



# Academy Forum

*Continuing the Message of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy*

The Association Newsletter

Issue #51- January 2020

**Just a Thought**

*Stalking is one of the most common types of victimization, yet there is still a lack of understanding about its prevalence and its impact on victims. This essay presents some practical tips to assist victims of stalking .*  
**Page 1**

**Web Links**

*You never know what resources await you on the world-wide web ...come see what our latest surfing expedition uncovered.*  
**Page 2**

**Save the Date!**

*Find out what trainings and events are just around the corner. It looks like there are lots of ways to keep you busy during the next few months!*  
**Page 3**

**Certification News**

*Want to learn how to become a certified victim service professional in the state of Maryland? This section explains each level of certification, and what are the specific requirements for each.*  
**Page 4**

**News From the Field**

*It's important to stay abreast of what legislation is working its way through Annapolis. This section highlights what recently passed, or is currently under consideration.*  
**Page 6**

**Best Practices**

*Establishing and maintaining one's personal safety is paramount for victims of stalking. Bella Grace shares her experience of being stalked by her ex-boyfriend, and the advice she now shares with others.*  
**Page 8**

## Just a thought...

### Stalking - A Misunderstood Crime

January is National Stalking Awareness Month. Sadly, millions of men and women are stalked every year in the United States. According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (2011), 1 in 6 women (16%) and 1 in 19 men (5%) have experienced stalking victimization at some point during their lifetime. Two-thirds (66%) of female victims reported being stalked by a current or former intimate partner; while male victims were equally as likely to have reported to have been stalked by an intimate partner (41%) or an acquaintance (40%). Given the prevalence of this crime, why is it so often misunderstood, minimized or ignored? Unfortunately, a lot can be contributed to a general lack of understanding about what stalking is (sometimes even by the victim themselves), the reluctance of

victims to report the crime, and a lack of information about what resources there are to assist victims when they do come forward.



According to the Office on Violence Against Women, the term "stalking" means engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for his or her safety or the safety of others or suffer substantial emotional distress. Unlike other crimes that are defined as an incident, stalking is a pattern of behavior, often comprised of a series of individual acts that could - in isolation - seem benign or be noncriminal. The most commonly reported stalking tactic for both female and male victims are being repeatedly subjected to unwanted telephone calls, voice, or text messages. Some other tactics

stalkers use include using social media networking websites to track or harass their victims; installing spyware or GPS tracking software on the victim's computer or phone; contacting friends or family to gather information about their victim; watching or following a victim as s(he) goes about their daily lives; breaking into or vandalizing the victim's property; or posting personal information or spreading harmful rumors about the victim.

Unfortunately, stalking often precedes other forms of violence, particularly when the two parties are intimately acquainted. Eighty-one percent of women who reported being stalked by their intimate partner, also reported being physically assaulted, and 31% reported being sexually assaulted (Tjaden, 1998). Sadly, 76% of women who were murdered by their intimate partner had been stalked by that partner.

**(Continued on page 4)**

**EDITOR'S CORNER**

Happy New Year Alum!

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and enjoyed some downtime with family and friends and have returned to your jobs refreshed and ready to take on the New Year! Not surprisingly, at the start of the new year many of us make resolutions on how we can become healthier, happier, or more successful. While your list of resolutions may contain one goal or many, I would like to challenge each of you to add one more to your list. I would love for each of you to become more active in the Victim Services Professional Network (VSPN). There are so many exciting things we have planned in 2020 (including free trainings!), that I know you won't want to miss. To see what we have in store, just check out the RVAAM website at [www.rvaam.us](http://www.rvaam.us)

I would also love to see more of you at one of the upcoming RVAAM Academies - whether it's attending the FREE advanced training, or welcoming the newest class at the Sunday night dessert social or congratulating them at the end of the week at graduation. The winter academy is right around the corner (February 17-21) and the summer academy is at the beginning of June (June 1-5). Both will be held at the beautiful Bon Secours Spiritual Center in Marriottsville. You remember how peaceful this place is - so why not take a little time out of your busy life to spend a few hours with friends, and recharge a bit.

Applications are still being accepted for both academies, so be sure to encourage your colleagues to apply. The application is available on the RVAAM website. And make sure to let them know that scholarships are available through RVAAM (or OVC

TTAC funds) if their agency won't pay for the training. Spots are filling up quickly for the winter academy, so make sure they get their application in soon.

I hope to see many of you in 2020, and I wish each of you a happy and healthy new year!

**Debbie Bradley, C.A., VASIII**

[bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org)

*The best way to predict the future is to create it. ~ Peter Ducker*

**WEB LINKS**

Although we have a virtual library at our fingertips every time we turn on the computer, we often lose sight of the forest through the trees just trying to navigate the world-wide web. Here are a few sites that relate to this issue's "Just a Thought" ... happy surfing!



**Stalking Resource Center (The National Center for Victims of Crime)**

Launched in 2000, the National Center for Victims of Crime partnered with the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women to create the Stalking Resource Center (SRC) to provide training and technical assistance to hundreds of communities seeking to enhance their response to stalking. The SRC is committed to continuing its national effort to promote awareness, action, and advocacy to enhance victim safety and hold stalking offenders accountable. To learn more about the SRC, or review resources the SRC has made available, go to: [https://victimsofcrime.org/our-pro-](https://victimsofcrime.org/our-pro-grams/past-programs/stalking-resource-center/about-us)

[grams/past-programs/stalking-resource-center/about-us](https://victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/past-programs/stalking-resource-center/about-us)

**Stalking Resource of Maryland**

The Stalking Resource Center strives to enhance the ability of professionals, organizations, and systems to effectively respond to stalking. This website provides comprehensive information about stalking and what constitutes stalking crimes within the state of Maryland. For more information about the SRCM, go to: <https://victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/past-programs/stalking-resource-center/stalking-laws/criminal-stalking-laws-by-state/maryland>

**Victim Connect Resource Center**

VictimConnect Resource Center is a referral helpline available 24/7 to assist crime victims confidentially and compassionately. A program of the National Center for Victims of Crime, it combines:

A traditional telephone-based helpline: **855-4-VICTIM (855-484-2846)**

An innovative online chat: [chat.VictimConnect.org](http://chat.VictimConnect.org)

Web-based information and service referrals: [VictimConnect.org](http://VictimConnect.org)

Victim Assistance Specialists inform victims of their rights and refer them to the most appropriate local and national resources.

**Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence**

The MNADV provides support and resources for professionals and individuals to help understand stalking, as well links to programs and hotlines where victims can go for help in Maryland. For more information, go to: <https://mnadv.org/?s=stalking>

## Responding to Stalking: A Guide for Advocates

Published by the Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center, this guide provides a comprehensive overview of the crime of stalking, its intersection with other crimes, its impact of victims, and an advocate's role in assisting stalking victims. To download a copy, go to: <https://www.stalkingawareness.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Advocate-Guide.pdf>

## SAVE THE DATE!

### 2020 RVAAM Academies

Once again, RVAAM will be offering **TWO Academies this year - a winter session and a summer session! Space is limited, so apply soon!**

February 17th - 21st, 2020

AND

June 1st - 5th, 2020

Both Academies will be hosted at the beautiful and peaceful Bon Secours Retreat Center in Marriottsville, MD. To register, go to [www.rvaam.us](http://www.rvaam.us) and download an application.



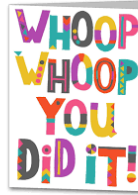
### VSTEP TRAININGS

The agenda for the next round of VSTEP Trainings is being finalized, so keep watch on your email and on the RVAAM website for the topics, dates, and locations!

## ALUMNI UPDATES

*It seems like only yesterday when we were all together at the Academy. But in a blink of an eye another year has passed us by. Here's just a snapshot of*

*some of the special events and milestones our alums have experienced since we last met...*



- **Ashley Fundack (Class of 2012)** - This past August, Ashley earned her PhD in Criminal Justice from Capella University, and is now an Assistant Professor at Cecil College.

## ALUMNI SHOWCASE

Several years ago, my coworker, Kim Vascoe shared her experience with me while attending the Roper Academy. She was extremely impressed with the Academy and encouraged me to apply for admission to the next Academy class.

As I continued to hear about all of the fantastic experiences from other graduates of the Academy, I decided to submit my application. I felt that attending the Roper Academy, I would grow personally and professionally, which would enable me to better serve my community. So, I submitted my application, and I completed the Academy in 2018.

If I had to identify the “best part” of the Academy, I would say for me, it was listening to the feedback from my peers, each of whom worked in similar fields of service. Hearing how different agencies and individuals handle specific situations was invaluable, and I left the Academy with more ideas and skills to help me better serve the victims in my community.

Another session I found really helpful was hearing from a panel of survivors. Each was so courageous in sharing their story, and they offered valuable insight into what did and did not work for them when engaging with victim services. I also really appreciated the suggestions they offered on

how we could better serve someone who experienced a similar situation. Having the opportunity to engage in such a candid discussion with victims about their experiences with the different systems they come into contact with was invaluable. It reminded me that although our intentions are good when we work with victims, sometimes we miss the mark. It reminded me that we always need to focus on what the survivor identifies s(he) needs, and then meet the individual where s(he) is - even if we don't agree. This is their journey, and we are only a part of it.

The other thing I really appreciated about my time at the Academy was the focus it placed on self-care. Dr. Jedidah Smith's presentation on how to monitor the mind and body's reaction to work-related stress was so interesting, and the tools he provided us to help minimize our own individual risk of burnout was really valuable.

After completing the week at the Academy, I returned to work energized with new ideas on how I could better help my coworkers, as well as the victims we serve. Although the week pushed me physically, emotionally, and mentally - it was undoubtedly one of the best decisions I've made. So, the advice I would give to anyone contemplating attending the Roper Academy is APPLY, and then COMMIT yourself to being there - to be fully present, so you can listen and learn from all of the experiences it will provide you. If you do that, you will leave empowered and be in a better position to help others become their best selves.

*Essay contributed by Dina Ward, Victim Advocate, Howard County Sheriff's Office (Class of 2018)*



## CERTIFICATION NEWS

*Why aren't you certified in victim services yet? When you pick a doctor or a lawyer to work with you, you almost always certainly base your decision on their credentials, such as the school they've attended and the cases they have worked on. After all, you want to make sure that you choose someone who knows what they are talking about and who has the most experience in the appropriate domain. The same applies to victim services - the right certification not only helps you to bolster your knowledge and skills that you can use when working with victims, but also provides quantifiable evidence of your competence in this challenging and competitive field. So, what are you waiting for? Go to [www.rvaam.us](http://www.rvaam.us) to learn more about the certification process and download a copy of the application today!*

*There are three levels of certification in Maryland, each require a specific set of qualifications and are described in detail below:*

- \* **Level I (VAS-I)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum of two years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 40 hours of training (RVAAM, NVAA, or other SVAA); d) interview; e) \$50 application processing fee
- \* **Level II (VAS-II)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum of five years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 80 hours of training (40 hours RVAAM, NVAA, SVAA and 40 hours advanced training and/or University level coursework in victim services, including 3 hours of Victims Rights training and 3 hours of Ethics in Victim Services training); d) written essay on what changes are needed in victim services; e) \$75 application processing fee.

- \* **Level III (VAS-III)** - a) complete application packet; b) minimum eleven years experience (paid or unpaid); c) 120 hours of training (40 hours RVAAM, NVAA, SVAA and 80 hours advanced training and/or University level coursework in victim services, including 3 hours of Victims Rights training and 3 hours of Ethics in Victim Services training); d) oral presentation on approved topic in Victim Assistance; e) \$100 application processing fee.

*There is also a similarly tiered renewal process in place for those advocates who want to remain current with their certification:*

- \* **Level I** - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within the past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; and b) complete renewal application packet and pay the \$25 renewal fee.
- \* **Level II** - Without an upgrade - same as Level I. To upgrade from Level I to Level II - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; b) written essay on what changes are needed in victim services; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$50 fee.
- \* **Level III** - Without an upgrade - same as Level I. To upgrade from Level II to Level III - a) complete 40 hours of continuing education (completed within past 3 years) which must include 3 hours of Victim Services Ethics training; b) oral presentation on approved topic in victim assistance; and c) submit renewal application packet and pay \$75 fee.

All application materials are available online at [www.rvaam.us](http://www.rvaam.us) (click on the Certification tab at the top of the page). Keep an eye out for upcoming classes on ethics. For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact Debbie Bradley at

[bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harfordsheriff.org) or by phone at (410) 638-4905.

**Check out ALL of the new certified Victim Assistance Specialists for the State of Maryland ... isn't it time you joined this group?**

### Level I Victim Assistance Specialist

Lauren Benjamin	Maura Burton
Brittany Butler	Razibul Hasan
Barbara Korenblit	Ana Rivera-Ortiz
Tamnika Taylor	Patricia Thomas
Jessica Watson	Deborah Wendland

### Level II Victim Assistance Specialist

Navarra Archie	Tiffanie Cannon
Angelica Cook	Falema Graham
Shirley Jensen	Robin Washington

### Level III Victim Assistance Specialist

Audra Johnson	Teresa Peek
Gregory Riddick, Sr.	
Melissa Ward-Quinn	



## Just a Thought (Cont.)

Not surprisingly, many victims of stalking often feel like they are trapped in a living hell. Being stalked may cause extreme and varied emotional and physical stress reactions, including intense feelings of fear or anger, increased irritability, decreased energy or exhaustion, difficulties in concentrating, withdrawal from family, friends or activities, major disruptions to sleep or eating patterns, or



- **Send a clear message.** While it may be tempting to confront your stalker, it's not always a good idea to do so. A stalker may be *trying* to get your attention, so you're acknowledging him or her may only embolden them. However, if you do know your stalker and feel safe approaching them (ideally only when there is a witness present), tell them in clear and concise terms to leave you alone, now. Don't raise your voice, but use a firm and controlled tone to convey this *not* a request, but an expectation. Be brief in your interaction, do not engage in a drawn-out conversation. Afterwards, be sure to document the exchange (when, where, what was said), and then never engage with the stalker again.

The most important thing to remember is that you do not have to try to deal with this situation by yourself. Help is available. If you do not feel comfortable reaching to law enforcement, contact one of the local rape crisis or domestic violence programs in your community - they will provide you with more information and resources, and will be there to listen and to support you. If you don't feel comfortable reaching out to one of those programs, then tell a close family member or a friend, so you don't have to continue to suffer in silence. The bottom line is don't stay quiet. And always remember, being stalked is *not* your fault - no one has the right to invade your privacy, or to make you feel uncomfortable or scared. No one.

*Essay contributed by Dr. Heather Pfeifer, Associate Director of the Roper Victim Assistance Academy.*

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

*It's important we all keep abreast of changes to laws and/or policies that have a direct affect on victims of crime. If you hear of new law or policy being proposed at the local, state, or federal level, be sure to share it with us!*

### **SB268 - Department of Legislative Services - Criminal Procedure - Violation of Conditions of Release** - This bill

amends Section 4-101(c) of the Criminal Procedures Article to reflect the changes to statute by designating a violation of a condition of pretrial or post trial release under Section 5-213.1 of the Criminal Procedure Article as a crime for which a police officer may not charge by citation. The bill also adds the crime of stalking under Section 3-802 of the Criminal Law Article to the list of charges for which a person is statutorily prohibited from violating a condition of pretrial or post trial release that prohibits contact, harassment, or abuse of the alleged victim or going in or near the alleged victim's residence or place of employment.

**Summary** - The purpose of this bill is to allow a citation, issued by a police officer, to place an individual even with a stalking charge in a position to have their pretrial and post trial release violated. This is even if the citation is for a misdemeanor, or local ordinance violation, which may only have a maximum penalty of 90 days or less. If an individual is convicted of violating their pretrial or post trial conditions of release, they will face a possible sentence of up to 90 days of incarceration. The bill was first introduced to, and read by, members of the

Maryland Legislature in January 2019. The bill took effect October 1, 2019. censing, and Regulation; providing that certain maximum penalty amounts do not apply if a certain discriminatory act is determined to be malicious; requiring any civil penalties collected under the Act to be paid to the complainant, not the general fund; etc. The bill went into effect October 2019.



## Best Practices

### *Protecting Oneself From Stalking*

As a survivor of intimate partner violence, I vowed to help lead others out of abusive relationships that cause many victims to live their lives in a constant state of fear. Prior to June 2002, I never considered the words my ex-boyfriend used to say to me as a form of stalking or terroristic threats. It wasn't until I had enough of him abusing me and following my every move, that I stood up for myself and took my first step to extricate myself from that toxic relationship. It wasn't until I stepped out of the relationship that I finally realized that I wasn't crazy for feeling the way I did, and that what I had been experiencing was not normal. Most importantly, I learned that there were ways to help prevent and/or stop this abusive behavior from continuing, and I was so grateful that I could finally see a way out.

Since then, I have devoted much of my life to assisting others who find themselves in a similar situation that I once was. And I share with them the tools, resources, and best practices that can help them reduce their risk of being stalked and/or to help them to get such behavior to stop. Here are the tips I share with them:

**Choose to not invest your whole self in other person.** You were put on this earth to be used by God, not by other



people. While you may believe your purpose is to help other people, your purpose is *not* to become what other people want you to be. Your purpose is to be who God created you to be. Stalkers become stalkers because the person they are stalking has become who or what they need or is missing in their life. Most stalkers are loners or who may have been rejected by others; so, when they meet someone else who shares similar feelings and also craves company, they look to that person to fill in all of the missing pieces of their life. Thus, they want the other person to be with them at all times, and will go to extremes to make that happen. So, we need to be careful not to invest our whole selves in another person, and end up giving up our own identity and sense of autonomy to meet the needs of another. But remember, stalkers not always the stereotypical jilted lover or jealous spouse. Stalkers might not have any romantic interest in the objects of their scrutiny. Rather, they see the other person as possessions to own or control.

**Choose to not tell the person you are interested in everything about you.**

When we embark on a new relationship, it is not uncommon or wrong to want to share things with the other person. That's how we get to know one another. However, we need to exercise caution in how much of ourselves we reveal. Information is power, and giving the other person too much personal information provides them with a way to control you - not just by monitoring your physical movements, but also how to manipulate your emotions.

**Choose your "gut feeling."** I remember when I first met my stalker, everything within me told me not to talk to him. But everyone around me told me I should. Why did I choose to ignore my inner-voice? Because I was so used to allowing everyone else to make decisions for me, and every time I chose what I believed was best for me, I had to deal with all of the back-

lash from people I thought were important to me. I used to put everyone else's happiness ahead of mine. That is not acceptable! Choose what works best for you, and choose it with confidence and commitment. It will save you a lot of heartache and pain, and may even save your life.

**Choose to out your stalker.** Stalkers want you to feel isolated, in their mind that increases your chances of accepting them. However, you can take back control by outing them. Don't be embarrassed to tell on your stalker! The more people who know, the more people you'll have looking out for you. Tell family, friends, and neighbors - provide them with photos and vehicle descriptions so they know who/what to watch for; tell your employer and request for extra security measures to help you stay safe (e.g., provide an escort to walk you to your car); tell the police and file a report. Don't be discouraged if the department can't do anything at first, start and maintain a paper trail, and document EVERY action your stalker takes, and contact the police every time you have something to report. In my case, it was a series of texts and voicemails that allowed me to file a police report. Do not be ashamed or worry about how you will look to people, or what others will think. This is YOUR life, YOUR security and well-being at stake - so you take every necessary preventive measure to eliminate the threat.

I hope these tips will help and encourage you (or someone you know) to separate from a toxic situation, and get the help you need and deserve.

Be encouraged. Be inspired. Be who God created you to be.

*Essay contributed by Bella Grace, Founding Pastor of Walking on Water Ministries International and My Sister's Keeper .*

## Editorial Board

**Debbie Bradley — Editor**  
**Hidaya Hamilton - Contributor**  
**Deborah Howard - Contributor**  
**Keith Gethers— Contributor**  
**Ashley Fundack — Contributor**  
**Kenya Pope — Contributor**  
**Heather Pfeifer — Managing Editor**

## Thoughts, Ideas, Suggestions?

Are you looking for more information about a particular issue in the field of victim services? The Editorial Board is always looking for new topics to profile in the newsletter that can assist our Alums both personally and professionally. Please send any suggestions you might have for a future topic to Debbie Bradley at [bradleyd@harford-sheriff.org](mailto:bradleyd@harford-sheriff.org). And remember, we are also happy to share any information you have about job openings and professional trainings you might think your fellow Alums would benefit from!

**Watch for the next edition of the Academy Forum in April 2020**

