalking is a pattern of behavior to really challenging people to think about the entire course of conduct that a stalker engages in. Because the criminal justice system, is often incident-based, we fail to spend time and resources developing the bigger picture. The second would be understanding the impact the stalking behaviors are having on the victim.

Q: What specific (and different) needs do rural stalking victims have, and do they face any particular challenges? Are there different obstacles for victims in rural areas than urban areas?

A: Victims in rural areas do face additional obstacles. Lack of local resources is a huge barrier. A victim may have to travel several hours to access services or to attend court. In rural communities, everyone knows everyone else, and the lack of privacy is a huge issue. For stalking victims in rural areas,

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You can read more about their organization at <http://idvsa.org>.

they are constantly encountering their stalker, there's only one gas station, one grocery store, etc. A victim may contact law enforcement to respond, and it may be a 45-minute response time. Many of the stalking victims in our frontier areas don't even have access to cell-phone coverage.

Q: Do you have any advice for victim service providers who are working with stalking victims?

A: I've learned that stalking is often overlooked, even by trained professionals. Stalking behavior is usually labeled or identified as jealous or controlling or possessive behavior, but we do a disservice to victims when we minimize it as such. Correctly identifying stalking allows for us to assist stalking victims with safety planning. Stalking victims need to be listened to and taken seriously. And service providers need to take the first step by seeking out education and resources to further their ability to assist stalking victims. ■