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Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein Warns of the Prevalence, Dangers of Stalking

City Attorney releases [public service announcement](#) to raise awareness of stalking crimes and the legal resources available to victims

COLUMBUS, OH—National statistics show that between six and seven million Americans are impacted by stalking each year. One in six women [will be stalked](#) in their lifetime and [one in three teens](#) will experience some form of physical or emotional abuse by someone they are dating. The damage can be profound. That's why Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein released a [public service announcement](#) to deliver a powerful and direct message: stalking is a crime and it can be stopped.

The [PSA](#) was timed for today because February is [Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month](#) and reports indicate that young people experience the highest rate of stalking. February also is the time of the year when healthy, loving relationships are celebrated on Valentine's Day, but the majority of people are stalked by someone they know, usually a current or former intimate partner.

“Stalking is not about love or romance. It is crime of violence, control or intimidation,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. “We want stalking victims to realize it's not their fault and they need to trust their intuition. They should never underestimate their stalker or the potential threat level that person may present. If the threat is immediate, call or text 911. Otherwise contact our office and get the help and resources that are available to those in need.”

The crime of stalking occurs when a person engages in a pattern of conduct (two or more actions or incidents closely related in time) targeting a person or a business that knowingly causes the victim to believe the offender will cause physical harm or mental distress to him or her.

Typical stalking behavior can include:

- Following or watching
- Unwanted telephone calls
- Unwanted mail or gifts
- Inappropriate approaches or physical contact
- Unwanted contact via the internet
- Intrusion into your private life
- Threats to your health or safety
- Physical assault
- Threats against family or friends
- Appearing anywhere you may be for no legitimate reason

- Damage to physical property

To successfully prosecute stalking, prosecutors need to prove that a series of incidents (which, if viewed as isolated incidents, might not constitute criminal acts) happened and that it caused the victim mental distress or fear of physical harm. City Attorney staff and police investigators rely heavily upon various types of physical evidence to assist in prosecuting stalking cases, and victims often can provide the most useful evidence.

Stalking victims should consider:

- Saving all documents, gifts, letters, or other forms of correspondence from the stalker. These items should be put in paper bags and handled as little as possible.
- Keeping a log of all events that involve stalking. The dates, times, a general summary of each event, any witnesses, and the victim's reaction to the incident will assist in establishing the criminal case.
- If safe to do so, carrying a camera or video recorder and recording telephone calls and making screen shots of texts from the stalker.
- Obtaining a telephone trap by contacting the Annoyance Call Bureau of your telephone provider.

Along with the [PSA](#), more information about stalking and the resources available to victims can be found on the City Attorney's [website](#).

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