**Stalking News Release/Letter to the Editor in Response to Media Representation**

For Immediate Release Contact: [Name/Title/Agency]
[Date] [Phone Number] [E-mail Address]

Taking Stalking Seriously in [name of program/media]

CITY/STATE— I am writing in response to the representation of stalking behavior in [name of program]. Too often, stalking is presented as romantic, funny, and/or harmless. [Share specific example from programming here].

Stalking is not something to be taken lightly. Stalking is criminal, traumatic, and dangerous. It is critical to raise the issue of stalking as its own form of violence as well as a crime that frequently predicts and co-occurs with physical and sexual assault. Stalking impacts over 1 in 6 women and 1 in 17 men in the United States1 -- yet, despite the prevalence and impacts, many victims, service providers, criminal justice professionals, and members of the general public underestimate its danger and urgency.

Stalking is defined as a pattern of behavior directed at a specific person that causes fear. Many stalking victims are followed, approached, monitored, and/or threatened, including through various forms of technology2,3. Victims and survivors often suffer anxiety, social dysfunction, and severe depression as a result of their victimization, and many lose time from work and/or relocate4,5. Stalking is a terrifying and psychologically harmful crime in its own right as well as a predictor of potentially lethal violence: 1 in 5 stalkers use weapons to threaten or harm victims6, and stalking increased the risk of intimate partner homicide by three times.7

Stalking is a crime in all 50 states, the U.S. Territories, the District of Columbia, tribal lands and in the military justice system -- but can be difficult to recognize and prosecute in a system designed to respond to singular incidents rather than the series of acts that constitute stalking.

While police and victim-serving professionals are critical, the reality is that the vast majority of victims tell friends or family about the stalking first. Responding with empathy and connecting victims to resources is key. The normalization of stalking in the media can negatively impact a victim’s ability to accurately identify stalking and seek help.

“We all have a role to play in identifying stalking, intervening when necessary, and supporting victims and survivors,” said [name and title of local spokesperson (with permission)]. [Your organization’s name] will offer [describe outreach activity] to promote awareness and public education about stalking during the annual observance. For more information, please contact [your name and contact information].

For additional resources to learn more about stalking, visit http://stalkingawareness.org and www.ovw.usdoj.gov. ### [Add your organization’s mission statement here.]

Sources:

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3. Messing, J., Bagwell-Gray, M., Brown, M.L., Kappas, A., & Durfee, A. (2020). Intersections of Stalking and Technology-Based Abuse: Emerging Definitions, Conceptualization, and Measurement. *Journal of Family Violence 35*(1): 693-704.
4. Blaauw, E., Arensman, E., Winkel, F.W., Freeve, A., & Sheridan, L. (2002). The Toll of Stalking. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence 17*(1): 50-63.
5. Baum, K., Catalano, S., & Rand, M. (2009). Stalking Victimization in the United States. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.
6. Mohandie, K., Meloy, J.R., McGowan, M.G., & Williams, J. (2006). The RECON Typology of Stalking: Reliability and Validity Based upon a Large Sample of North American Stalkers. *Journal of Forensic Sciences, 51* (1), 147-155.
7. Spencer, C.M. & Stith, S.M. (2018). Risk Factors for Male Perpetration and Female Victimization of Intimate Partner Homicide: A Meta-Analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse 21*(3): 527-540.