RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association urges Congress, the states and territories, local governments and agencies, and nongovernmental victim services programs to support efforts to pass legislation and secure funding for the development of multidisciplinary, community-based programs to respond to the current epidemic of domestic violence.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association recommends that any government or private entity developing multidisciplinary programs in response to domestic violence ensure that such programs contain the following essential elements:

1. Participation by the various professionals having services to offer victims of domestic violence, including, but not limited to, judges, lawyers, advocates from local and state domestic violence coalitions and programs, physicians, nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, victim services professionals, law enforcement personnel, military personnel, members of the business community, and the media;

2. Coordinated information-sharing among the offices of prosecutors, public defenders, probation officers, courts, victim services programs, relevant government agencies, and law enforcement officials to ensure that all aspects of the justice system are adequately informed about each other's actions in domestic violence cases, so long as the information-sharing process protects the privacy, confidentiality, and safety of the victim and the victim's children;
(3) Multidisciplinary public education programs about domestic violence;

(4) Multidisciplinary domestic violence prevention and intervention through employee assistance programs and programs based in hospitals, schools, medical clinics, social service agencies, and military bases;

(5) Enhanced legal representation for victims of domestic violence and their children and expanded attorney training through pro bono and legal services programs, university legal clinics, and private bar continuing legal education programs;

(6) Data collection regarding numbers of victims, disposition of cases, services utilized to resolve the violence, and victim fatalities, so long as procedures are adopted to protect the privacy, confidentiality, and safety of the victim and the victim's children; and

(7) Policies, procedures, and practices which place primary emphasis on the safety of the victim and the victim's children.
Domestic violence is a growing epidemic in this country. Between 1.8 and 4 million women each year are battered by their intimate partners. The secondary effects of domestic violence are felt on an even broader scale: from 3 to 10 million children witness acts of domestic violence, not only learning to fear their own family members, but also suffering severe emotional and behavioral problems. Worse still, judges are beginning to report that children first seen as victims in domestic violence cases return to court years later as juvenile offenders and adult criminal defendants. Likewise, businesses are just beginning to recognize the enormous economic costs domestic violence levies in the form of absenteeism and reduced employee productivity. It is clear that all of society has an abiding interest in ending domestic violence. What should be equally clear is that all of society must shoulder the responsibility to carry out this enormous task.

The American Bar Association's Commission on Domestic Violence has spent January 1995 - June 1995 researching model domestic violence programs across the country in an effort to understand why they work. What has become abundantly clear is that only those programs that draw on the broad resources of the community—judges, lawyers, advocates from local and state domestic violence coalitions and programs, physicians, nurses, psychologists, social workers, victim service professionals, law enforcement and military personnel, the business community, and the media—have been able to effect the changes which end domestic violence.

These programs work well because they bring together and coordinate the work of all professional and advocacy groups necessary to fully address the domestic violence problem. While the legal system is one of many areas in which domestic violence is properly addressed, it is not the only such area. The very serious emotional and psychological trauma caused by domestic violence requires appropriate treatment from mental health professionals, including social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists. Additionally, medical doctors, nurses, teachers, and law enforcement officials must be involved in, and understand, the entire process, because they often are the first persons to whom victims of domestic violence turn when seeking help. The business community also can contribute, by developing employee assistance programs which help victims of domestic violence re-establish physical safety and economic security. The military too has an important role, and already has begun to develop multidisciplinary domestic violence programs for its own personnel. Finally the role and contributions of the popular media cannot be ignored: television, newspapers, and radio now provide highly effective outreach, teaching thousands of Americans about the causes of domestic violence and the currently available solutions.
Multidisciplinary programs which bring together all of these helping professionals have much greater success in reducing family violence. Some communities in our country have recognized this important point and have acted accordingly. Most, however, have not. Thus, professionals and advocates across the country must develop comprehensive programs in every community. As the nation's leading legal organization, the American Bar Association is uniquely suited to spearhead this broad-based, national campaign to help communities forge these professional links.

The Association has taken the first major step by creating the Commission on Domestic Violence. The Commission members include the Presidents of the American Medical Association, the National Education Association, and the Legal Services Corporation; the Executive Director of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence; the Chief Judge of New York State; the Superintendent of the Chicago Police Department; the commanding general of the U.S. Army Community Family Support Center; a representative of the American Psychological Association; the Executive Vice President of Corporate Affairs for the Walt Disney Company; national experts on domestic violence; and representatives of the following Association Sections, Divisions, and Commissions: Family Law, Criminal Justice, Judicial Administration, Individual Rights and Responsibilities, Status of Women in the Legal Profession, Young Lawyers, and Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants. The mandate of the Commission is to bring together national leaders in an effort to develop a comprehensive, multidisciplinary blueprint for communities seeking effective responses to domestic violence.

The Commission's research prepares us for the next step: composing and disseminating the blueprint of a multidisciplinary domestic violence program which will help all communities - urban and rural, diverse and homogeneous, rich and poor - address and solve this urgent problem. To be truly effective, this effort will require broad-based support from Congress, state legislatures, local governments, and private victim services programs. The Commission therefore recommends that the House of Delegates adopt the recommendation outlined above. By taking a leadership role in identifying and promoting the essential elements of a multidisciplinary plan, the Association can begin the process of organizing judges, lawyers, and other professionals in communities across the country to take responsibility for developing an effective, coordinated response to the epidemic of domestic violence.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher L. Griffin   Mama S. Tucker
Co-Chairs, Commission on Domestic Violence

August 1995
1. **Summary of Recommendation(s).**

The Commission on Domestic Violence recommends that Congress, the states and territories, and local governments support and fund programs in which judges, lawyers, and other professionals develop coordinated, multidisciplinary responses to domestic violence in their communities.

2. **Approval by Submitting Entity.**

The Commission on Domestic Violence has approved this recommendation.

3. **Has this or a similar recommendation been submitted to the House or Board previously?**

No.

4. **What existing Association policies are relevant to this recommendation and how would they be affected by its adoption?**

N/A

5. **What urgency exists which requires action at this meeting of the House?**

Many domestic violence programs, including those created and funded under the federal Violence Against Women Act of 1994, are in the process of formation across the country. The Association has been invited to participate in many planning activities for these programs; this policy, if adopted, would enable the Association and the Commission to advocate that these programs follow the most successful model for ending domestic violence: a multidisciplinary, community response.

6. **Status of Legislation.** (If applicable.) N/A

7. **Cost to the Association.** (Both direct and indirect costs.) N/A
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8. Disclosure of Interest. (If applicable.) N/A

9. Referrals.

To be referred to all ABA Sections and Divisions, the Commissions on Women in the Profession and Homelessness and Poverty, and to state bars prior to the Annual Meeting.

10. Contact Person. (Prior to the meeting.)

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11. Contact Person. (Who will present the report to the House.)

Christopher L. Griffin and Mama S. Tucker

12. Contact Person Regarding Amendments to This Recommendation. (Are there any known proposed amendments at this time? If so, please provide the name, address, telephone, fax and ABA/net number of the person to contact below.)

No further amendments anticipated.

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