

TALKING STALKING: TIPS FOR CAMPUS PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

PLAN A CAMPUS STALKING PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Individuals 18-24 years old experience the highest rates of stalking (among adults)ⁱ and many college stalking victims disclose to their friends before talking to anyone else.ⁱⁱ This provides a unique opportunity for universities to increase awareness around stalking and support victims.

43%

of college stalking victims who meet the legal criteria of stalking do not identify their experience as 'stalking'ⁱⁱⁱ

Stalking is a serious, prevalent, and dangerous issue that impacts every campus in the United States; is a violation of student conduct codes and Title IX; and is a crime under the laws of the 50 states, District of Columbia, U.S. Territories, and Federal government. While campus awareness and discussion of sexual assault and intimate partner violence have increased in recent years, stalking remains frequently misunderstood. It is essential for victims, friends, and campus professionals to be able to identify and name stalking. A public awareness campaign can support these efforts by increasing understanding of stalking on campus, raising awareness about available services, and making it clear that stalking behaviors are unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

MAKING AWARENESS MATTER

Awareness does not necessarily mean action—but it's often the first step towards the changes you may want to see on your campus. Awareness campaign can be powerful for many reasons, including:

- Many victims of stalking don't identify their experience as stalking. Helping individuals identify common stalking tactics by naming them as stalking behaviors can help them make sense of their experience and guide them towards available resources and assistance.
- Friends and family members are usually the first people a stalking victim talks to about what's going on, and their responses heavily influence whether or not a victim seeks further help. When friends, family, classmates, teachers, mentors, and colleagues know how to identify stalking, they are better able to support victims and help keep them safe.
- Stalking is a unique crime that calls for specific safety planning strategies, support, investigation, and discipline/charging, as well as the development and implementation of policies and protocols to ensure an effective response. When relevant staff understand stalking, it can enhance their ability to identify and respond appropriately.
- Social norms that minimize, romanticize, or normalize stalking need to change. Working to change social norms that find stalking acceptable or "not a big deal" is a vital step in our efforts to end stalking.



GETTING STARTED

LEARN ABOUT STALKING

Your campaign should be informed by a working understanding of stalking. While you don't have to be an expert, review relevant resources before planning your campaign to make sure you have a foundational knowledge of stalking.

The Clery Act and Title IX define stalking as a pattern of behavior directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their own safety or the safety of others; or suffer substantial emotional distress. Fear is central to the definition of stalking. Common stalking behaviors include—but are not limited to—repeated unwanted phone calls and messages, surveillance, showing up when not invited, spreading rumors, and threats.

Review SPARC resources as sources of content and delivery at [StalkingAwareness.org](https://www.stalkingawareness.org/):

- [Media normalization of stalking materials](#)
- [National Stalking Awareness Month materials](#)
- [Stalking fact sheets and infographics](#)
- [Stalking Incident and Behavior Log for Students](#)
- [Stalking informational videos](#)
- [Stalking on Campus Public Awareness Workshop materials](#)
- [Understanding Stalking on Campus Brochure](#)
- [Talking Stalking: Tips for Prevention/Awareness Educators](#)
- [Webinar recordings](#)

STUDENT-CENTERED CAMPAIGNS

Every campus public awareness campaign should start and end with students. Students—through focus groups, surveys, discussion sessions, advisory committees, internships, and/or more—should be involved in deciding what the messaging should be and how it should be delivered. Getting student buy-in from the beginning will establish a level of student commitment that will help your campaign succeed.

Ask students:

- **What does stalking look like, feel like, and sound like, to you?**
- **What might be helpful to someone experiencing stalking?**

Conduct focus groups, surveys, and/or discussion sessions—or come up with another way to connect with students—in order to ask for buy-in and ideas, which will help you figure out what you need to focus on as you learn what students do and do not know about stalking.

It's essential to work with students from a variety of backgrounds and groups on campus, because they will help you craft culturally-specific messages, behaviors, and examples that will resonate with different groups of potential victims, friends supporting victims, and stalkers on campus.

BUILD BUY-IN

Students are often most receptive to hearing from other students, which means that student leadership is critical to ensure a relevant campaign in terms of content and a successful campaign in terms of distribution and reach. Identify which student leaders will be most involved and which communities on campus they may reach.

One way to get students involved is to provide detailed plans to student groups and associations, inviting them to hold their own events and/or participate in campus-wide events to raise awareness around stalking. Ongoing required meetings and general campus programming—for dorm floors, Greek social organizations, and orientations—are great to take advantage of.

You could offer prizes or incentives to groups for conducting programming or to students for creating content, highlighting different categories such as general stalking awareness or a culturally-specific targeted campaign. Prizes could be cash, or that a piece of art will hang on the wall in a certain building, or that the PSA will be used by the university next year, etc. Consider asking professors or Greek life leaders to offer “points” or extra credit to their students/communities to encourage attendance.

FINDING YOUR MESSAGE(S)

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Though stalking is a complicated and nuanced topic, awareness campaign materials should be simple—the best awareness campaign materials are generally concise, easy-to-understand, and visually appealing.

For this reason, it can be helpful to see the awareness materials as a means to spread basic information as well as a “hook” to encourage more robust learning and meaningful action. Make sure that your campaign provides clear ways

for interested students to access more nuanced resources, content-rich programs, and take actionable steps; this could be an invitation for an in-person or online workshop, a link to guidance on helping a friend, the contact information for relevant campus services, or anything else you hope that students will access to further their learning and create change.

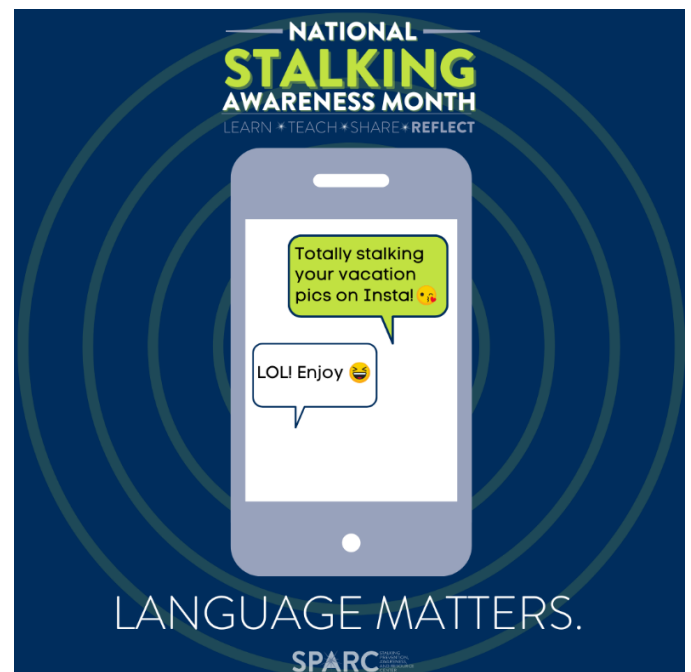
“Every time I go out and speak on stalking, people are like, ‘oh yeah I know what that is.’ But, in reality, they don’t. People have experienced it, but they aren’t making the connection.”

-Debbie Riddle, anti-stalking activist

- Remember that the victim decides when the line has been crossed on the spectrum of “normal” dating and romantic pursuit behavior to stalking and abuse—and that different individuals will draw different lines depending on their experiences, needs, wants, beliefs, identities, and/or cultures.
- Introducing the topic of stalking by discussing how stalking is normalized in the media, socially, and through culture(s) can be a great way to start the conversation. Then you can continue by talking about stalking behaviors and the importance of calling out stalking for the crime and victimization that it is, despite how it is minimized and romanticized in music, in the media, and in regular conversation.

CONSIDER POSITIVE SOCIAL NORM CHANGE, NOT FEAR-BASED CAMPAIGNS

Awareness campaigns that focus on fear are not as impactful, so instead we recommend focusing on informational campaigns and positive social norm messaging. Social norms refer to values, beliefs, attitudes, and/or behaviors shared by a group of people. They are often based on what people believe to be normal, typical, or appropriate. Social norms can function as unspoken rules or guidelines for how people behave, and for how people are expected to behave. People generally follow social norms because they want to fit in with the people around them.^{iv} You can survey your campus to learn what your social norms are and then campaign to change negative or reinforce positive campus social norms to guide people to realize that others believe victims, take stalking seriously, and disapprove of stalking behaviors. Encouraging students to “see through” the normalization and misinformation about stalking they’ve been exposed to can also be a powerful (and empowering) engagement strategy.



CHOOSE A MAIN GOAL/MESSAGE

At SPARC, our consistent public awareness message is “stalking: know it, name it, stop it.” We want people to understand what stalking is, identify it, and take steps to stop it. You are welcome to use this same message and/or tailor your own for your campus or community. Having an overall theme can help unify materials, reinforce messages, and focus your approach.

- Remember that 18-24-year-olds often do not know what stalking is, so it’s vital to describe and target the behaviors instead of just using the word “stalking.” Providing examples is helpful.
- Make sure your main goal and message are relevant to your campus community. Most stalkers and victims know each other—on campuses, stalkers are often current or former intimate partners, acquaintances, friends, or classmates.”

It can be difficult to narrow down the main point of the campaign. Some questions to consider in your planning include:

- »What do you *most* want students to understand about stalking?
- » If students walked away with *one* main point about stalking after this campaign, what do you want it to be?
- »What problem(s) do you think exist around understanding stalking on campus? Are there misunderstandings you specifically want to correct?
- »What do you want students to *do* about stalking on campus? What *don’t* you want them to do?



Consider the following statements as you narrow down the main point of your campaign. Which resonates most with your goals? Does everyone involved in the campaign agree?

- Most of all, I want to ensure that students:
 - ☐ ...know where to go on campus for resources, help, etc.
 - ☐ ...are better able to identify stalking behavior(s)
 - ☐ ...know some basic facts about stalking
 - ☐ ...voice what changes they want in campus policies and practices
 - ☐ ...recognize that stalking should be taken seriously/see that stalking is dangerous and traumatic, not “annoying”
 - ☐ ...understand how stalking intersects with dating violence and/or sexual violence
 - ☐ ...respond to friends experiencing stalking with empathy and support, i.e. “say the right things”
 - ☐ ...reflect on how stalking may be minimized or normalized on campus and in pop culture
 - ☐ ...feel that stalking offenders will face consequences
 - ☐ ...report stalking to appropriate authorities
 - ☐ ...intervene if they see or hear about stalking behaviors
 - ☐ ...reflect on their own behavior(s)
 - ☐ ...something else entirely!

Next, consider using the following messages with local and campus-specific information, to align with your goals:

Potential messages to use in alignment with your goals:

- [insert]% of students...
 - believe stalking is serious
 - disapprove of stalking
 - would encourage a friend being stalked to get help
 - think stalking is the stalker's fault (not the victim's)
 - would tell a friend to stop if they found out they were stalking someone
 - believe stalkers can be current/former intimate partners, acquaintances, friends, classmates, strangers, family members, or people of authority
- Common stalking behaviors and tactics
- Student conduct expectations
- Student investigation and discipline process
- Available campus assistance
 - No contact / trespass orders
 - Counseling
 - Safety planning
 - Accommodations in academics, housing, extracurriculars, and more
- Campus programs that can help stalking victims and their reporting obligations (confidential or not)
 - Title IX office
 - Crisis center
 - Gender resource center
 - Residential life
 - Campus security/police
 - Sexual assault program
 - Intimate partner violence program
- Campus policies and services address stalkers and victims who are students, faculty, volunteers, alumni, and/or staff
- Off-campus options
 - Support services
 - Reporting to police and the criminal legal system
 - Applying for a protection order and/or accessing the civil legal system

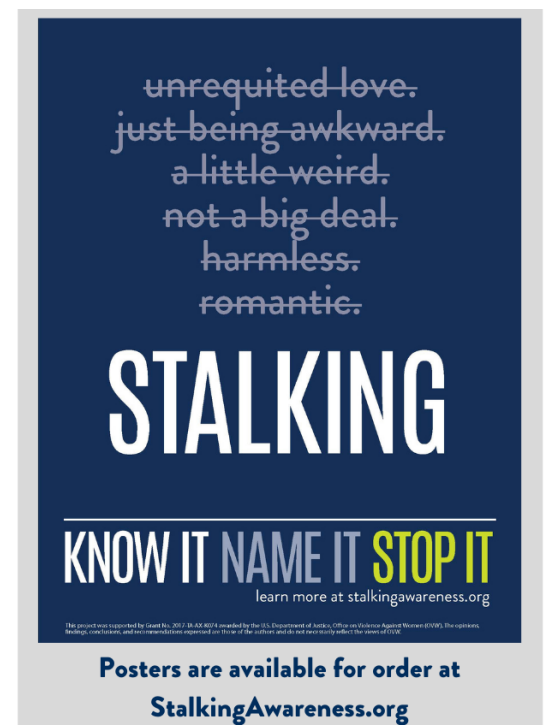
DESIGNING DELIVERY

After you finalize your messaging, then you can figure out how and when to deliver it. Leverage regularly scheduled meetings and general campus programming, like dorm floor meetings, Greek life programming, and orientations.

Is there a certain day, week, or month during which you'll be distributing materials? Consider national awareness months for [stalking](#) (January), teen dating violence (February), sexual assault (April), and domestic violence (October). Will your campaign culminate in a certain event or call-to-action?

Get advice from students about the best format for your messaging, which will probably include different formats for different messages and for different student populations.

- What social media platforms and messaging applications do various groups of students use?
- What types of content do students pay attention to? Posters, videos, podcasts, websites, in-person workshops, virtual workshops, in-person events, virtual events?
- How do students like to engage with content? Passively listening, watching, or reading? Creating and sharing?
- Are students more likely to scan a QR code, type in a URL, click on a link, or engage with a person?





CONTENT FORMATS

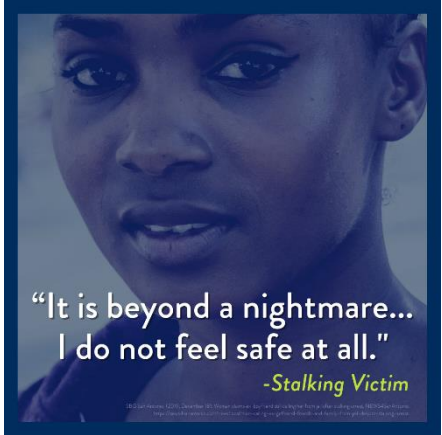


Consider distributing materials both in-person and online to best reinforce the message(s) of your campaign.

- Social media platforms are an easy and effective way to distribute public awareness messaging. Talk to students about what successful campaigns they've seen in the past and which platforms are most popular. Make sure to create posts that are easy to share on multiple platforms (i.e., images sized for Instagram, videos short enough for TikTok, etc.).
- Seeing actual posters around campus can also be an effective way to reinforce the message(s) students may be seeing online. You may design and distribute your own and encourage students to put them up on their dorm room doors and around campus. You can also order [free brochures and posters from SPARC](#).

TYPES OF CONTENT MESSAGES

Different people have different responses to campaign approaches. What resonates for one student may not be effective for another; for example, some students are very responsive to statistics showing prevalence, while others will simply skim over numbers. Some viewers may be deeply affected by personal stories and quotations, while others might find them overly subjective and trite. For this reason, it's often best to vary your approach throughout the campaign.

Message Type	Why use it?	Example	Get Ideas From
Statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes stalking “real” • Shows there is research/academic rigor behind this campaign and topic • Provides concrete information 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalking fact sheet • Stalking on campus fact sheet • Campus-specific surveys, Clery reports, etc. • Past @FollowUsLegally posts
Explainer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds foundational knowledge quickly • Introduces or reinforces information from events or more content-rich resources 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context is Key webinar recording • Stalking Definition/FAQs • Student conduct codes • Language from the counseling center, Title IX Office, etc. • Past @FollowUsLegally posts

Quote or Story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes a more emotional and human appeal Concrete examples make stalking “real,” not theoretical 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> News stories on stalking that quote victims Stalking survivors on your campus (with consent and anonymity) Past @FollowUsLegally posts Strictly Stalking Podcast
Questions Encouraging Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks students to reflect on their role in the broader issue Encourages action and further learning 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The event or resource that you want to drive students to (for example, one could link to a resource on helping friends) Past @FollowUsLegally posts
Explicit Call to Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directive and constructive, provides something to actually do Next steps are clear, takes campaign from knowledge to action 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The event or resource that you want to drive students to Your main campaign goals, what you want students to do

CONSIDERING VISUALS

Public awareness campaigns should have strong visuals that draw students in. Be mindful that the visuals may speak just as loudly as the written content and be careful not to reinforce incorrect information. For example, most stalkers are known to the victim, not shadowy strangers, and so a campaign with shadowy stranger imagery can be counterproductive even if the written content is accurate. Consider the following:

- Do you want to use photos, graphics, or both? What permission(s) will you need?
- How will you ensure that the diversity of students is accurately represented? Consider diversity in terms of race, gender, ability, age, size, and more.
- Who will design the campaign materials? Consider involving graphic design students.
- What reaction(s) are you hoping for? What image(s) can best elicit these reactions?
- Are there certain colors, logos, images, or slogans that should be included or excluded?
- If you took the text off, what message would each image send? Is this the right look and feel for your campaign?

GOING BEYOND THE CAMPAIGN

HOLD AN EVENT – OR MULTIPLE EVENTS!

A standalone public awareness campaign on stalking is a good start, but will only go so far. Consistent education and awareness efforts around stalking that take place throughout the academic year can better reinforce the messages of the campaign, provide different entry points for students to engage with the content, and demonstrate that addressing stalking is a true campus priority.

Events could include:

- Inviting speakers to campus, including stalking survivors and/or local victim service providers.
- Holding an in-person or online *Know It, Name It, Stop It* [campus workshop](#) for students.
- Using the [You discussion guides](#) and other activities for campus programming.
- Challenging students to create content that can be shared on social media (for example, Tik Tok challenges) or around campus (for example, artwork that can be displayed on campus or used on a brochure, website, or in next year's public awareness campaign).
- Having a chalk art contest where the campus provides chalk and drywall as well as music, pizza, and prizes. Students can either bring art they created ahead of time or have a set amount of time to create something. Then each piece of art is displayed around campus along with information.
- Inviting students to create PSAs for social media, short videos, and/or podcasts around stalking.
- Engaging American Studies, Women's/Gender/Feminist Studies, and/or other departments to conduct scholarly events around stalking, such as the media normalization of stalking.

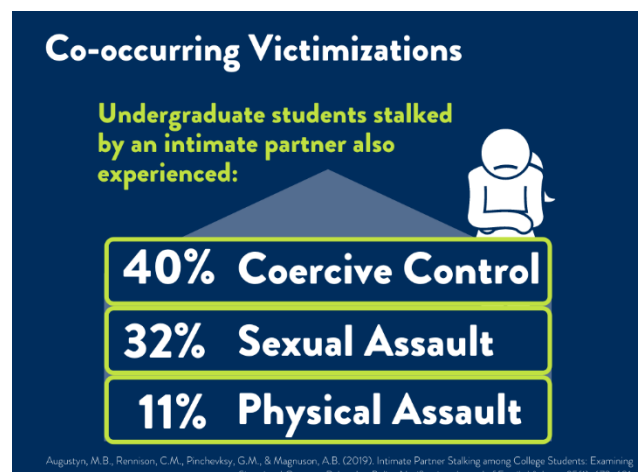
By conducting a variety of events and including a variety of delivery formats, you can draw in different groups of people.

In addition to asking students to create content, other formats could include:

- Creating video interviews with staff from different offices about the stalking-specific services they provide (what they do, who the office is), and posting them on campus websites and social media.
- Conducting standalone presentations for first year orientation, transfer students, graduate students, faculty, and staff.
- Including [brochures](#) or other stalking resources in registration packets, orientation packets, at the campus crisis center, gender center, public safety office, and more.

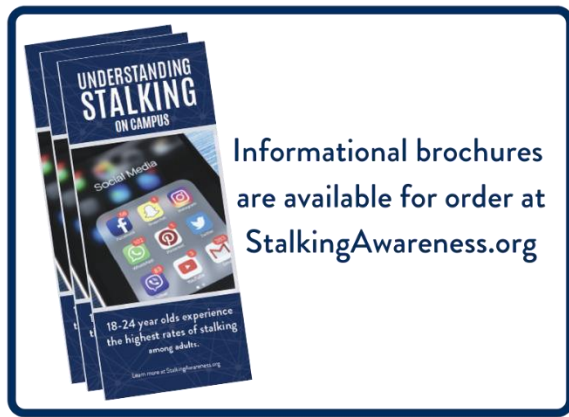
INCORPORATE STALKING INTO DATING ABUSE/RELATIONSHIP/SEXUAL ASSAULT EDUCATION

It's strategic to reinforce your stalking public awareness campaign with messages about stalking year-round, and stalking often co-occurs with the issues you're already educating on. If your campus typically leads campaigns for months such as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (February), Sexual Assault Awareness Month (April), and/or Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October)—and don't forget about [National Stalking Awareness Month](#) in January!—consider incorporating stalking education into these existing educational and awareness efforts. Campus-specific campaigns promoting responsibility, bystander intervention, or safety can also be adapted to include stalking examples and messages.



Consider the behaviors and examples that you already use in campaigns and workshops to illustrate interpersonal violence—it's very likely that you're already talking about stalking! Simply explaining that "X behavior is also an example of stalking, a prevalent crime that may co-occur with dating violence/sexual assault" can be a major step in helping victims identify their experiences and seek more information.

Adding information and examples about the intersection of stalking with your other topics can be an easy and time-efficient way to incorporate stalking into your efforts.



- What existing campus resources can you add stalking information to? How you can leverage existing SPARC materials? Check out [StalkingAwareness.org](https://stalkingawareness.org) for ready-to-use programming, recorded webinars, activity ideas, and more.
- For examples and information about incorporating stalking into educational and awareness efforts, review [Talking Stalking: Tips for Prevention/Awareness Educators](https://stalkingawareness.org/talking-stalking-tips-for-prevention-awareness-educators).
- To analyze your campus response to stalking, use [Addressing Stalking: A Checklist for Campus Professionals](https://stalkingawareness.org/addressing-stalking-a-checklist-for-campus-professionals).

ENSURE EVALUATION

How will you measure campaign success? Please share with us (info@stalkingawareness.org) so that we can share your ideas with other campuses.

Consider collecting metrics on campaign distribution, event attendance, and other concrete measures. Concrete actions and items are relatively easy to measure, such as how many times a video has been viewed or a website has been accessed, how many stalking reports have been made, or how many stalking victims have accessed support services.

Social norms, understanding stalking, and victims feeling supported are harder to measure and may take years to change. Consider interviewing students before and after the campaign, conducting pre-and-post attitudinal surveys, and/or seeing if campaign participation grows each year.

Campus communities that understand the nature and dynamics of stalking—and the impacts on victims—can better support victims and hold stalkers accountable. Please contact the Stalking Prevention, Awareness, & Resource Center (info@stalkingawareness.org) with any questions or for additional assistance.

ⁱ Smith, S.G., Zhang, X., Basile, K.C., Merrick, M.T., Wang, J., Kresnow, M., & Chen, J. (2018). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2015 Data Brief*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

ⁱⁱ Cantor, D., Fisher, B., Chibnall, S., Madden, K. (2020). *Report on the AAU campus climate survey on sexual assault and misconduct*. Westat.

ⁱⁱⁱ Brady, P. Q. & Woodward Griffin, V. (2019). *The Intersection of Stalking and Sexual Assault Among Emerging Adults: Unpublished Preliminary Results, mTurk Findings*, 2018.

^{iv} CDC Injury Prevention & Control: Division of Violence Prevention. (2019, July 22). *Veto Violence: Social Norms*. <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/main/prevention-information/35>