Stalking on college campuses is occurring at an alarming rate and it now appears that college students are at greater risk of being stalked than other populations. According to the most recent National Sexual Victimization of College Women Survey, more than one in eight, or 13 percent, of female college students surveyed had been stalked within a six- to nine-month period.¹ This rate compares with the estimated one in twelve women and one in forty-five men who will be stalked in their lifetime.²

Why College Campuses?
Campus Stalking, a report published by the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA), underscores aspects of campus life that increase the risk of stalking.³ For example, college campuses generally offer an open atmosphere that is very appealing for students, many of whom are living—likely for the first time—without direct parental supervision. College buildings and residence halls provide relatively easy access to virtually anyone who wishes to enter the premises. Students tend to follow predictable schedules, attending classes and eating meals at the same time each day, week after week.

These same features, ironically, increase the risk for stalking behavior. Campus stalkers can easily familiarize themselves with a student’s comings and goings—and campus buildings that don’t have 24-hour security provide stalkers with physical proximity to their victims.

The numerous social opportunities college campuses provide—and, in fact, many boast—provide another risk factor that makes students more vulnerable to stalking. Many college students are at a point in their lives where dating and seeking romance become more important to them. Many intimate relationships are newly formed on college campuses. It’s well established that most female victims are stalked by current or former intimate partners such as dating partners, spouses, or cohabiting partners.⁴ What was viewed initially by college students as positive, romantic attention, may turn into the repeated unwanted attention, harassment, and contact that characterizes stalking.

Low Reporting Rates
Compounding the problem of stalking on college campuses is the shockingly low reporting rate among students. The National Sexual Victimization Survey of College Women found that 83 percent of students who were stalked did not notify the campus police or other school authorities.⁵ The two main reasons students gave for not reporting the crime were that students either thought the police would not take the stalking seriously or that they were not aware that the unwanted behavior was a crime.

One College Takes on Stalking
After a review of the victimization of college women study, Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin, conducted their own survey to gauge the prevalence of stalking on their campus. What they found was that their own survey mirrored the national statistics.

In November 2002, Edgewood College, coordinated a comprehensive training and planning program for participants that represented a broad cross section of the college community. Conducted on-site by the Stalking Resource Center over a two-and-a-half-day period, the multifaceted program was designed to raise awareness of stalking on campus and to create a forum for discussion on how Edgewood can effectively respond to victims.

Numerous student peer educators participated in a training session that provided general background on stalking and specific methods for supporting stalking victims. A similar training was provided for first responders including staff and resident assistants. Representatives from student health and campus counseling services
participated in brainstorming sessions to generate ideas on establishing a support group for the survivors of stalking.

The program concluded with a roundtable discussion on the establishment of a multidisciplinary response to stalking at Edgewood College. Participants included the Dean of Students and staff from the offices of Health and Safety, Health Services, Security, and Residence Life. This meeting laid the foundation for Edgewood’s unique response to stalking.

**Colleges Uniquely Positioned to Address Stalking**

Of the estimated 9,653 colleges and universities throughout the United States, relatively few have taken affirmative steps to support stalking victims on their campuses. College campuses, however, are in a unique position to support victims. For example, many universities and colleges have counseling centers already in place. Additional training for campus counselors to support stalking victims can be done easily. Campus security is available and often located on the college grounds. When a report is made, or incident occurs, campus police can easily take the victim to the college health or counseling center. This contrasts with many law enforcement agencies who would have to transport the victim often miles to a completely separate victim agency. On college campuses, the security, the counseling center, the health center as well as other centers, are all parts of the same organization rather than separate entities. When a campus adopts a stalking protocol, all agencies within the college community can respond in unison. Outside the university setting, the different service providers are often separate organizations each with their own different and often conflicting policies and protocol.

Universities can provide the victim with one, unified, multidisciplinary response all coordinated together through one central organizational structure, all located in the same location. When a victim resides on campus, these services are all also located where the victim resides providing unparalleled access. Additionally, many colleges already have policies regarding sexual assault, which can provide a solid foundation from which to build an effective response to stalking. With all these advantages, college campuses can address stalking in many unique and creative ways.

**Stalking Resource Center Here For You**

If you are working in a college or university setting, the Stalking Resource Center can provide direct technical assistance and support to your efforts to help college students who are being victimized by stalking. Please contact Jen McLish at jmclish@ncvc.org if you are interested in assistance from the Stalking Resource Center. Also check for updates on our website www.ncvc.org/src.

(Endnotes)

3 Kirkland, Connie J., (2002). *Campus Stalking*, California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA), Sacramento, CA.
4 Fisher et. al at p. 28.
5 IBID at 28.