

# Breaking the Cycle: Cour

## Story by Amy Edwards

With a national increase in awareness on the problems of domestic violence, the Lincoln Police Department has changed its policy concerning domestic violence and counseling programs have been set up to deal with the problems of men who abuse.

Capt. Charles Flansburg said LPD has changed its policy giving an officer the option of taking action or not. If there is evidence of assault or violence, the officer can issue a citation to the accused party, which will then be taken through court. If the assault is serious, the officer has the option of arresting and jailing both parties.

Flansburg said that both parties are often jailed because the argument will start off with one person hitting another and escalating the argument. Even though one person usually gets hurt more (the woman in most cases), both parties could be charged with assault.

"Domestic violence is a real difficult call to work because you can't take sides," Flansburg said. "Many times what happens in a need for arrest is that not only does the man want to be arrested, but the woman doesn't want him sent to jail. You have to fight two people."

### Trying to remain neutral

Flansburg said what often happens is that the officer will end up being assaulted or even shot at by both people.

"The main thing is trying to remain neutral," Flansburg said.

When an officer issues a citation, even if the victim doesn't want to file charges, an attorney files charges if they believe they can prove assault after reviewing the case, said Toni Thorson, District Attorney for Lancaster County. The victim does not file charges, the state does.

The attorney then makes a decision. If there is sufficient evidence, the state files charges.

Because the victim in an assault case is often in need of protection, Thorson said a "no contact provision" can be issued by the court and the defendant is ordered to have no contact whatsoever

with the victim, through phone calls, friends, mail, etc. A "friendship house" in Lincoln is also an option for battered women.

The no contact provision only lasts while the case is going through the court process, Thorson said. As soon as the case is dismissed, or a sentence is issued, the provision is dropped.

Domestic violence is a misdemeanor assault, and bodily injury committed during domestic violence can be defined as pain (even if there are no obvious results), Thorson said.

Judges hand down decisions, Thorson said. Sentencing can include a fine up to \$1,000 and/or up to one year in jail. Probation sentences can also be given with conditions that could include counseling.

Counseling programs help break the cycle of violence.

The Men's Anger Control Program, a counseling program for men with abuse problems in Lincoln and Lancaster County, is designed to help men get away from abusive habits.

Any effort to help abused women must include counseling for the abuser to break the cycle of violence, said the director of a local counseling program.

### Counseling program started

John Garmatz, director of the Men's Anger Control Program, said the program grew out of the Lincoln Rape Spouse Abuse Crisis Center.

The program started after patterns during counseling for battered women became evident.

Garmatz said that during the counseling, they would see a pattern developing; a woman would go through counseling and leave the man. Not long after that, another woman would come in for counseling who had been beaten by the same man. He said that the problem is not with the women who are being beaten, but with male violence. In order to help women who are being battered, counseling services must be provided for men who beat women, Garmatz said.

The program was set up during the first six months of 1983 and services were first provided for men going through the program in July of 1983. Garmatz said that it is difficult to say exactly how successful the program is, but in many ways it is