



DATE: February 9, 2016
TO: The Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers
FROM: The Norman Human Rights Commission
**SUBJECT: 2015 Inclusive Community Dialogue
Report and Action Plan**

In conjunction with the City's proclamation of October, 2015, as Domestic Violence Awareness month, the Norman Human Rights Commission ("HRC") hosted an Inclusive Community Dialogue ("ICD") on Domestic Violence at the Norman Public Library on October 1, 2015. Approximately a dozen residents and law enforcement representatives from the Norman Police Department and the Cleveland County Sheriff's Office attended this ICD facilitated by Commissioner Daniel Dukes. No one in attendance identified themselves as an "offender" or "survivor" of Domestic Violence. The group acknowledged that the level of attendance may have been impacted by the sensitive nature of the subject matter and issues of fear or embarrassment which survivors and/or their families may associate with this topic and discussing it in a public setting.

As with previous ICDs, citizens were invited to speak to how Domestic Violence has touched their lives, what services are needed in Norman for Domestic Violence survivors and their families, and what resources are currently in place. Because of the unique and sensitive subject matter and the smaller number of participants, one group discussion was held to address the following questions:

1. How do you search for information regarding domestic violence? (Internet, local resources? Phone book?)
2. Is there a need for more safe places (shelters) for victims of domestic violence?
3. What resources/ongoing support are needed and/or available after the survivor leaves the shelter?
4. Any issues with feeling safe to report domestic violence situations to proper authorities?
5. Are you worried about confidentiality concerning issues of domestic violence?
6. Other concerns regarding domestic violence.

Below is a summary of the main points discussed.

Domestic Violence Facts Discussed

- “cloud of shame”
- Fear of retaliation
- Shelter stay is 120 days
- 43% increase in males reporting DV (2013-2014)
- Takes 7-8 times before a survivor has the ability to leave abuser and survive independently
- Domestic Violence and substance abuse are co-occurrence
- Families, not just survivors, need resources and support

WOMENS RESOURCE CENTER (‘WRC”) (Advocacy)

Strengths

- Partnerships with Norman Police Department
- Weekly Peer Support group offered
- Shelter provided for women and children in need
- Services are offered to families as well as survivor

Opportunities

- More space is needed (max capacity is 18)
- Services are for females only (men have no resource)
- Funding is limited - general public is unaware of how to donate

STEREOTYPES (Offenders & Survivors)

Myths

- Only women are abused
- Abuse is only physical
- Offenders are typically males
- Only survivors need counseling and support
- Domestic Violence occurs between males and females

Facts

- Men are reporting Domestic Violence assaults
- Abuse can be physical, emotional, or psychological
- Both males and females are offenders
- Offenders seek counseling and services as well
- Same sex Domestic Violence is on the rise (reported more often)

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Strengths

- Norman Police Department responding quickly to Domestic Violence calls
- NPD better educated on handling D.V. situations
- NPD works closely with Women's Resource Center and other agencies

Opportunities

- NPD has identified language barrier as an issue when Latino or Hispanic survivors report incidents
- Lack of trust of NPD from minority (African American & Hispanic) survivors

PUBLIC RESOURCES

Strengths

- Pastors may be 1st to know of Domestic Violence abuse
- Positive experiences with Norman Police Department.
- Child Welfare (DHS) is working together with WRC in support of survivor (parent)

Opportunities

- More shelters are needed (Norman has one shelter)
- No facility for men (Woodward, OK has one facility)
- Schools are obligated to call DHS (preventing reporting)

FINANCIALS

Strengths

- WRC operating budget is \$750,000-\$800,000
- WRC receives federal grants, United way donations, and individual donations

Opportunities

- More money is needed to build additional shelters
- Financial independence is #1 hurdle
- Survivors cannot afford child care

ACTION PLAN

Although the City does not necessarily have primary control or responsibility over many of the aspects involved in combating Domestic Violence, the ICD participants and the HRC wanted to bring awareness of this very important issue to City Council and to encourage on-going dialogue and deliberations on how the community as a whole can work together to address these concerns. Overall suggestions or goals discussed are listed below, although it is acknowledged that City Council does not directly control all of these areas within the community.

1. More funding to WRC and other agencies working with Domestic Violence survivors and offenders.
2. Second shelter built for female survivors and their children.
3. Bilingual police officers needed to better serve the non-English-speaking survivors.
4. Counseling services needed for both survivors and offenders that address substance abuse and addiction as related to Domestic Violence issues.
5. Identify agencies that can work with the GLBTQ community regarding Domestic Violence issues.
6. Better education for children of Domestic Violence in order to “break the cycle” of Domestic Violence.

The Commission encourages the City Council to think of those “victims” of Domestic Violence as “survivors.” Those survivors could be our children, neighbors, and fellow members of our community. They deserve resources and services that will enable them to live safely in our community.

The Human Rights Commission will continue its efforts to establish collaborative relationships to support initiatives related to human rights issues. As the Human Rights Commission moves through their process, they will keep Norman City Council informed.