

Domestic Violence Prevention

A Workplace Initiative

RESOURCE GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

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To find out how your workplace can become involved
in this domestic violence prevention initiative,
please contact the Manitoba Women's Directorate at

1- 800-263-0234

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Violence in Personal Relationships: An Issue At Work?

Why Should We Care?

Today, more people are aware of domestic violence, and that women are especially vulnerable. But is violence against women a workplace issue? Many employers and trade unions think it is.

Intimate Partner Abuse (Domestic Violence):

As the name indicates, intimate partner abuse is the physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse by current or former partners in personal relationships. Manitobans are reminded of the consequences of this violence almost every day. Approximately one in five Manitoba adults report they personally know someone who has been victimized by domestic violence during the past year. Many of these respondents claim to know more than one such victim (Probe Research Public Opinion Poll on Domestic Violence Issues 2001, p. 12).

On average, approximately 74 women are killed each year by their husbands and common-law partners. In 1999 about 220,000 Canadian women were threatened, slapped, kicked, punched, choked, beaten or sexually assaulted.

Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2002

While domestic violence can also spill into the workplace in the form of harassing phone calls from partners, the consequences of violence are sometimes less obvious, including absenteeism, loss of concentration, fatigue, emotional instability, and reliance on medications or alcohol - all contributing

to reduced performance. Co-workers may feel the strain, too.

In addition to the considerable human costs of domestic violence, society too pays a price through its impact on our economy. In fact, the total measurable costs related to health and well-being alone is estimated to be over a billion dollars a year. Add the costs of accompanying factors like hospital admissions and physicians' services, and the costs of the policing, legal and judicial systems, and the total becomes many times greater than this.¹

Statistics cannot show the cost of domestic violence to individual Canadian enterprises, but preliminary research suggests that over one-quarter of that total cost can be traced to the need for time away from work because of violent or violence-related incidents.

Domestic violence can increase employers' workers compensation costs and boost insurance benefit claims for prescription drugs, for example.

It's Against the Law

Domestic violence is against the law. The position of the Manitoba government in the matter of abuse is "zero tolerance" which means that, subject only to the limits imposed by law, no margin will be afforded to abusers. The police and prosecutors have been so instructed and conduct themselves accordingly. The government's stand recognizes the high cost of violence, the suffering of our families and our communities and the need for intervention.

In 1999 the Manitoba government proclaimed the *Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Act*, which provides persons subjected to domestic violence and stalking

¹ Tanis Day, *The Health-Related Costs of Violence Against Women: the Tip of the Iceberg* (Canadian Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children, London Ontario)

with the ability to seek a wide range of civil remedies to address their individual needs.

Domestic Violence: A Private Problem?

Believing that domestic violence is a private matter makes it harder for people caught in violent relationships to look for help. In other words, silence sustains the problem. There is a need to work toward ending the isolation victims feel in abusive relationships. The entire community can be involved in preventing all kinds of violence in relationships.

“Minding our own business....”

Many Canadian employers point to an employee’s need for privacy as an obstacle to deciding whether or not to intervene when domestic violence is suspected and the employee has not come forward. Co-workers, too, are often reluctant to face a friend’s or colleague’s reaction to a perceived “invasion of privacy” when they suspect violence, and want to adopt a proactive approach.

That attitude is changing. As awareness of the

“It’s one thing to suggest to someone that they go to a brown-bag lunch about household budgeting, and much harder to encourage someone to attend a similar event on domestic violence. They’ll feel that they’re labelled, if they show up.”

Hamilton, Ontario, Community Development Worker

harm caused by violence has grown, people have learned both that they can help **prevent** violence, and that **preventing violence is most possible when everyone assumes responsibility for safety**. In Manitoba, there is a high level of public concern about domestic violence. Across the province, four out of five surveyed adults (80%) indicated that they were concerned about this issue. (Probe Research Public Opinion Poll on Domestic Violence

Issues April, 2001, p. 4)

In spite of this concern, it often takes a long time for women who are victims to disclose violence, even to their closest friends. It can be difficult for them to bring “personal” issues into the workplace, even when they think it might help. Victims may feel responsible for the abuse, or feel in control by “surviving” the best way they know how, or they may be unsure whether anyone can help. The consequences surrounding disclosure may seem frightening, or uncertain, since it could mean dealing with a lot of strangers.

Many abusive people are unaware that there is help available to stop abusive behaviour. Many abusers are not aware that stopping abuse will require changes in the ways they deal with anger. Some abusers have justified their violent behaviour by blaming the victim for provoking violence.

We all hesitate to intrude. Supervisors, for example, are very uneasy about approaching an employee, and feel they should “say something” only if a worker’s productivity is clearly suffering. When that’s not happening, they hope that the worker will come forward or seek assistance, either directly from management, or Employee Assistance Programs, or outside the workplace.

Times are changing. Years ago, supervisors felt the same way about suspected alcohol or drug abuse -- it was seen as a private matter. Now, with the links between substance abuse and productivity clearly established, and help more readily available, today’s supervisors are much more likely to offer support.

We know that a supportive workplace atmosphere with a proactive approach to initiating contact is an important step to ending the silence around the cycle of violence. How can we balance the importance of respecting people’s privacy and confidentiality, with a proactive, positive approach to helping survivors or perpetrators of violence to identify themselves and seek assistance?

We need a consistent message to employees, from supervisors at all levels, that help is available to them for violence and relationship problems.

An American report indicates that 75 percent of individuals suffering from domestic violence are victimized at work. Abusive spouses may place harassing phone calls or make unwelcome appearances at work.

*Partnership for Prevention
Washington 2002*

A supportive work environment...

Awareness and education programs can help ensure that Canadian workplace “culture” supports survivors that might want assistance. Some programs inform employees of the prevalence and consequences of domestic violence, foster a supportive work environment for both men and women, or help prevent abuse by workers in the home and the workplace. Co-workers can be taught what to do to support someone in an abusive relationship. Time off can be made available for employees.

What is different about a supportive workplace, where workers get the message that there is help available? A supportive workplace has open communications programs to raise awareness of domestic violence among employees and supervisors. There are posters and brochures about domestic violence on display. Joint management-labour committees for employee health and safety or training, make sure that supervisors have the resource material they need.

Most of all, supportive workplaces are ones where violence in any form is not acceptable. These are workplaces where everybody believes they can help, and people know the services that are available in the workplace and in the community. They have written policies and procedures, in addition to provisions within collective agreements, which signify to employees that the issue is taken seriously by management and unions.

Disclosures of Abuse...

What can I do to help if a worker tells me they are being abused or if an abuser reveals violence in their personal relationships?

When you suspect someone at work is being abused, first, show respect. **Find out if the person is safe.** Listen carefully, accept the fact the person is speaking about being abused, and believe them. Show that you care by being honest and genuine.

Listen and let the worker talk about their feelings, if they want to.

Do your very best to ensure confidentiality. Talk in a quiet place; assure the person you will not repeat the conversation. If the worker tells you about a child who is being abused, tell them that reporting of suspected abuse to child protection authorities or the police is required by law.

Be open-minded. Avoid judging, and try to keep your personal feelings and opinions to yourself. Don't blame either the worker or their partner. Offer alternatives, not advice. Don't tell the person what to do. Remember that you can't replace the professional services that are available through the Employee Assistance Plan, or elsewhere in the community.

“Personally it did happen once that I suspected someone of being a victim of domestic violence. I used my intuition. I dropped hints, left pamphlets behind. She eventually did come out and discuss it. I think we should be proactive.”

A co-worker

Remember This...

- Nothing “justifies” abusive behaviour. Many forms of abuse are criminal acts.
- Abuse occurs in all income and education levels; in all religious, racial, cultural groups and genders.
- Alcohol and drugs contribute to abuse but they are not the cause of it.

- Once a pattern of abuse has been established it is very difficult to stop without outside help.
- Abuse has a devastating “domino effect.” Children who experience or witness abuse often perpetuate the behaviour in future relationships.
- Be patient. You need to understand that people can only take action to leave an abusive situation when they are ready. Tell them that you believe in their ability to make changes when they are ready. Offer support.
- If you know, tell the worker about the help available in the workplace, the employee assistance program or union counsellors. Share that help is available in the community.
- Domestic violence is a tough problem, hard to handle when it happens with people we know and care about. Remember that you can't solve someone else's problems but that most people can, with help, overcome most problems.

Customers and Clients as Victims

Also falling under the umbrella of safer and supportive work environments, employers can recognize the important role they play in educating their clients and customers about domestic violence. High traffic areas such as washrooms in restaurants, bars, clubs, and gas stations are the perfect places for women to gain access to resource information on domestic violence. The inherent privacy of these locations may offer the only opportunity for women to access information without fear of repercussion. Simply by placing public awareness posters in public washrooms, establishments are able to convey the message that they care for their

customers' wellbeing. Not only will establishments benefit by knowing they are helping to reduce domestic violence, victims and clients will consider the establishment a good corporate citizen, which contributes to an overall positive public image. In other words, good client service is good business.

The stickers are designed to fit on the inside door of washroom stalls. The stickers list a 1-800 number that individuals can call for assistance if they are experiencing domestic violence. The information is presented in plain language to reach the largest population possible.

Making the Workplace Safer: It's Everyone's Business

Women's Safety at Work: A Special Concern

- Leaving an abusive relationship is very difficult, and in some cases, the woman and her closest friends and family members are at extreme risk of harm.
- If child custody is an issue, the woman may need to keep in contact with her former partner using her workplace telephone, and can be subjected to verbal abuse while at work.
- Employees dealing with abusive situations may need time off for medical treatments, to handle legal actions, court or mediation sessions.
- For survivors of domestic violence, employers can help make sure that the workplace is free from danger or harassment from partners or ex-partners -- and make it safe not only for the woman survivor, but for co-workers too.

The Role of Employers and Unions

Employers and unions have joined together to find ways to increase the safety of their employees. Today, it is normal for companies to look for ways that they can assist their employees' wellness. Many are also helping at work to reduce the risk to women from abusive partners or ex-partners, and providing support in the workplace for women experiencing abuse at home. Workplaces can

The recognition that violence against women should be prevented and acted upon in the workplace presents significant policy challenges to employers and trade unions. It also challenges governments charged with regulating employer responsibilities.

also play a role in addressing the causes of all kinds of violence against women and in offering information to both men and women on respectful and non-violent relationships and community services to help those in difficulty.

These programs are working to prevent violence from happening in the first place, and to intervene early to prevent long-term consequences of violence.

Employers and unions -- acting in a workplace setting -- can be effective allies in contributing to the prevention of violence. For women who experience violence in intimate relationships -- often isolated from other supports -- the workplace can be one of the few places where they feel secure.

Successful partnerships are driven by a strong, visible commitment to safe workplaces by senior management and by the trade union leadership. The resulting Violence Prevention programs rely on proven strategies, similar to those used for years to reduce sexual harassment at work.

In addition to specific initiatives, many companies and unions support anti-violence activities inside and outside the workplace, such as the YWCA's Rose lapel pin or the White Ribbon campaigns. Each year for the month leading up to December 6, Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, wearing a white ribbon or a Rose lapel pin is a personal pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women.

An Effective and Comprehensive Workplace Strategy:

1. Positive Management and Trade Union Perspective

Canadian trade unions and businesses have done significant work to develop safe workplaces, where workers can feel safe from violence and harassment from co-workers, supervisors, clients and customers. No less a commitment is needed - at work - to address violence that occurs at home.

- Understanding that violence in personal relationships does affect workplace safety and security.
- Being aware that violence affects both men's and women's productivity at work and that women are most often the victims of violence. As an employer, you may have both offenders and victims in your workplace.
- Taking a top-down strong, visible, and continuous commitment to address violence prevention, by company management and union leadership.
- Agreeing to recognize women's rights to refuse work in a situation where they might be harassed, or feel endangered.

2. Information and Training for Staff

- Developing multi-faceted awareness, educational and training programs to sensitize both men and women employees to the social and emotional costs of domestic violence and services available.
- Providing resource materials for employees and supervisors.
- Training human resource personnel to identify the consequences of violence against women and children.
- Providing information on where to get legal assistance to obtain court protection from abuse, violence and harassment.

- Distributing in the workplace materials on community resources that can benefit people experiencing abuse.

Implementation:

Development of Awareness and Education Programs

Awareness and education programs take a proactive stance against domestic violence, keeping employees aware of its consequences, and making sure that employees know help is available. They aim to make sure that the workplace is a supportive environment where employees can disclose domestic violence and seek assistance if they wish. They provide employees, both men and women, with general information about the effects of violence and suggest ideas for workplace action. If an Employee Assistance Plan is in place, EAP staff can be asked to make presentations to groups of employees.

Resource Materials

A variety of information on domestic violence is available from Manitoba Justice and Manitoba Family Services and Housing. Most focus on the needs of victims. Materials advise about personal protection, victims' rights, safety and well being of children, available resources, personal/legal options and rebuilding lives affected by abuse. These need to be visible in the workplace -- it's important that employees who may need help can find out where to get it. A community resource list with local agencies' phone numbers can be distributed with pay cheques, or posted on workplace bulletin boards.

3. Workplace Programs and Policies

- Written workplace policies and procedures.
- Workplace programs to identify and help employees with violence prevention.
- General violence prevention and attention to victim safety.

- An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that includes support for victims or offenders (should include domestic violence and anger management for men with aggressive behaviour).

Implementation:

Employee Assistance Programs

Ideally an Employee Assistance Program can provide initial counselling, and then refer employees to a variety of community support services, like legal advocates, support groups, shelters and crisis lines, financial counsellors, housing providers and government or private agencies.

Proactive EAP programs make sure that they tell management and union representatives about needed changes to policies and procedures, and new ways of reducing workplace risks or improving security. Often, EAP managers work in co-operation with other parts of the organization to develop policies and procedures to assess and manage risk, assess potentially violent employees, recognize signs that employees are in abusive relationships, train supervisors, provide general violence prevention programs, and deliver programs on employee safety and security.

Written Workplace Policies and Procedures

It often helps to have policies and procedures written down, so that women needing help with domestic violence and other forms of violence, such as harassment, know how to handle it. Anti-violence policies can be modelled on the sexual harassment policies that are common in most workplaces -- based on the Canada

Labour Code and Manitoba Human Rights Act definitions of gender-based, racial, and other forms of harassment. The Manitoba Human Rights Commission offers examples of policy wording that can be customized to each individual workplace.

Dealing with violence prevention using these proven strategies has been very successful, in part, because procedures are standardized and, as with harassment complaints, no action is taken without the employee's knowledge and consent.

Collective Agreements

Language in collective bargaining agreements can also address the prevalence of violence and include increased protection or a level of employer support for survivors of domestic violence that is appropriate to the workplace and the company.

Some recent Canadian collective agreements have included:

- reasonable time off to deal with the effects of violence and to pursue the legal remedies that are often necessary.
- "no discipline clause" when poor performance or absenteeism is caused by domestic violence.
- assistance in finding help, support and escape from violent situations, even transfer to another locality by the company if that's possible.
- creation of the position of "women's advocate".

Strategies for small businesses

If you are an employer with a small staff, it is often financially impractical to develop large-scale programs such as an Employee Assistance Program. However, there are realistic options to address domestic violence that spills into the workplace.

The following tips could help:

- Encourage individuals, especially victims of domestic violence, to save threatening emails or voice mails. These items can be used as evidence for future legal action or to demonstrate that an existing protection or prevention order has been violated.
- Allow victim to have priority parking near the building.
- Screen calls by routing them through main reception or security.
- Relocate the victim's workplace to a more secure area.
- Provide a picture of the abuser to reception areas and/or security.
- Provide escorts to walk with victim to and from a vehicle or public transportation.
- Install desk panic buttons.
- Post the domestic violence resource list in your workplace.
- Ask the victim what changes could increase his/her safety.

(Source: Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESOURCE GUIDE SERVICES

EMERGENCY: Toll-Free Province-wide Crisis Line (24 hours) 1-877-977-0007
Local Winnipeg Crisis Line (24 hours) 942-3052

Winnipeg

Evolve/Klinic (A) 784-4070
 Fort Garry Women's Resource Centre (A) ... 477-1123
 Ikwe-Widdjiitiwin (C,E) 987-2780
 toll-free 1-877-977-0007
 Immigrant Women's Counselling
 Services (A) 953-4100
 L'Entre-Temps Des Franco-Manitobaines 925-2550
 The Laurel Centre (A) 783-5460
 Ma Mawi-Wi-Chi Itata Centre (A)
 Spirit of Peace Program 925-0349
 North End Women's Centre (A) 589-7347
 Osborne House (C,E) 942-3052
 Pluri-Elles Center de Femmes (A) 233-1735
 Women in Second-Stage Housing
 (WISH) (F) 275-2600
 Women's Advocacy Program (A) 945-6851

Westman Region

Westman Women's Shelter (C,E)
 Local 727-3644
 toll-free 1-877-977-0007
 Samaritan House Ministries (F) 726-0758
 Women's Advocacy Program (A) 726-6515

Central Region

South Central Committee on Family Violence (C,E)
 Local 325-9957
 toll-free 1-877-977-0007
 Portage Women's Shelter (C,E)
 Local 239-5233
 toll-free 1-877-977-0007

Eastman Region

Eastman Crisis Centre (C,E)
 Local 346-0028
 toll-free 1-877-977-0007

Interlake Region

Lakeshore Women's Resource Centre (C,D)
 Local 768-3016
 Evergreen Women's Resource Centre (C,D)
 Local 642-8264
 Nova House (Selkirk) (C,E)
 Local 482-1200
 toll-free 1-877-977-0007

Parkland Region

Parkland Crisis Centre (C,E)
 Local 638-9484
 toll-free 1-877-977-0007
 Swan Valley Crisis Centre (C,D,F) 734-9368

Norman Region

Snow Lake Centre on Family Violence (C,D)
 Local 358-7141
 The Pas Committee for Women in Crisis (C,E)
 Local 623-5497
 toll-free 1-877-977-0007
 Women's Safe Haven/Resource Service, Flin Flon (A)
 Local 681-3105
 Women's Advocacy Program (A) 627-8483

Thompson Region

Thompson Crisis Centre (C,E) 778-7273
 Toll-free 1-877-977-0007
 Women's Advocacy Program (A) 677-6368

AS A GENERAL RULE

- A. Specialized counselling, non crisis-oriented.
- B. Shelter will refer to contact person in community, if necessary.
- C. Short-term crisis services.

- D. Safe home - residential accommodation in a family home.
- E. Shelter - emergency residential accommodation and counselling services.
- F. Residential second-stage program.

Community Links

Across Canada, many organizations are working on violence prevention. Workplace programs can be most successful when they work in partnership with community agencies that know and understand the dynamics of violent relationships, anti-violence programs, and how to deal with domestic violence and where treatment can be accessed.

- Education and awareness building about the incidence of violence, who is affected and personal rights to safety are important steps. Such information gives people a chance to talk and think about it. Community groups in your area can send someone to talk about a variety of issues, including domestic violence and other forms of violence, including sexual and criminal harassment. There are plenty of brochures on violence against women, child abuse and elder abuse. Distribute brochures with pay cheques, or distribute them at staff or union meetings. Put posters up in the lunchroom and offices.
- To link workplaces with the community, employers and unions can support national and local campaigns on violence prevention, local women's shelters, sexual assault centres and men's treatment programs. In your workplace, you can support community programs to prevent violence against women, and help your community develop needed services for people affected by violence.

- Women's shelters and transition houses provide temporary accommodation and support for abused women and their children for periods of a few days to a few weeks and, in some cases, a few months. They also provide a supportive environment where a woman can consider and discuss her alternatives with other women in similar situations. Some houses offer counselling and follow-up to women and children.

Canada's 400 women's shelters operate in the context of other community services supporting and helping abused women. These include provincial and municipal social services; victim advocacy services; community crisis lines and rape crisis lines; women's support groups; legal aid services; and other groups and agencies. Most transition houses have information about local sources of help.

- Programs for men who abuse and counselling services for anger management and conflict resolution now exist. Information on such services can be a useful addition to violence prevention information kits.
- Employee Assistance Programs can support and use community-based resources like shelters, crisis telephone lines and outside professionals.
- Distribute a Community Resource List: Your community resource list should include the local telephone numbers of key resources that are available to workers facing violence at work or in their homes. Telephone numbers are important because workers need to know where help is available in their community. Make sure the list is small enough so that it can be carried easily.

"We would provide an employee with support and encouragement to acquire external assistance. The employee would be referred to external counselling, or our in-house psychologist. Wherever the employee felt most comfortable..."

Employee Assistance Program counsellor

WORKPLACE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The National Film Board Family Violence Film and Video Catalogue has a listing of films and videos on child abuse, child sexual abuse, wife abuse and elder abuse, available from NFB regional libraries.

The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence (NCFV, Health Canada, Finance Building, Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 1B4) has many useful resources on violence against women. Its staff can refer you to resource people and organizations in your area, such as transition houses and shelters. It also offers an excellent document entitled *Wife Abuse: A Workplace Issue, A Guide for Change* (by Donna Denham and Joan Gillespie). NCFV may be

contacted through their website at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence or call for their resource listings: toll free 1-800-267-1291, TDD toll free: 1-800-561-5643, fax: (613) 941-8930.

The Women's Research Centre and the B.C. Federation of Labour developed a resource called *Taking Action: A Union Guide to Ending Violence Against Women*. This is a handbook that covers issues of wife assault, violence in the workplace, child abuse, sexual assault and sexual harassment. Copies may be obtained from the Manitoba Women's Directorate at 1-800-263-0234 or (204) 945-3476.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)

Fitting domestic violence prevention into Employee Assistance Programs...

Domestic violence like other problems can represent a significant cost to employers. Research among employers trying to deal with violence shows that many rely on their Employee Assistance Plan.

The most successful EAP programs are wide-ranging in the problems they tackle, and generous in the help they offer. Often, they include the following elements:

- a strong commitment to employee assistance among company and union leadership, and joint administration governed by policy and procedures that the union and management both support.
- complete protection of employee confidentiality, normally handled through an arm's-length

relationship with a contracted assessment service that does not disclose personal information -- workers' confidential personal information does not ever find its way back to the workplace.

- outside professional services, when needed, that are also independent of the employer are built into the program design.
- full funding by the employer to an agreed-upon level of services.
- a simple, understandable and private means of contacting Employee Assistance Program counsellors -- full 24-hour, 7-days-a-week plans are available.
- EAP programs work best when they are completely voluntary, available for the whole family, and are not used as a disciplinary tool.

■ EAP programs can be proactive, providing useful feedback to companies (and unions where applicable) about programs that can work to help prevent violence against women. Some can be a cornerstone of workplace programs that educate employees about violence prevention. For example, employers and trade unions committed to supporting women experiencing domestic violence or abusive partners can make paid leave available for the personal and family problems that arise in abusive relationships, and for the legal work that often needs to be handled.

The keys to success in EAP..

Experts agree that four important ingredients are: a firm commitment to EAP by senior company management; the use of community-based resources to help employees in trouble; training supervisors and co-workers to recognize the signs of partner, child or elder abuse; and providing support/encouragement to get help.

Community-based services: Employee Assistance Programs, in larger communities, need not work alone, but can make use of community resources to help employees. Many communities have agencies that can help when violence issues are raised: women's shelters, family counselling services, rape crisis centres, treatment for abusers, and drug and alcohol referral centres. The use of community resources can be built into the design of an EAP.

Typically, EAP programs can draw on a variety of services for abused women: counselling support, police protection at work or at home, financial counselling services, legal aid, emergency housing or permanent social housing agencies, and child care services.

Referral Agents: Those in abusive relationships often find it difficult to seek help on their own. This is where "referral agents" -- especially co-workers -- can play a big role. Co-workers can help employees in distress recognize there is a problem, motivate them to deal with it, and help connect them with the EAP or most appropriate community resource.

Co-workers can be trained to offer help and support to victims of abuse, but the key task is to refer. **Co-workers cannot replace professional services.** No one can make sure that a colleague accepts the help, or force them into an employee assistance program. Often, the situation is so complicated that there's a need for the range of services offered by EAPs.

When you set up an Employee Assistance Plan...

When an employer and/or union decide to set up an EAP, they should resolve to maintain it for the life of the collective agreement, and strike a joint committee, with equal representation from the union and management to administer it.

Strong EAP support is often based on contract clauses dealing with the issues of violence prevention and specific contract language about days off with pay for medical or legal appointments; and education and awareness sessions held during work hours for all employees on the impacts of violence.

There's no need to reinvent the wheel. Companies and unions can jointly "benchmark" a similar enterprise that has a successful Employee Assistance Program.

Union locals can be encouraged to make links with local shelters, help-lines, women's centres or treatment agencies working in the community.

Employers can use their influence in the community to support local shelters and crisis lines.

Don't forget that employee assistance programs can't work alone. Violence prevention happens when employers and unions co-operate to make it happen, and develop a comprehensive violence prevention program within the organization.

Canadian employers and trade unions are helping to break the isolation and silence around all kinds of violence, including domestic violence. These partnerships work.

APPENDIX – Workplace Violence

Violent acts -- and incidents of sexual harassment -- can also be perpetrated by people in the workplace. A national survey conducted by Statistics Canada in 1993 found that 23% of Canadian women had been subjected to harassment, intimidation or humiliation at work -- a total of 2.4 million women. Of these women, 55% identified co-workers, 39% bosses or supervisors and 13% clients or customers as the perpetrators of the violence.

Although the need to protect people from violence at work is a task that crosses gender lines, it is easy enough to see that women may be put in work situations where they are particularly vulnerable. That's why some employers take special steps to make sure that women are safe, and why some trade unions have made women's safety a bargaining issue. That is why governments have passed legislation and regulations that outlaw sexual harassment at work, and made employers legally responsible for maintaining harassment-free workplaces.

Over the last few decades, employers have made strides in developing appropriate and effective policies and programs to address workplace violence and harassment. The following are some of these initiatives.

- Addressing situations where women are especially vulnerable to harassment, abuse or violence from co-workers, supervisors, clients and customers. For example, women may need special protection from working in isolated situations or late at night.
- Training in human rights legislation and programs to reduce gender-based harassment.
- Conducting safety audits of workplaces to heighten security against violence. Safety audits can reduce the chance of sexual assault or harassment. A commitment should be made by management to implement their findings.

Safety audit kits, available from women's and community service groups, provide a checklist of things to look for: lighting and maintenance, visibility and sight lines, isolation from sight and sound, potential assault sites and escape routes, nearby land uses, signs and overall workplace design. Workplaces where employees deal with customers or clients with a potential for conflict or physical endangerment (e.g., banks, welfare workers, prisons) require anti-violence measures based on security concerns.

- Including specific conditions in collective agreements under which women can be asked to work alone, or in isolated settings.
- Having prevention programs, which are particularly important when employees, especially women, work in isolated settings or are at risk of aggressive behaviour by clients, customers, or other employees. A safer community for women is a safer community for everyone.

Workplace Violence Prevention Legislation

In Manitoba, the Workplace Safety and Health Act contains the "Workers Working Alone Regulation", which compels employers to secure workers from risks of victimization through criminal violence. The key concepts include:

- The necessity of assessing all working alone situations to determine the conditions or circumstances which may result in misfortune to the workers working alone and attempt to reduce the probability of such misfortune; and
- The provision of a means of securing assistance for workers working alone in the event of injury or other misfortune.

A Model of Best Practices – Zero Tolerance for Violence

The TD Canada Trust, taking a strong corporate stand against workplace harassment and violence has adopted a “zero tolerance” policy. The bank has a series of easily accessible programs within which employees can seek support and assistance for both violence in the workplace and in the home.

Policies of “zero tolerance” for violence support employee safety, security and equality.

A Best Practices Model for Your Workplace?

Your own “best practices” model of an anti-violence program in your workplace could contain the following elements:

- a working environment in which employees are encouraged to use workplace programming to address their situation, with a flexible, supportive and confidential approach to assisting victims or offenders.
- program flexibility, to allow each worksite to address the issues at its own pace.
- multifaceted awareness, educational and training programs that sensitize both women and men employees to violence prevention.
- using the collective bargaining process to confirm that the workplace is an appropriate venue for preventing violence against women.
- strong vocal support for violence prevention from management and union membership.

Resource material on “Keeping Safe at Work”, a province-wide initiative focusing on the safety of women working alone or travelling to and from work alone, is available on the Manitoba Women’s Directorate and Workplace Health and Safety websites. The material provides valuable tips to increase awareness of potentially threatening situations, and assists employers and employees to plan ahead to avoid crimes of opportunity.

