



The Family Crisis Shelter

P.O. Box 704, Portland, Maine 04104

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Portland Family Crisis Shelter, founded 10 years ago, continues to provide refuge, support and advocacy with the goal of empowering women victimized by domestic violence. The Shelter has grown into a comprehensive domestic violence program, with integrated services aimed toward response, intervention and prevention. Our ultimate goal is to end violence against women. Our services focus on: (1) individual advocacy with battered women to promote awareness of their rights and options, and (2) advocacy on a societal level to strengthen women's rights and impose more consistent legal sanctions against abusers.

In-shelter and out-of-shelter programs offer supportive advocacy promoting battered women's self-esteem, awareness of alternatives, and belief in their competence to take control of their lives. Advocates provide individual support for women's choices of action regarding their families' futures, legal advocacy, and assistance in accessing community resources, such as housing and social services. Women's Support Groups, conducted weekly in Portland, Brunswick and Bridgton, offer mutual support and self-help. Isolation and self-blame experienced by women with histories of battering are countered by the shared discovery, among peers, that their abusive experiences are similar. Redefining battering as a crime - a societal problem, rather than a personal failing- women are freed to take action toward changing their lives. Women's Support Groups are open to women from the greater community, as well as Shelter residents.

Our Children's Program provides crisis intervention and long-term preventive planning for children traumatized by family violence. We intervene within the cycle of violence by introducing children to a safe environment where they are able to develop trust and self-expression, engage in therapeutic recreation, and learn non-violent methods of conflict resolution. Weekly Parenting Skills Groups focus on non-violent discipline, nurturing, self-esteem building and communication skills.



While the Shelter provides safe refuge for women and children fleeing violent homes, our Community Response Program (CRP) works in the community, intervening in domestic violence to protect women and children in their homes. Four mornings weekly, in the Portland Public Safety Building, Outreach Advocates provide crisis intervention services to women victims of domestic assault. Staff contact is initiated with women following all police-reported assaults. Outreach services include assistance with filing Orders for Protection from Abuse, accompaniment to court for hearings, individual support throughout the adjudication process, and referrals to appropriate community resources. Services are open to any woman experiencing domestic abuse or the threat of violence.

In conjunction with individual victim advocacy, CRP conducts extensive training of professionals within the criminal justice/legal system, as well as other agencies dealing directly with domestic violence. The two-pronged approach of individual and institutional advocacy aims to build a unified community response to domestic violence as the responsibility of the abuser, not the victim.

A pilot Abusers' Education Program, planned for Portland in the Fall of 1987, will offer a positive alternative to fines and/or jail terms for perpetrators of domestic violence. A six-month, highly-structured curriculum focuses on the perpetrator's acceptance of responsibility for his violence and adoption of non-violent methods for conflict resolution.

Our staff and volunteers are also available upon request to provide In-Service Training to community professionals and agencies, educational presentations to community groups, and an Educational Curriculum for training students and teachers on domestic violence and conflict-resolution methods.

The Family Crisis Shelter is in the process of replicating the Portland comprehensive Community Response Program within Bath-Brunswick.

For further information and requests for services, contact Family Crisis Shelter at 1-800-537-6066.

August 1987