

# *P*REMIER'S ACTION COMMITTEE ON *F*AMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Dear Employer, Union leader, Employee Assistance or Human Resources Coordinators:

Workplace safety efforts have typically focused on occupational hazards, injury reduction or prevention of harassment or threats from disgruntled customers. Recently employers have begun to focus on the importance of promoting employee health and safety as a mutually sound investment in skills, talents and wellness. Many employers are unaware that violence in the home can affect workplace productivity, safety and relationships.

Research in P.E.I. indicates that Islanders strongly support public education by making violence prevention information easily available. Everyone can play a role by encouraging people to get help early before violence results in tragedy.

Men and women experiencing violence may quietly use the workplace as a place of safety and an escape from the violence. Sometimes people leave employment to appease an abusive partner or take time off to avoid detection. Fear of losing a job can keep abusers from getting treatment. Some people experiencing stress at work take their frustrations home where violence is used to restore a sense of control.

Recognizing that work and life experiences are very connected, the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation (CAALL), a forum for exchange of ideas on labour issues and labour legislation, released in 1997, a generic outline on workplace violence prevention. This material was developed by its Women in Employment sub-committee and focused on woman abuse prevention. In 1999, the P.E.I. Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention established a working group to develop a customized workplace education resource kit for distribution to workplaces in P.E.I.

I am pleased to share this work for your consideration and use in your workplace. The package contains:

- **Best practices for workplace violence prevention**
- **Educational fact sheets on violence and it's impacts**
- **A guide to local counseling and support resources for employees**
- **Pamphlets**
- **Posters**
- **Mirror stickers.**



The Rotary Club of  
Charlottetown Royalty



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The materials have been designed to encourage employers to use them in many ways. They can be distributed in their current form, incorporated into existing documents on workplace safety, included in information on employee assistance programs, reproduced with your own letterhead or logo for distribution, or put on your workplace bulletin boards or newsletters. The posters and stickers are specially designed to be placed in women's washrooms.

I want to thank the sponsors and contributors to this valuable initiative: Rotary Club of Charlottetown Royalty, Occupational Health & Safety Branch of the Workers Compensation Board of PEI, Transition House Association, Gemini Screen Print, and the working group from the Premiers Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention who coordinated the project.

I am also grateful to the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation and the Royal Bank of Canada for their excellent work on workplace violence prevention.

If you wish further information or materials, please contact your local Access PEI Centre or any of the services listed in the resource kit.

Please join in helping us make information on violence prevention available to every Islander.



Hon. Marion Reid, Chair  
Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention



**Best Practices  
for Workplace Promotion of  
Violence Prevention**



This resource package for workplace education on violence prevention, prepared by a working group of the Premier's Action Committee for Family Violence Prevention, is being distributed to workplaces and managers of public spaces across the Island.

The working group includes:

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Cindy Ferguson, Department of Health & Social Services

Joanne Ings, Transition House Association

Ann Sherman, Community Legal Information Association

George Stewart, Workers Compensation Board of PEI

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We welcome your feedback on the resource and information on how it was used in your workplace. Please direct your feedback to Interministerial Women's Secretariat, PO Box 2000, Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7N8.

# Violence in Personal Relationships: An Issue At Work?

## Why Should We Care?

P.E.I.'s Family Violence Survey 2000 reveals that 87% of Islanders are very concerned about the personal, social and economic costs of violence. Seventy-five per cent indicated that education and awareness will help prevent violence. Most people surveyed indicated they would help or intervene in a violent situation but many were unaware of the key services available.

Today, more people know about violence, and that women and children are especially vulnerable to violence in special ways. But is violence against women, children or elders a workplace issue?

Many employers, and many trade unions, think it is.

Violence intrudes at work in two ways. First, violent acts -- and incidents of abuse and sexual harassment -- can occur at 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 source 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. And 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.

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**“In an average year, about 78 women are killed by their husbands and common-law partners and, in 1993, approximately 200,000 women were threatened, slapped, kicked, punched, choked, beaten or sexually assaulted.”**

**Holly Johnson,  
*Dangerous Domains,*  
page 133.**

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Secondly, family violence -- the physical, psychological, emotional or sexual abuse of women and children by women's partners or ex-partners in intimate relationships -- also intrudes into the workplace. It can include stalking, harassment, verbal abuse, even financial abuse. Unfortunately, Canadians are reminded of the consequences of domestic violence almost every day.

Research on the economic costs of family violence indicates that violence against women is a very expensive problem in our society. **The total of the measurable costs relating to health and well-being alone is estimated to be over a billion dollars a year.** This is likely the tip of the iceberg. If the costs, such as those for hospital admissions, physicians' services, and the costs of the policing, legal and judicial systems, the total would certainly be many times greater than this.<sup>1</sup>

At work, there is absenteeism, loss of concentration, fatigue, emotional instability, and reliance on medications or alcohol -- all contributing to decreased productivity. Co-workers feel the strain, too.

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**“Of the 245 women murdered in Canada in 1992, 47% (114 women) were slain by a spouse or boyfriend...”**

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Statistics cannot show the cost of family 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.

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

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**One-quarter of Canadian women have experienced violence at the hands of their partner or past marital partner. One-quarter of Canadian women is sexually assaulted during her lifetime. The majority of Canadian women have been harassed on the job or in public. (Statistics Canada)**

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### **It's Against the Law...**

Domestic violence is against the law: violence against women, children and elders, physical assaults can be criminal offences. Sexual or criminal harassment or stalking is also against the law in Canada. Both affect job performance in similar ways, and can be dealt with using similar strategies.

<sup>1</sup> 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)

<sup>2</sup> *LINK, Violence Against Women and Children in Relationships and the Use of Alcohol and Drugs: Searching for Solutions*, Addiction Research Foundation, Toronto, Ontario, Module 2 page 11.

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

We cannot end violence in personal relationships overnight, but we can support efforts to create safe, healthy, supportive and more productive workplaces.

### **Employers and Unions Can Be Effective Allies...**

Employers and unions have joined together to find ways to make workplaces safer. Today, it is normal for companies to look for ways, for example, to try to assist 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 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 programs rely on proven strategies, similar to those used for years to reduce sexual harassment at work.

Workplace partnerships between unions and employers use these methods:

- a strong, visible and continuous commitment by senior company and trade union management to help prevent violence
- awareness-building and education programs throughout the organization
- workplace safety audits and concrete plans for protection of workers
- making sure domestic violence, and anger management for men with aggressive behaviour, is included in Employee Assistance Programs
- distribution of information about community resources for abused women

- ❑ training human resource personnel to identify the consequences of violence against women and children.

Many companies and unions support anti-violence activities inside and outside the workplace, like the Purple or White Ribbon Campaigns that commemorate the 1989 Montreal massacre every December 6th. They do fundraising for women's shelters and other women's programs in their communities.



## **Why reinvent the wheel....**

Lots of companies, trade unions and employers have found ways to respond to violence in a workplace setting. Strong responses involve strategies to make sure workplaces are safe from violence, and ensure that they are supportive places for women or men experiencing family violence. Joint strategies between labour and management work best, but employers and unions have taken bold steps on their own.

Comprehensive workplace strategies include a variety of initiatives. A “best practices” model would combine some of the following elements:

- 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
- a top-down commitment to address violence prevention, from the union leadership and company management
- awareness and education programs which are accurate and accessible
- an Employee Assistance Program that includes support for victims or offenders
- resource materials for employees and supervisors
- written workplace policies and procedures against violence, harassment, and discrimination
- workplace programs to identify and help employees with violence prevention
- general violence prevention and attention to victim safety
- a “zero tolerance” policy of violence and harassment in the workplace

### **Awareness and Education Programs**

Awareness and education programs take a proactive stance against 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 family 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.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Canadian Auto Workers offer comprehensive anti-violence programs that include kits to be used by union locals; handbooks on building safer communities and workplaces (with instructions about how to conduct workplace safety audits); and training workshops for union leadership, members and union staff about the problems of violence against women.

### **Employee Assistance Programs**

Ideally an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) 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.

### **Resource Materials**

Resource materials about violence and treatment programs are available from the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention, violence counselling and support organizations, family service agencies and trade unions. These need to be visible in the workplace -- it's important that employees who may need help can find out where to get it, as easily as possible. A community resource list, with local agencies' phone numbers, can be distributed with pay cheques, or posted on workplace bulletin boards.

### **Written Workplace Policies and Procedures**

It often helps to have policies and procedures written down, so that women needing help with violence or harassment, especially harassment in the workplace, know how to handle it. Anti-violence policies can be modelled on the harassment policies that are common in most workplaces -- drawn from the Canada Labour Code and Canadian Human Rights Code definitions of gender-based, racial, and other forms of harassment.

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

### **Violence Prevention and Workplace Safety Programs**

Prevention programs are particularly important when employees, especially women, work in isolated settings or are at risk of aggressive behaviour by clients, customers, or other employees.

“Best practices” include safety audits, to reduce the chance of sexual assault or harassment, and a commitment 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.

A safer community for women is a safer community for everyone.

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**“Women do a walk around the workplace, and determine which places in the organization are unsafe -- for example, not enough lighting, or the parking lot is too far; then a program is set with the management which agrees to make the workplace safer.”**

**Union representative**

### **Zero Tolerance for Violence Policy**

The TD Canada Trust, taking a strong corporate stand against workplace harassment and violence, and 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.

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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
- ❑ a focus on policies supporting safety from personal violence **and** workplace action to support workers experiencing domestic violence
- ❑ 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, including opportunities for discussion among men and women about the prevalence and consequences of family violence
- ❑ 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

## 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 family 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. Give 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 sexual harassment, domestic violence 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 a staff or union meetings. Put posters up in the lunch room 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 followup 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.

- ❑ Include information on programs for men who abuse (e.g. Turning Point) and counselling services for anger management and conflict resolution.
- ❑ Employee Assistance Programs can support and use community-based resources like shelters, crisis telephone lines and outside professionals.

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**“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**

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- ❑ **Workplace and Community Safety Audits:** The goal of a safety audit is to help reduce the chance of sexual assault or harassment, and to implement the safety measures that are identified. One of the best Women’s Safety Audit Kits has been developed by the Metro Toronto Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC). It helps women identify the design and safety shortcomings of sites in their communities (and workplaces). Contact METRAC at 158 Spadina Road, Toronto, Ontario M5R 2T8, phone: (416) 392-3135, fax: (416) 392-3136.

- ❑ **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.

**FAMILY VIOLENCE RESOURCE GUIDE  
EMERGENCY SERVICES**

**Anderson House** ..... (toll free) **1-800-240-9894**

**Charlottetown Area** ..... **892-0960**

*24-hour service for physically and emotionally abused women and their children. Emergency shelter, food and clothing; telephone service including crisis support; counseling, emotional support, information and referral. Wheelchair accessible. Women are not admitted if they are under the influence of alcohol or non-prescription drugs or if they exhibit psychiatric problems or if their need is for housing only.*

**Child Abuse Line** ..... (toll free) **1-800-341-6868**

*Child protection services for abused/neglected children. After-hours calls concerning child abuse are screened and, if necessary, referred to workers on call across PEI.*

**PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre** ..... (toll free) **1-800-289-5656**

**Charlottetown Area** ..... **566-8999**

*24-hour crisis line for victims of rape and sexual assault including incest and spousal rape. Trained volunteers answer calls and provide information, advocacy and support.*

**Crime Stoppers** ..... (toll free) **1-800-222-8477 (TIPS)**

*If you are being abused or know of an abusive situation, you can call Crime Stoppers. You will be assigned a code number. We do not require your name. We guarantee that you will remain anonymous.*

**Island Help Line** ..... (toll free) **1-800-218-2885**

*24-hour free, confidential service for all Islanders providing information, support, crisis counseling on family matters, child abuse, alcohol and drugs, parenting and suicide.*

**REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES**

**Child and Family Services**

**Charlottetown** ..... 368-5330  
**Souris** ..... 687-7060  
**Montague** ..... 838-0700  
**Summerside** ..... 888-8100  
**O’Leary** ..... 859-8811

*Financial assistance; homemakers and home helpers; child protection services; general counseling; transportation in cases of special need; day-care subsidy; and other social services.*

**POLICE** ..... 911

**Charlottetown RCMP** ..... 368-9300  
**Summerside RCMP** ..... 436-9300  
**Alberton RCMP** ..... 853-9300  
**Montague RCMP** ..... 838-9300  
**Souris RCMP** ..... 687-9300  
**Charlottetown Police Department** ..... 629-4172  
**Summerside Police Department** ..... 432-1201  
**Borden-Carleton Police Department** ..... 437-2228  
**Kensington Police Department** ..... 836-4499

**HOSPITALS**

**Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Charlottetown** ..... 894-2111  
**Prince County Hospital, Summerside** ..... 432-2500  
**Stewart Memorial Hospital, Tyne Valley** ..... 831-7900  
**Kings County Memorial Hospital, Montague** ..... 838-0777  
**Souris Hospital, Souris** ..... 687-7150  
**Western Hospital, Alberton** ..... 853-8650  
**O’Leary Community Hospital, O’Leary** ..... 859-8700

**HOME CARE AND SUPPORT**

**Charlottetown** ..... 368-4790  
**Montague** ..... 838-0772  
**O’Leary** ..... 859-8730  
**Souris** ..... 687-7096  
**Summerside** ..... 888-8440

*Adult protection; home care nursing; visiting homemakers; occupational therapists; community support workers.*



## **JUSTICE & LEGAL SERVICES**

### **Victim Services**

**Charlottetown** ..... **368-4582**

**Summerside** ..... **888-8217**

*Assists victims of crime across the province. Services include: information and referral; short-term counseling; assistance through the Court process; victim impact statements; and criminal injuries compensation.*

**Community Legal Information Association** ..... **(toll free) 1-800-240-9798**

**Charlottetown** ..... **892-0853**

*Provides basic legal information including free pamphlets on a wide variety of legal topics to the general public.*

### **Crown Attorneys**

**Charlottetown** ..... **368-4595**

**Summerside** ..... **888-8213**

*The Crown Attorneys represent the Attorney General in the prosecution of all criminal cases under the Criminal Code of Canada and Provincial Statutes. In cooperation with Victim Services, Crown Attorneys assist victims with Court preparation upon request.*

**PEI Community Justice Resource Centre** ..... **368-6390**

*Programming of the Centre focuses upon the delivery of services which will develop and reinforce positive lifestyles. Programs include the Turning Point Program which is a men's group counselling program aimed at helping men to stop violence against their female partners; the Female Anger Management Program; the Male Anger Management Program; and the Sexual Deviance Assessment /Treatment Program.*

### **Family Legal Aid**

**Charlottetown** ..... **368-6043**

**Summerside** ..... **888-8219**

*Services to low-income clients in family law matters such as separation, divorce, custody; for victims of family violence; also for child protection cases.*

### **Family Court Counsellors**

**Charlottetown** ..... **368-6056**

*Reports to the Court, e.g., custody reports ordered by Supreme Court Justices; family and marital counseling; and referral to appropriate legal and other agencies.*

**Consumer Services** ..... (toll free) **1-800-658-1799**  
**Charlottetown** ..... **368-4580**  
*Assistance and counselling is available to any consumer with a debt-related problem.*

**Lawyer Referral Service** ..... (toll free) **1-800-240-9798**  
**Charlottetown Area** ..... **892-0853**  
*Legal advice provided early before your problems become complicated or expensive. Nominal fee for one-half hour advice. Monday to Friday. 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.*

**Maintenance Enforcement**

**Charlottetown** ..... **368-6010**  
*Enforcement of provincial orders and agreements and contact for out-of-province enforcement for the benefit of child and spousal support.*

**COUNSELLING**

**Community Mental Health Services**

**Charlottetown** ..... **368-4430**  
**Summerside** ..... **888-8180**  
**Montague** ..... **838-0782**  
**Souris** ..... **687-7096**  
**West Prince** ..... **888-8180**  
*Treatment, assessment and consultation services.*

**COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Transition House Association Outreach Services**

**West Prince: Valerie Smallman** ..... **859-8849**  
**East Prince: Norma McColeman** ..... **436-0517**  
**Eastern PEI: Gwyn Davies** ..... **838-0795**  
**Queens County: Gloria Dennis** ..... **566-1480**  
*A free and confidential service providing emotional support for women victimized by family violence.*

**Community and Family Services of PEI**

**Charlottetown** ..... **892-2441**  
*Individual, family and marital counselling; information and referral; family life education; family advocacy; and specialize in anger management for victims and abusers. Ladies auxiliary provides a Christmas shop for low-income clients.*

**Catholic Family Services Bureau**

**Charlottetown** ..... **894-3515**

*Individual, marital and family counselling; support and self-help groups; family life education program, and advocacy on behalf of clients.*

**Prince County Family Services Bureau**

**Summerside** ..... **436-9171**

*Supportive counselling and referrals for families of limited income and for unmarried mothers.*

**Salvation Army**

**Charlottetown** ..... **892-8870**

**(after hours)** ..... **566-9982**

**Summerside** ..... **888-3870**

**(after hours)** ..... **436-8072**

*24-hour service. Emergency shelter, food and clothing; transportation in emergency cases if needed; pastoral counselling; operation of a senior citizen home; and provision of a chaplain to the Correctional Centre.*

## **WORKPLACE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES:**

P.E.I. Transition House Association offers education and training programs on Woman Abuse as a Workplace Issue. These sessions can be presented in a lunch hour, half day or full day format for both employees and managers. For more information call Transition House Association at 894-3354.

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 (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, including 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). 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 has a resource called *Taking Action: A Union Guide to Ending Violence Against Women*. A handbook that covers issues of wife assault, violence in the workplace, child abuse, rape and sexual assault and sexual harassment. To order, contact the Women's Research Centre, (Suite 101 - 2245 West Broadway, Vancouver, V6K 2E4), telephone: (604) 734-0485, fax: (604) 734-0484.

## Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)

### Fitting violence prevention into Employee Assistance Programs...

Family 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, seven-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 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 three important ingredients are: a firm commitment to EAP by senior company management; the use of community-based resources to help employees in trouble; and training 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. Using 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:** Women 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 an employee in distress recognize there is a problem, motivate her to deal with it, and help connect her with the EAP or most appropriate community resource.

Co-workers can be trained to offer help and support to abused women, 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.

But very often, this is the help that victims or offenders need to get through a crisis.

## **When you set up an Employee Assistance Plan...**

When an employer and 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; legal services and support paid by the employer; and education and awareness sessions for all employees on the impacts of violence, during work hours.

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 transition houses, 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 cooperate 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 violence against women, in the workplace and in their communities. These partnerships work.

## Family Violence: A Private Problem?

Believing that family violence is a private matter makes it harder for people caught in violent relationships to look for help since the silence perpetuates 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, but 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 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.**

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. These are complex personal issues, too: 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.

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**“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**

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

When this happens, even workplaces that specifically offer help in dealing with the consequences of violence can be prevented from doing more. 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.

### **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 genders, 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.

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**"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**

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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 family violence among employees and supervisors. There are posters about family violence, and brochures. The 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. Workplaces where everybody believes they can help -- and people know the services that are available in the workplace and in the community for survivors of violent relationships.

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 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.

**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.

Remember This .....

- Nothing “justifies” abusive behavior. 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 behavior 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.

Tell them you believe in their ability to make changes and tell them there is help available.

Family 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.

## **Women's Safety at Work: A Special Concern**

The costs of violence against women -- both violence that occurs in the workplace and the consequences of family violence among women employees -- are very high. As well as the health consequences, workplace research points to increased absenteeism, poor morale, lower productivity and higher stress. Violence against women is no longer a hidden problem for Canadian employers and trade unions.

Situations exist where women are especially vulnerable to harassment, abuse or violence from co-workers, supervisors, clients and customers; for example, they may need special protection from working in isolated situations or late at night.

Workplaces are also becoming important terrain in efforts to prevent family violence. Violent partners intrude into the workplace setting by telephone, or by harassing women on their way to and from work or by showing up at the workplace.

If a woman is leaving an abusive partner, his knowledge of her work location may become the point of attempted contact with her, particularly if she has concealed her new home address. When abusive partners show up at work, the result can be upsetting not only to the woman, but also to other employees, and can disclose the violence before the woman is ready to take that step.

**When a woman takes steps to leave an abusive situation, she and those closest to her 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 may need time off for medical treatments, to handle legal actions, court or mediation sessions.

### **What Can Be Done to Make Workplaces Safer?**

- ❑ workplaces where employees deal with customers or clients with a potential for conflict or physical endangerment (eg. banks, welfare workers, prisons) require anti-violence measures based on security concerns

- policies can be developed about sexual harassment that protect women from co-workers, supervisors, clients and customers
- for survivors of family 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
- safety audits can help protect women from the dangers of working alone at night, or in isolated locations.

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**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.**

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Today, Canadian employers and unions support initiatives aimed at preventing or reducing violence against women. Many companies and unions support anti-violence activities outside the workplace, like the Purple or White Ribbon Campaigns, or fundraising for women's shelters and other abuse education programs in their communities.

Employers and unions are becoming increasingly aware of the need to respond -- at work -- to violence issues. Employers and unions are agreeing to recognize women's rights to refuse work in a situation where they might be harassed, or feel endangered. Some collective agreements now include the specific conditions under which women can be asked to work alone, or in isolated settings.

### **What Should We Do?**

Here's what some Canadian employers and unions are doing to make workplaces safer:

- safety audits of workplaces to heighten security against violence
- training in human rights legislation and programs to reduce gender-based harassment
- multi-faceted awareness, educational and training programs to sensitize both men and women employees to the social and emotional costs of violence and services available

- workplace awareness and education programs to sensitize employees to the problems of family violence and ways to be helpful
- union and employer-supported counselling and for Employee Assistance programs
- where to get legal assistance, sometimes paid for by employers, to obtain court protection from abuse, violence and harassment
- distribution in the workplace of materials on community resources that can benefit people experiencing abuse.