



LAURA BLAKE
1958-1991



CHRISTINE M. FLEMING
1971-1992

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WOMEN'S
FUND
OF
GREATER
OMAHA

CAN WE STOP THE VIOLENCE IN OMAHA?

A Status Report

Second
In A Series Of
Reports
On The Condition Of
Women and Girls
In Omaha.

Prepared By
The Women's Fund Of
The Omaha Community Foundation

October 1995

WOMEN'S FUND

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TASK FORCE MISSION

It is the mission of the Domestic Violence Task Force of the Women's Fund to: Promote healthy families and relationships through the reduction of domestic violence. The strategy to achieve this mission is to:

- ◆ Redefine domestic violence to the public and the criminal justice community as a serious crime.
- ◆ Bring abusers into the judicial system through reducing "screening out" of cases.
- ◆ Impose/enforce legal sanctions on the abuser as a deterrent and to create long-term accountability.
- ◆ Provide safe housing, legal advocacy and education for victims.
- ◆ Enhance and coordinate interagency communications and monitor and evaluate the system's effectiveness.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Patricia Lamberty, Chair
Attorney Mediator

Eileen Buzzello, Attorney,
Survivor
Department of Social Services

Barbara Harris, PhD, Professor
Creighton University,
Social Work

Barbara Hauptman, Deputy Chief
Omaha Police Department

Emily Cunningham Kozlik
Executive Director, YWCA

Gail Walling Yanney, MD
Clarkson Hospital Foundation

Pat Lenaghan, RN, MSN
Nursing Admin,
Methodist Hospital

Rhonda Applegarth, *Survivor*
Business Manager,
Hudson Center

Leigh Ann Retelsdorf, Attorney
Assistant Douglas County
Attorney

Brenda Smith, *Survivor*
Deputy Chief
Omaha Police Department

Nancy Thompson
US Attorney's Office

Sandra Johnson,
Executive Director
Metropolitan Omaha Medical
Society

Mary Larsen, Director
YWCA-Women Against
Violence

Dianne Seeman Lozier, Attorney
Lozier Corporation

Marilyn Milbrath Means
Douglas City Health Dept

Deborah Lutjen
Douglas City Health Dept

Deborah Carey-Minardi
Chief Probation Officer

Gina Volenec
State Probation

Kathy Schinker, Director
The Shelter

Mary Heng-Braun
Program Officer
Women's Fund of the
Omaha Community

Sara Christiansen, MD
Internal Medicine

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First and foremost, the writers want to recognize and commend all of the agencies and individuals who provide assistance to victims of domestic violence and their families. While the complete list of providers is too long to include — several must be specifically identified: YWCA - Women Against Violence Program, Omaha Police Department, City Prosecutor’s Office, County Attorney’s Office, The Shelter, Douglas County Court, District Court, State Probation, Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition. We thank them for their significant efforts to respond to domestic violence.

The network of services provided represent a trauma center for victims and their families and the efforts of those who are a part of this network are critical to them. This network can — and sometimes does — work very effectively. At other times, communication problems and gaps in the system can make the response unnecessarily complex or clumsy. We believe, however, that those working within the system have a genuine and heartfelt desire to improve it; that the problems in the system are identifiable and capable of being remedied, and that the way to accomplish that is through a constructive, community-wide effort. The Domestic Violence Task Force of the Women’s Fund seeks to function as a catalyst for that effort.

These efforts will be funded in part by a Family Support Program Grant from the U.S. Dept. of Education. The Women’s Fund collaborated with UNO and the YWCA on this grant.

PLEASE NOTE

Clearly, both women and men are capable of committing violence against their loved ones. Women and men are capable of hitting, kicking, punching, stabbing, shooting and even, lighting on fire, their partners. Sadly, both genders are capable of, and sometimes do, kill their partners.

National and local research suggests, however, that in over 90% of cases, men are perpetrators and women are victims of domestic violence.¹ As a result, in this document we will refer to the perpetrator as “he” and the victim as “she.” Be assured, however, that we are aware that at times these roles are reversed.

It is also important to note that this report is about domestic violence in the City of Omaha and Douglas County. The law enforcement and judicial systems responding to domestic violence are city and/or county based. As a result, this report does not address the greater Omaha area or any other counties. Obviously, domestic violence may be a serious concern in those locations, but it was beyond our scope to address them.

INTRODUCTION

Violence is one of the critical problems facing our nation and our community. Every day in Omaha, Nebraska we hear of guns in the schools, drive-by shootings and car-jackings by ever-younger youths. However, violent behavior does not begin in adolescence nor does it occur only in the streets or neighborhoods. It occurs regularly, behind the closed doors of our homes, between family members and former intimates. Indeed, experts in violence prevention suggest that domestic violence is at the heart of much of the violence in this country. Violence begets violence and each new generation learns to be violent, at least in part, by participating in a violent family.

Domestic violence is defined by the relationship of the victim to the defendant, rather than solely by the crime committed. It includes any harmful physical contact or threat thereof, occurring between current or former family or household members, sexual or intimate partners or individuals who share biological parenthood.

Domestic violence generally represents a pattern of behavior rather than a single, isolated incident. The pattern can take many forms, all of them involving physical violence or threats of physical violence. The pattern almost always includes emotional, sexual and economic abuse as well. The violence may be accomplished with the use of hands, feet, weapons or other objects. Injuries inflicted are as serious as, or more serious than, injuries inflicted in other felonies.

Some might argue that the term “**family violence**” is more appropriate for this report. The writers struggled with this issue. In the end, we wanted to be crystal clear that there is a problem with violence against women as well as children. Frequently, the term family violence is used to refer only to child victims of parental violence. Again, our focus is on violence perpetrated against women and their children by their current or former intimate partners.

This report focuses on domestic violence in Omaha, Nebraska. It does not provide all of the detailed data necessary for program development or revisions; additional work will be required. It is intended to ask, and begin to provide answers to, a number of questions:

- ◆ What is the extent of the problem?
- ◆ What is the impact of domestic violence on children?
- ◆ What are possible sources of the problem?
- ◆ What is the current response to Omaha battered women and their children?

Unless we do something about violence in the home, we'll never be able to do anything about violence in the streets.

US Attorney General Janet Reno

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