



Monitoring bracelets worth a try

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The numbers are frightening and the effects devastating.

One out of every 12 women will be stalked in her lifetime, according to Gretchen Vapnar, the executive director of the Elgin Community Crisis Center, in a story reported last week by Daily Herald staff writer Sheila Ahern.

In 2005, there were 115,282 domestic violence crimes reported in Illinois, a 5.6 percent increase in five years, according to the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority.

Also in 2005, there were 64,639 orders of protection issued in Illinois, a 2.5 percent increase since 2000, according to the authority, citing Illinois State Police records.

And 74 percent of all murder-suicides in the United States involved an intimate partner or ex-partner.

Of these, 96 percent were females killed by their intimate partners, according to the Violence Policy Center as reported by the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority.

Cindy Bischof of Arlington Heights may not have known of those statistics. But what she did know is that she was one of those statistics, a 43-year-old woman who was living in fear of an ex-boyfriend. She took all the steps recommended to keep him away from her, including an order of protection that was violated at least three times.

But it wasn't enough. Bischof was gunned down by that ex-boyfriend outside her Elmhurst real estate office, and then he killed himself.

"Cindy did everything she was supposed to do," said Michael Bischof, Cindy's brother. "In 10 months, she lived in four different residences and even hotels. She lived in fear of this coward."

Now he and his family are working to create even more protections for people being victimized by stalkers. They have proposed -- and state Rep. Suzie Bassi, a Palatine Republican, has agreed to introduce a bill -- to require electronic monitoring bracelets be worn by people who violate protection orders.

"We need greater safety guards and victims need more protection," Bassi said.

We couldn't agree more. Will bracelets work? We think they might. They are already used for other monitoring purposes, such as keeping track of molesters. But specifics need to be worked out.

Will the victim automatically get notified when an offender is too close? How much lead time will that person have to get out of harm's way? Michael Bischof said victims would be notified using a global positioning system.

We encourage state legislators to do their homework and come up with a bill that answers those questions and others and provides the added protection that Cindy needed and might have prevented her death.