



City of Grand Rapids, Michigan  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

ROSALYNN C. BLISS  
MAYOR

# PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, comprehensive studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that more than 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have experienced sexual violence involving physical contact during their lifetimes; and

WHEREAS, individuals with disabilities are 4 to 10 times more likely to be victimized than people without disabilities and children with disabilities are more than twice as likely to be victimized; and

WHEREAS, YWCA victim advocates, area hospitals, law enforcement, and prosecutors came together with the goal of dramatically improving our community's response to sexual assault.; and

WHEREAS, in November 1996 the YWCA Nurse Examiner Program opened its doors following three years of collaboration, research, and planning between:

- Blodgett Memorial Medical Center and Butterworth Health Corporation (now, Spectrum Health)
- Grand Rapids Police Department
- Kent County Prosecutor's Office
- Kent County Sheriff's Office
- Planned Parenthood Centers of West Michigan (now, Planned Parenthood of Michigan - Irwin/Martin Health Center)
- Metropolitan Hospital (now, University of Michigan Health-West)
- Saint Mary's Health Services (now, Mercy Health Saint Mary's)
- YWCA West Central Michigan

WHEREAS, early on the Nokomis Foundation generously invested in the necessary groundwork that would ensure the YWCA Nurse Examiner Program's long-term effectiveness; and

WHEREAS, the YWCA Nurse Examiner Program was intentionally designed to be victim-centered in the following ways:

- Addressing the sometimes competing priorities of victim advocacy, medical care, and criminal justice with a shared understanding that a victim's unique needs would be the first priority
- 24/7, confidential access to services at no charge to the patient
- No requirement to report to law enforcement
- A calm, predictable environment in a private medical suite, outside of a traditional emergency department
- Support by victim advocates who offer crisis counseling and have been trained in trauma resolution by the top professionals in the field

- Objective evidence collection and expert medical care by some of the most skilled nurse examiners in the state, along with the ability to testify in court
- Secure storage to maintain the chain of evidence
- Seamless access to the range of YWCA services including support groups, counseling, legal assistance, and more

WHEREAS, the YWCA Nurse Examiner Program has aided 20+ Michigan communities to establish local Nurse Examiner Programs, expanding access for victims throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, the YWCA Nurse Examiner Program was a founding member of the Michigan chapter of the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN), creating more uniform training and overseeing professional credentialing; and

WHEREAS, the YWCA Nurse Examiner Program has been a leading contributor to research, expanding knowledge in the growing field of medical-forensic examinations and improving patient care nationwide; and

WHEREAS, the YWCA Nurse Examiner Program earned credentialing to serve pediatric patients and partnered with the Children's Advocacy Center to expand access to services for our community's children; and

WHEREAS, the YWCA Nurse Examiner Program has been credited with discovering similar characteristics in seemingly unrelated cases, leading to the identification of two serial rapists; and

WHEREAS, the YWCA nurse examiners and victim advocates have cared for more than 8,000 patients over the past 25 years; and

WHEREAS, today, the YWCA Nurse Examiner Program provides medical forensic exams and advocacy for sexual assault (all ages, all genders) and domestic violence (adult, all genders); and

WHEREAS, the YWCA Nurse Examiner Program continues to be a role model and leader with new and important expansions that include community education about the extraordinary risk of strangulation in sexual and domestic violence, along with greater access to program services for survivors of intimate partner violence;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Rosalynn Bliss, Mayor of the City of Grand Rapids, do hereby recognize the

## **25th Anniversary of the YWCA Nurse Examiner Program**

and praise the achievements of the YWCA West Central Michigan, its nurse examiners and victim advocates whose selfless, heartfelt commitment to their patients inspires us all, the staff members who helped establish the program and those who have ensured its continued growth, those who have generously funded and contributed in support of the program, and the many dedicated board and committee leaders throughout the years.



Rosalynn Bliss