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fall 2010
greater harrisburg

stalking and technology

Facebook stalking. Spoofing. Cell phone spyware. Google stalking. Cyberbullying. GPS Systems. Computer spyware.

All of the above are tools in a stalker's arsenal. When most people think of stalking, they think of being followed, watched and attacked from the bushes. Although this still occurs, it is more likely that a stalker can stalk his/her victim without ever leaving the comfort of home. With the amazing advances in technology, there is the danger that the technology is being used to stalk and terrorize.

Perpetrators of stalking have a wide variety of tools at their fingertips most of these tools cost nothing. Many people are taking advantage of the various social networking websites that have cropped up like wildfire in the past several years. The most popular of the social networking sites is Facebook. Facebook is great way to share information, reconnect with old friends and share photos with friends and family. It is also a great way for a stalker to continue to receive information about another person, without that other person knowing that they are being stalked.

On Facebook, there are various privacy settings that the user has to proactively enact to ensure that their profile cannot be viewed by people they do not want to see it. However, many people are not aware that they need to proactively set their privacy settings to their specific needs. If a profile is not private, any of the million members of Facebook are able to view a person's status updates, wall postings and

photographs. This a great tool for a stalker to use to keep tabs on their victim. It is imperative for victims of stalking to check to make sure their profile settings are set to only allow their friends to access their profile and photographs. Victims also need to be aware that a stalker can also find out information by viewing the profiles of the victim's friends and the victim should be conscious of the content of the postings that are being placed on other's profiles as well.

Imagine your surprise if your caller ID shows that your mother is calling you and when you answer it is a person screaming threats at you. This is now possible thanks to spoof cards. Spoofing is the ability to make a phone call, send a text message or email and have whatever phone number or email address you wish to appear as the sender of the phone call, text message or email. This presents numerous problems for victims of stalking. A victim may be

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services

Protection from Abuse

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Unemployment Compensation

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Immigration

Crime Victim Compensation

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who we are

The Legal Center was started in 2000 and was one of the first programs in the state to combine legal services under the umbrella of a victim services program. Since its inception in 2000, the Legal Center has grown to four attorneys and two paralegals.

Our staff have assisted countless victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in civil legal matters, including divorce, child custody, child and spousal support, protection from abuse, and immigration. The Legal Center provides these services, free of charge, to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence, regardless of gender. The Legal Center is currently located in downtown Harrisburg in close proximity to the Dauphin County Courthouse.

The Legal Center also provides training and technical assistance to attorneys, law students, district magistrates, medical students, high-school students, college and law school faculty and staff, police officers, probation officers, and other community groups on issues relating to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence. The Legal Center can provide training on a wide variety of topics and can be specifically tailored to a group's needs.

In Fiscal Year 2009/2010 the Legal Center provided services to 1714 victims of domestic violence, stalking, dating violence, and sexual assault.

If you would like more information regarding the services that the Legal Center provides, or would like to discuss scheduling a training, contact the Legal Center.

- Nichole Walters, Esquire
Director

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specifically avoiding phone calls from their stalker, but if they receive a phone call from their mother, the likelihood of the victim answering the phone call is very high. It also provides a potential issue for law enforcement in providing documentation of the origin of the phone call if there is a criminal proceeding.

Another tool for a stalker to use is GPS systems. GPS systems are readily available at a low cost. There are specific GPS devices that allow a parent to track their teenage driver to see where they are going and their speed. These GPS devices are also being used by stalkers to follow their victims. They can be inconspicuously placed on another person's car and they provide you with a real time account of the location of the car. In addition, most cell phones are equipped with GPS devices, which if activated, can give the stalker the exact location of the cell phone.

Technology is not going away, it is advancing at a rate that is astounding. It is important for members of the law enforcement community and victim's services field to be aware of the advances in technology so that victims of stalking can be provided with this information so they can better protect themselves.

The YWCA Legal Center is available to provide information and training on the advances in technology that are used in stalking as well as providing assistance to victims of stalking.



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trainings we offer

The YWCA Legal Center is available to provide trainings on the following topics, as well as providing custom trainings to fit your needs:

Domestic Violence and the Cycle of Violence
Protection from Abuse Law
Sexual Assault
Stalking

Technology and Stalking
Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault
Intersection Between Stalking & Sexual Assault
Cyberbullying

upcoming agency events

First Responder's Breakfast • October 8

Candlelight Vigil on the Stairs to the Capitol • October 19

Power of Style Fashion Show • October 21

Pursuit of Justice Purse Auction • November 30

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

go to www.ywcahbg.org for more information about upcoming events

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The YWCA of Greater Harrisburg is a 501(c)3 organization, affiliated with the YWCA of the USA and is a United Way Agency. The YWCA is certified under the Pennsylvania Association of Non-Profit Agencies' Standards of Excellence.