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# Addressing Domestic Violence in the Workplace

## A Handbook for the Workplace



## **Addressing Domestic Violence in the Workplace Handbook**

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## Addressing Domestic Violence in the Workplace: A Handbook

### Preface

Domestic violence is the “fastest growing type of workplace violence in Canada” (ACWS 2008, p. 1). It is considered workplace violence because its consequences can extend beyond the home into the workplace. This handbook aims to raise awareness about the prevalence and effects of domestic violence in the workplace. It also provides suggestions to the employer, supervisor, union, joint health and safety committee/health and safety representative, co-workers and victims on how to address this issue. Due to the complexity of workplace violence in the health and community care sector, Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA) uses the CalOSHA workplace violence classification system (1998). In this system, used in the PSHSA series, *A Guide to the Development of a Workplace Violence Prevention System*, domestic violence is considered Type IV.

The PSHSA supports the prevention and reduction of workplace injuries and occupational diseases in Ontario’s healthcare sector by helping organizations adopt preventive best practices and approaches. PSHSA is a non-profit organization designated as the Safe Workplace Association for the healthcare education and municipal sectors under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

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## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
Recognizing Domestic Violence .....	4
The Effects of Domestic Violence .....	5
Incorporating Domestic Violence in a Workplace Violence Prevention Program.....	6
Protection Measures: .....	7
Victim and Co-worker Assistance:.....	7
Legal Measures: .....	8
Employer Actions .....	8
Supervisor Actions .....	9
Union Actions .....	10
Joint Health and Safety Committee/ Health and Safety Representative Actions.....	10
Co-worker Actions .....	10
Disclosure .....	11
Workplace Domestic Violence Education Program .....	12
Putting This Knowledge to Work .....	13
Conclusion.....	15
Resources Available for Victims of Domestic Violence.....	15
Glossary of Terms .....	21
References .....	21





## INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is on the rise in Canada, and is the “fastest growing type of workplace violence in Canada” (ACWS 2008, p. 1). Domestic violence is not restricted to the home; it can affect the workplace as well, and therefore becomes workplace violence.

Violence in the workplace is a growing issue in the health and community care sector as well. Domestic violence is an important consideration, since, when it enters the workplace, it negatively affects the victim, co-workers and the organization. Employers and workers often do not recognize domestic violence as a workplace hazard. They may believe that domestic violence is a personal issue and that workplace parties can do nothing about it. This makes it even harder for a victim to ask for help (Government of Manitoba 2009). Amendments to the *Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act* ensure employers have a legal obligation to address the risk of workplace violence.

Domestic violence is workplace violence as soon as it occurs in the workplace, and can threaten the safety of not only the employee victim but also his or her co-workers, supervisors and clients. Its effects range from interference felt by all employees to serious harm to an individual. These can lead to significant organizational costs.

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*Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviour used by one person to gain power and control over another with whom he/she has or has had an intimate relationship. It may include physical violence, sexual, emotional and psychological intimidation, verbal abuse, stalking, and use of electronic devices to harass and control. Anyone can be a victim of domestic violence, regardless of age, race, religion, sexual orientation, economic status or educational background. The abuser may be a current or former spouse or intimate partner, relative or friend.*

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The employer, supervisor, union, co-workers and joint health and safety committees (JHSC) or health and safety representatives (HSR) can take proactive steps to prevent domestic violence from entering the workplace and minimize its negative effects.

This handbook provides practical suggestions that all workplace parties can adopt to raise awareness of domestic violence in the workplace and reduce the risk. It outlines:

- The effects of domestic violence in the workplace on the organization and workers;
- Ways to recognize the signs and symptoms of domestic violence;
- The roles of the employer, supervisor, union, JHSC/HSR and employees in supporting victims of domestic violence and preventing related workplace violence;
- Practical suggestions for including domestic violence in the organization’s workplace violence prevention program.



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*Domestic violence is also known as Personal Relationship Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, Woman Abuse or Family Violence. The term Domestic Violence is most widely used in Ontario and Canada.*

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## RECOGNIZING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Some victims may not realize that the actions they are enduring constitute domestic violence. Co-workers witnessing such behaviour or hearing victims' confidences may also not understand this. This may be due in part to the fact that 66 per cent of violent workplace incidents are committed by someone the victim knows (OWJN 2008).

The following behaviours and actions have been identified as those used by perpetrators to interfere with their victims' work.

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*Between 2002 and 2007, a total of 166 domestic violence death cases resulted in 230 deaths: 142 women, 23 children and 65 men. In most cases, women were the victims and men the perpetrators. The majority of male deaths were perpetrator suicides. (Annual Report of the Ontario Coroner's Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, 2008)*

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**Attempts to prevent the victim from getting to work or looking for work, such as:**

- Interfering with transportation by hiding or stealing the victim's car keys or transportation money
- Hiding or stealing the victim's identification cards;
- Threatening deportation if the victim was sponsored;
- Failing to show up to care for children; and
- Physically restraining the victim.



**Interfering with the victim at work by:**

- Repeatedly phoning or emailing him or her;
- Stalking and/or watching the victim;
- Showing up at the workplace and pestering co-workers with questions about the victim (where is she/he, who is she/he with, when will she/he be back, etc.);
- Lying to co-workers (she/he's sick today, she/he's out of town, she/he's home with a sick child, etc.);
- Threatening co-workers (If you don't tell me, I'll...);
- Verbally abusing the victim or co-workers;
- Displaying jealous and controlling behaviours;
- Destroying the victim's or organization's property; and
- Physically harming the victim and/or co-workers.

*(Swanberg, Macke & Logan 2006; Swanberg, Macke & Logan 2007; Zachary 2000)*

*The most common tactics are repeated harassing phone calls, and harassing in person at the workplace.*

*(Swanberg, Macke & Logan 2006)*

**The victim may:**

- Try to cover bruises;
- Be sad, lonely, withdrawn and afraid;
- Have trouble concentrating on a task;
- Apologize for the perpetrator's behaviour;
- Be nervous about speaking in the perpetrator's presence;
- Make last-minute excuses/cancellations;
- Use drugs or alcohol to cope; and
- Miss work frequently or more often than usual.

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*Many of the deaths in Ontario related to domestic violence occurred when a relationship was ending or after separation. An employee who has separated or is thinking about separating from an abusive partner is at greater risk of death. Take stalking seriously. Stalking has been identified as one of the primary risk factors for attempted and actual murder of female partners in intimate relationships. Even if she has a restraining order, there is no guarantee that the abuser will respect it. Steps need to be taken to ensure the victim's safety if she is being stalked or a restraining order is breached.*

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## **THE EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Once it transfers to the workplace, domestic violence affects the victim, co-workers, supervisors, union representatives, JHSC/HSR and the employer.

The effects of domestic violence in the workplace can include:

- Reduced employee productivity;
- Increased absenteeism;
- Replacement, recruitment and training costs when victims are injured or dismissed for poor performance;



- Higher company health expenses;
- Decreased employee morale;
- Strained co-worker relations;
- Potential harm to employees, co-workers and/or clients when violent abusers enter the workplace; and
- Liability costs if anyone at the workplace is harmed.

Increased absenteeism and/or decreased productivity may be interpreted by a supervisor or employer as an employee's lack of responsibility or neglect of job duties. 54 per cent of domestic violence victims miss three or more days of work a month (Zachary 2000).

Co-workers, supervisors and union representatives may also feel the effects of domestic violence, either from witnessing harmful behaviour toward the victim or being threatened themselves. While defending the victim, a co-worker may be caught in the middle. Any worker who is distracted and not focused on the task at hand may become a safety hazard and increase the risk of injury to other workers or clients.

For the organization, increased absenteeism and sick time and decreased productivity translate into significant costs (Riger, Raja & Camacho 2002; Swanberg & Macke 2006). Organizations also face recruitment and replacement costs if victims quit their jobs because of domestic violence or are dismissed for reduced work productivity.

Even clients and visitors can feel the effects of domestic violence if they witness an incident in the workplace. This could include threatening behaviour, property destruction, physical attack or victim kidnapping. Such events could have both physical and psychological health implications.

The social costs of violence against women – including healthcare for victims, criminal justice, social services and lost productivity – are estimated in the billions of dollars. The psychological impacts for victims, their family and friends cannot be measured in dollars (Statistics Canada 2006)

## **INCORPORATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN A WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM**

Amendments to Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* require employers to take reasonable precautions to protect employees from domestic violence in the workplace. This means having a plan in place to minimize the impact of domestic violence when it enters the workplace. The plan could include training or orientation sessions for management and staff to help them recognize the signs of domestic violence. When both partners in a violent situation work in the organization, the employer needs to respond effectively to both the perpetrator and the victim. For example, female victims sometimes use force against the abuser in self-defense or self-protection – conduct that may at first glance appear aggressive. Appropriate and effective training can help management identify the “primary aggressor” and devise a proper plan to respond to the violence. As well, a police investigation or advice from community





services can help an employer address the violence in an informed manner. In Canada, almost 20 percent of all incidents of violent victimization, including physical assaults, sexual assault and robbery, occurred while the victim was at work (Statistics Canada 2004). Thirty-eight per cent of Canadian nurses experience domestic violence (Anderson 2002).

Some organizations incorporate domestic violence within their violence prevention policy, while others develop a separate one. Less than 50 per cent of Canadian workplaces have policies to manage this risk (ACWS 2008). Whatever the organization chooses, employers should not tolerate any type of violent behaviour, including domestic violence. Employers can be proactive, and put the following precautions in place regardless of whether domestic violence incidents or complaints have been reported in the past. These include:

- A clearly stated policy on domestic violence;
- Public education materials about help available to victims and abusers, displayed in accessible areas such as lunch rooms, washrooms, company website;
- Regular training and education about domestic violence at all levels of the organization;
- policies about paid time off, extended leaves of absence and workplace relocation for victims of domestic violence, as well as accountability measures for abusers in the organization;
- Employer procedures for handling an incident/potential incident and disclosing information on a “need to know” basis to protect confidentiality while ensuring worker safety;
- A list of services, such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), a local women’s shelter, the police and the Assaulted Women’s Helpline that can support the worker in various ways; and
- Assistance in developing a personal safety plan that considers not only a worker’s needs at work and at home, but also those of her children.

### PROTECTION MEASURES:

- Managers, supervisors, security personnel, JHSC/HSR, union representatives and co-workers should take clear and simple steps if domestic violence enters the workplace.
- Effective safety planning ensures the victim’s safety and well-being, and that of her children and co-workers.

### VICTIM AND CO-WORKER ASSISTANCE:

- Provide lists of internal and community resources to help the victim, perpetrator, witnesses and co-workers.
- While first ensuring a safe workplace, respect the victim’s privacy as much as possible (*Swanberg, Logan & Macke 2005; Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital 2008*)

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*All persons in Ontario, including professionals who work with children, must promptly report to a Children’s Aid Society (CAS) when they have reasonable grounds to believe that a child is or may be in need of protection. If you have concerns, contact your local CAS. You can supply details without having to provide identifying information. They will tell you if you need to make a formal report.*

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## LEGAL MEASURES:

Under the OHSA, workplace violence means:

- a) The exercise of physical force by a person against a worker in a workplace that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker;
- b) An attempt to exercise physical force against a worker in a workplace that could cause physical injury to the worker;
- c) A statement or behaviour that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker.

Domestic violence in the workplace is interpreted in a manner consistent with this definition. In broader terms, domestic violence can include emotional and psychological intimidation, verbal abuse and use of electronic devices to harass and control. Because an abuser may exhibit a number of controlling behaviours, emotional abuse can quickly turn into physical violence. Such abuse or harassment can be disruptive and harmful to the victim and may lead victims to believe they are at risk of physical injury.

## EMPLOYER ACTIONS

The employer can proactively plan and establish the following basic precautions:

- Develop a guide for the workplace in consultation with the JHSC/ HSR. This can incorporate strategies for dealing with the perpetrator if he or she appears at the workplace or works there.
- Develop a training program for domestic violence in consultation with the JHSC/HSR.
- Train all staff on measures and procedures for the prevention of workplace violence including domestic violence. Training should encompass identification of domestic violence, communication and de-escalation techniques.
- Establish specific actions that the employer, supervisor or others can take in domestic violence situations in the workplace.
- Establish and train an inter-disciplinary team of internal resources (management, human resources, security, etc.) and external specialists (EAP, police, women's shelter staff, threat assessment experts, etc.) to respond to domestic violence in the workplace. An existing emergency response team (such as Code White) with additional training may suffice.
- Have a staff team ready to respond swiftly and effectively when an employee discloses concerns about domestic violence. One member of this team should support and work directly with the employee.
- Outline potential case-specific solutions that may be offered to the victim. These include flexible work hours or workload, security escorts to vehicles, extended leave periods, personal workplace safety planning, personal alarms, cell phone with direct dial to 911, etc.
- Develop a security plan for the workplace. This includes specifying when police are to be called and when doors should be locked. Other elements of the plan can include pre-programming telephones with emergency contact numbers, installing desk or wall panic buttons, providing personal alarms and creating code words or phrases to indicate a potential situation.
- Develop a list of resources for victims, and make copies easily accessible in staff rooms, washrooms or on the organization's computer system.



- Emphasize that confidentiality will be maintained on a “need to know” basis, that victims of domestic violence will be supported and that their employment will continue.
- Offer an employee assistance program (EAP) for domestic violence situations, and inform the victim that it also offers support to the perpetrator.
- Establish a company hotline for employees to report threatening situations that they have experienced or witnessed.
- Develop, in consultation with the JHSC/HSR, a chain-of-command reporting, investigation and follow-up procedure.
- In consultation with the JHSC/HSR, develop management training programs on work/family issues.  
*(Anderson 2002; Rothman et al. 2007; Swanberg, Logan & Macke 2005; Swanberg, Macke & Logan 2006; Swanberg, Macke & Logan 2007)*

## SUPERVISOR ACTIONS

In addition to the training provided by the employer, supervisors can educate workers about workplace violence prevention procedures and resources. They have greater influence over case-specific support strategies. The supervisor’s basic precautions and planning activities should include:

- Training and educating all employees about assistance available from the employer;
- Appearing approachable to encourage victims or co-workers to report;
- Providing specific training to security staff about domestic violence, and training all staff about security procedures for responding to a call;
- Making information available about legal, counselling and safety planning resources;
- Distributing brochures describing the implications of domestic violence on the workplace;
- Posting a domestic violence resource list in an accessible and visible location;
- Securing the work site;
- Enforcing the violence prevention policy, including domestic violence; and
- Conducting periodic workplace checks to ensure all security requirements are in place and operating *(Anderson 2002; Rothman et al. 2007; Zachary 2000)*

If an employee discloses the potential for domestic violence at work, the supervisor should consider the following case-specific strategies:

- Help the victim create a workplace safety plan.
- Encourage the victim to develop a personal safety plan for herself and her children while at home, conducting personal business and en route to and from work.
- Encourage the victim to save threatening voicemails or emails in case legal action needs to be taken.
- Give the victim priority parking near the building.
- With the victim’s input, screen calls, relocate her work to a secure area and/or provide the perpetrator’s photo or physical description to reception and security.
- Escort the victim to and from a vehicle or public transportation.
- Find out what the victim needs to stay safe and, in consultation with her, seek police assistance and/or file charges.



- Advise the victim to seek medical treatment.

## UNION ACTIONS

The union plays an important role in protecting the interests of workers/members and in working with management to address domestic violence. This includes:

- Teaching union leaders and stewards to recognize signs of domestic violence;
- helping the victim create a workplace safety plan;
- Co-operating with supervisors, human resources, security, eap, etc. To co-ordinate prevention and response initiatives;
- Supporting victims of domestic violence whether or not they disclose the facts to management;
- Discussing with the victim her/his individual needs and resources available (e.g. Enhanced security, flexible work schedule, time off, temporary leave, protection orders, etc.); and
- Negotiating flexible hours, leave options, transfer and relocation, safety planning, security measures, etc. In collective agreements *(AFSCME 2009; Government of Manitoba 2009; OFL 2009; Safe@Work Coalition 2009; Shelternet 2009)*

## JOINT HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE/ HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE ACTIONS

The joint health and safety committee in large workplaces, and health and safety representatives in smaller workplaces, play a leading role in creating healthy and safe workplaces. This includes:

- Recognizing the signs of domestic violence and recommending prevention initiatives;
- Serving on an interdisciplinary team or incident team dealing with domestic violence;
- Evaluating the risks associated with domestic violence in the workplace when doing hazard reviews and risk assessment;
- Making recommendations to eliminate or control domestic violence (e.g. Security measures, safety planning, risk assessment);
- Participating in worker awareness training about domestic violence;
- Monitoring the organization's workplace violence prevention program and making written recommendations to the employer for worker safety; and
- Fostering the internal responsibility system (irs) within the organization (if issues are not resolved by the employer, the JHSC is entitled to contact the Ministry of Labour) *(CCOHS 2007; Ontario Ministry of Labour 2002).*

## CO-WORKER ACTIONS

Once co-workers are trained to recognize the signs of domestic violence, they can offer appropriate support such as:

- Spending break time with the victim;
- Listening to and believing what the victim is saying to let her know she has support;
- Not blaming the victim or the perpetrator, nor telling the victim what to do;
- Providing a list of available resources and encouraging the victim to seek professional help; and



- Offering to screen the perpetrator’s phone calls or emails. *(Swanberg, Macke & Logan 2006; Swanberg, Macke & Logan 2007)*

*Victims are more likely to confide in a co-worker than a supervisor, trained human resources person or security. (Swanberg & Macke 2006)*

## DISCLOSURE

A plan to prevent domestic violence from entering the workplace has a better chance of success if the employer is well informed of all the risk factors. Open disclosure therefore decreases the risk for everyone at the workplace, since the most effective prevention strategies can be implemented when the employer is aware of the actual threats.

Due to the stigma associated with domestic violence, however, many victims are not willing to disclose the facts. The chart on the next page provides some reasons why a victim may or may not choose to disclose. Employers, supervisors, unions, and JHSC/HSRs should attempt to address the reasons for not disclosing to increase victim confidence in workplace supports and raise the organization’s disclosure rate *(Swanberg & Macke 2006)*.

Why victims might choose <i>not</i> to disclose:	Why victims might choose <i>to</i> disclose:
Doesn’t trust the employer.	Has a sympathetic supervisor, co-workers or union representatives who are willing to listen. She therefore feels safe in the work environment.
Fears losing her job.	Needs someone to confide in and talk to.
Cultural taboo.	Wants to explain decreased work performance, increased absences or tardiness to avoid losing her job.
Invasion of privacy.	Needs time off from work for court appearances.
Seen as a personal or private matter.	Wants to confirm supervisor, co-worker or union representative suspicions.
Fear of humiliation by the perpetrator.	Wants to explain reasons for calling in sick or appearing upset at work; physical injuries and bruises.
Too ashamed to speak about it.	Wants to explain past/future phone calls or visits from the perpetrator.
Co-worker, supervisor or union representative might be friends of the perpetrator	Wants to warn the workplace that the perpetrator may show up there.





Fear of being held responsible for the domestic violence	Is afraid for her safety.
Fear that the perpetrator will be harmed.	Wants support to call the police or other helpers.
Fear that perpetrator will seek revenge.	Knows her rights and wants justice.
Belief that the employer neither cares nor has time for domestic violence problems.	

*(Paluzzi & Houde-Quimby 1996; Swanberg, Logan & Macke 2005; Swanberg, Macke & Logan 2006; Swanberg, Macke & Logan 2007)*

- Once a victim discloses, she/he can take the following steps to support the domestic violence prevention plan:
- Share ideas with the employer, supervisor, union or JHSC/HSR on making changes to increase safety for everyone. This includes threat assessment, safety planning and risk management.
- Identify an emergency contact in case the employer is unable to contact the victim.
- Make the employer aware of court orders such as custody orders, peace bonds and restraining orders.
- Supply a photo and physical description of the perpetrator and his vehicle.
- Develop a personal safety plan for work and non-work times (see resource section), on her/his own or with the assistance of the employer or community specialists.

## WORKPLACE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EDUCATION PROGRAM

An education program at the workplace should provide general information on domestic violence with the goals of:

- Better protecting employees from domestic violence in the workplace;
- Increasing awareness of the implications domestic violence has for workplace health and safety;
- Increasing disclosure rates;
- Ensuring victim disclosure results in appropriate responses by the employer, supervisor, union, JHSC/HSR and co-workers.

The program should include the following information for the supervisor, JHSC members/HSR, union representatives and front-line workers as appropriate:

- Prevalence of domestic violence in society and how it is primarily directed at women.
- Signs, symptoms and consequences of domestic violence transferred to the workplace. This includes characteristics exhibited by a victim and common perpetrator tactics.
- Organizational procedures for handling domestic violence incidents. This includes specific actions to take when domestic violence enters the workplace, as well as reminders about the importance of maintaining employee confidentiality to the fullest extent possible.
- Additional pressures faced by immigrant and refugee women, Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, racialized women, women of faith, etc.



- Supportive and effective responses following victim disclosure.
- Assessment of violent or threatening conduct.
- Personal safety planning for victims and co-workers.
- The right time to call police.
- Available workplace policies and practices to accommodate a victim’s needs (leaves of absence, flexible work hours).
- Organizational resources such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Community resources (consider posting the list in washrooms, perhaps on a tear-off pad). *(Swanberg, Logan & Macke 2005; Swanberg, Macke & Logan 2007; Zachary 2000)*

## PUTTING THIS KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

The following case study illustrates how the employer, supervisor, union, JHSC and co-workers might respond to a domestic violence situation.

*Jane has worked as a registered practical nurse in a hospital for five years. Over the past six months, her co-workers have seen a new pattern in Jane’s behaviour: increased tardiness and absenteeism, and distraction when caring for her patients. The administration staff states that Jane’s partner calls several times during her shift demanding to speak with her immediately every time. Jane always seems disturbed after those calls and often excuses herself to retreat to a private area. The joint health and safety committee member has noticed that Jane seems to be emotionally distraught during her shifts. She is always willing to pick up extra shifts or work overtime. A concerned co-worker has contacted her union representative. Jane’s supervisor suspects she is afraid to go home to her partner, but this is just speculation since she has not disclosed her situation to anyone at work.*

The table below outlines actions that co-workers, supervisor, employer, union and JHSC may take without or with Jane’s disclosure.

Without Jane’s Disclosure	With Jane’s Disclosure
<p>Co-worker response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spend time with Jane during breaks or lunch and offer to listen.</li> <li>• Offer to meet Jane for coffee outside the work environment in case she does not feel comfortable disclosing at work</li> </ul>	<p>Co-worker response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become familiar with how Jane’s partner looks and sounds in case he appears at work. This will help in notifying security or calling the police if an immediate safety concern arises.</li> <li>• Offer to screen calls from Jane’s partner.</li> <li>• Provide Jane with a list of places to go for help.</li> </ul>
<p>Supervisor response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discourage gossip and promote privacy for all workers, especially Jane.</li> </ul> <p>Enforce consequences for inappropriate breach of confidentiality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have information available about legal, counselling and other resources.</li> </ul>	<p>Supervisor response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer to listen if Jane chooses to disclose.</li> <li>• Be approachable and assure Jane that her employment is not in jeopardy.</li> <li>• Help Jane find resources to create a personal safety plan.</li> <li>• Provide training to security staff in case</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the availability of the Employee Assistance Program with all workers.</li> </ul>	<p>Jane’s partner appears at work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In consultation with Jane, ask administration staff to screen her phone calls.</li> <li>Provide a recent photo of her partner to security/reception.</li> <li>• Suggest medical treatment</li> </ul>
<p>Employer response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer an employee assistance program to all workers and their families.</li> <li>• In consultation with the JHSC, develop, enforce and evaluate a violence prevention program that incorporates domestic violence.</li> <li>• Offer training programs for all staff to increase awareness of domestic violence and outline organizational processes and supports.</li> <li>• Enforce “need to know” confidentiality policies for all staff.</li> </ul>	<p>Employer response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer to listen if Jane chooses to disclose.</li> <li>• Allow schedule and workload flexibility if Jane requires time off to deal with her domestic situation.</li> <li>• Undertake a threat assessment through expert resources (police, external specialists).</li> <li>• In consultation with the JHSC, develop, evaluate and enforce a case-specific safety plan for the workplace.</li> <li>• Provide a security escort for Jane when she enters and exits the building.</li> <li>• Provide a personal alarm and cell phone with direct dial to 911.</li> <li>• Secure the premises and parking lot.</li> <li>• Install panic buttons on the floor where Jane works.</li> </ul>
<p>Union response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discourage gossip.</li> <li>• Maintain confidentiality on a “need to know” basis.</li> <li>• Encourage the use of EAP and local community services.</li> <li>• Offer to spend time with Jane.</li> </ul>	<p>Union response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign a union representative to informally interact with and support Jane.</li> <li>• Encourage Jane to use internal or external resources to create personal and workplace safety plans.</li> <li>• Work with management to implement security measures and safety planning.</li> <li>• Encourage Jane to document all incidents of domestic violence.</li> </ul>
<p>Joint health and safety committee response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage a committee member to spend time with Jane.</li> <li>• Conduct a general hazard/risk assessment that includes domestic violence in the workplace.</li> <li>• Encourage management to increase awareness of domestic violence in the workplace.</li> </ul>	<p>Joint health and safety committee response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help Jane find resources to create a safety plan.</li> <li>• In consultation with Jane, discuss options for increased security measures.</li> <li>• Undertake a threat assessment through expert resources (police, external specialists).</li> <li>• As part of an interdisciplinary team, identify and evaluate hazards and risks related to domestic</li> </ul>



	violence in the workplace (or co-ordinate with external experts).
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## CONCLUSION

Today’s leading companies promote the personal safety and well-being of their employees because it benefits employees, the employer and the company’s bottom line. It is in an organization’s best interests to implement policies and programs to address domestic violence in the workplace. It is also a legal requirement. Amendments to Ontario’s Occupational Health and Safety Act oblige employers to take reasonable precautions to protect an employee from domestic violence in the workplace. Employers need to be alert to the signs of domestic violence and able to assess potential risk to the victim, co-workers and other bystanders. They must also have policies and programs in place to minimize risks.

Helping employees feel safe by addressing their personal safety issues and connecting them with appropriate community resources can contribute to a healthier, more productive workforce. It can also prevent serious injuries and fatalities.

The suggestions outlined in this handbook should help organizations establish prevention measures and procedures and build a resource list. They also help employers develop, in consultation with the JHSC/HSR, an education program to raise awareness of domestic violence in the workplace. While every organization is different, being prepared and having an idea of what you can do will minimize the impact of this serious issue on the workplace.

## RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Many resources for the prevention of domestic violence in the workplace exist.

For Women in Crisis:

**Assaulted Women’s Helpline:** [www.awhl.org](http://www.awhl.org)

A 24-hour telephone and TTY crisis line for women in Ontario. The service is anonymous and confidential. You do not have to give your name and the toll-free number will not show up on your phone bill. The helpline does not have call display. An objective is to ensure “women from all communities have access to support and information in order for them to have increased choices regarding their safety.”

Contact: 1-866-863-0511 (toll free), GTA 416-863-0511, TTY 1-866-863-7868 (toll free), TTY GTA 416-364-8762.

**Femaide:**

A confidential 24-hour support and crisis line for French-speaking women. The service provides emotional support, information and referrals to local services.



Contact: 1-877-fem-aide (toll free) or 1-877-336-2433 (toll-free), 1-866-860-7082 (TTY), Sudbury area 705-677-0001.

**Women's Shelters:** [www.shelternet.ca](http://www.shelternet.ca)

The Shelternet website connects abused women to shelters. An interactive map helps you find the shelter or second-stage housing closest to your hometown. This website provides reliable and up-to-date information for abused women, their family, friends and colleagues including: how to make a safety plan, understanding abuse and Internet and email safety.

**Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres:** [www.satcontario.com](http://www.satcontario.com)

In English and French, this website provides information about Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Care and Treatment Centres in Ontario, as well as information about sexual assault and domestic violence. Ontario has 34 hospital-based programs whose services include: emergency medical and nursing care, crisis intervention, forensic evidence collection, medical follow-up and counselling.

**Sexual Assault/Rape Crisis Centres:** [www.ocrcc.ca](http://www.ocrcc.ca)

Sexual Assault and Rape Crisis Centres offer a wide variety of services to victims and survivors of sexual violence. Services include a 24-hour anonymous crisis/support telephone line, individual and group counselling, court, police and hospital accompaniment, information on the legal system and community referrals. French services are available in some areas. For a listing of Sexual Assault and Rape Crisis Centres see the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres website.

**Les centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel (CALACS) (French only)**

The centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel (CALACS) are sexual assault support service centres that offer a broad range of services to sexual assault victims. Services include: a 24-hour telephone crisis and support line; individual and group sessions; accompaniment to hospitals, police stations and tribunals; and referrals to other community services. To find out what French-language services are available in your region, call 1-877-femaide (336-2433).

**SupportLink:**

Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking in 20 Ontario locations (served by Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services) can get help planning for their safety. This includes free airtime and wireless phones pre-programmed to dial 911.

Contact: 416-314-2447, 1-888-579-2888 (toll free).

[Tips for Creating a Safety Plan](#)





If you are feeling threatened by an abusive partner, ex-partner or co-worker and/or are being stalked, consider creating a safety plan. The websites listed below describe the actions you can take to enhance your personal safety.

- [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca)
- [www.haltonwomensplace.com/safety.htm](http://www.haltonwomensplace.com/safety.htm)
- [www.shelternet.ca](http://www.shelternet.ca)

#### [Restraining Orders, Peace Bonds and Terms of Release](#)

These are other options for increasing your safety if you are feeling threatened by a partner or ex-partner and/or are being stalked.

The Ontario Women's Justice Network site ([www.owjn.org](http://www.owjn.org)) explains restraining orders, peace bonds and terms of release, and how to obtain them. The Family Law Education for Women, at [www.onefamilylaw.ca](http://www.onefamilylaw.ca), helps women understand their rights under Ontario family law. For information specific to restraining orders, peace bonds and terms of release see their on-line booklet titled Criminal and Family Law.

#### [Taking Care of Children, Housing, Food and Pets](#)

##### **Childcare:**

You can search for a childcare location on the website of the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services ([www.gov.on.ca/children](http://www.gov.on.ca/children)). It contains information on unlicensed and licensed childcare (both home childcare and childcare centres).

##### **Children's Aid Societies (CASs):**

The mandate of Children's Aid Societies is to protect children from abuse and neglect. If you have concerns about protecting a child, please contact your local CAS immediately. Ontario has 53 Children's Aid Societies, listed on the website of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies [www.oacas.org/childwelfare/locate.htm](http://www.oacas.org/childwelfare/locate.htm).

##### **Supervised Access Centres:**

When parents separate, access visits with children may be a problem. The Supervised Access Program, funded by the Ministry of the Attorney General, offers separated families a way to deal with some of these problems. Supervised access centres provide a safe and secure setting where visits and exchanges can take place under the supervision of trained staff and volunteers. For more information, contact the ministry at 416-212-2028, email [attorneygeneral@ontario.ca](mailto:attorneygeneral@ontario.ca), or visit [www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca](http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca) and look for "Supervised Access" under "Family Justice."

##### **Family Responsibility Office (FRO):**



The role of the Family Responsibility Office is to process child and spousal support payments and ensure they are paid on a regular basis. Information on how the program works and how payments are enforced is posted at [www.mcscs.gov.on.ca](http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca).

**The Office of the Children’s Lawyer:**

The Office of the Children’s Lawyer at the Ministry of the Attorney General delivers programs in the administration of justice on behalf of children under 18 with respect to their personal and property rights. Lawyers within the office represent children in various areas of law including child custody and access disputes, child protection proceedings, estate matters and civil litigation. For more information, consult the website of the Ministry of the Attorney General at [www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca](http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca).

**Ontario Works:**

If you are in temporary financial need, Ontario Works may help you cover the costs of basic needs (e.g. food and housing) and help you find a job. For more information and an “Eligibility Estimator” to find out if you qualify for Ontario Works, check the website of the Ministry of Community and Social Services: [www.mcscs.gov.on.ca](http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca).

**Co-operative Housing:**

If you want to find a housing co-op, check the website of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada ([www.chfcanada.coop](http://www.chfcanada.coop)) and click on “Looking for co-op housing?” Most co-ops have rent-geared-to-income units, and some offer housing for people with special needs. The Ontario Region Office can be contacted toll-free at 1-800-268-2537.

**Tenants’ Rights:**

What Tenants Need to Know About the Law is a free publication of Community Legal Education Ontario. It is available online at [www.cleo.on.ca](http://www.cleo.on.ca) under “Landlord and Tenant” then “View Materials.”

**Food Banks:**

The Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB) is a network of more than 100 food banks from Windsor to Ottawa, and Thunder Bay to Niagara Falls. To find your local food bank, visit [www.oafb.ca/it](http://www.oafb.ca/it).

**Safety for Pets:**

The Ontario Veterinary Medical Association has established the SafePet program to provide temporary housing and care for pets of women leaving abusive partners. For more information about SafePet, talk to your local women’s shelter or veterinarian. Visit [www.ovma.org](http://www.ovma.org) (click on “For Pet Owners”) or call 1-800-670-1702.

**Legal Resources:**

**Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic (Toronto): [www.schliferclinic.com](http://www.schliferclinic.com)**



The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic Offers free counselling, legal and interpreter services to women in the Greater Toronto Area who have experienced physical, sexual or psychological abuse. Contact: 416-323-9149.

**Family Law Education for Women: [www.onefamilylaw.ca](http://www.onefamilylaw.ca)**

This initiative helps women understand their rights under Ontario family law. A range of key areas under family law are posted on the website including marriage and divorce, custody and access, child and spousal support, child protection, etc. These materials are available in 11 languages, including English, French, Arabic, Chinese (Simplified and Traditional), Farsi, Somali, Spanish, Punjabi, Urdu and Tamil.

**Human Rights Legal Support Centre: [www.hrlsc.on.ca](http://www.hrlsc.on.ca)**

The Human Rights Legal Support Centre offers legal services to individuals throughout Ontario who believe they have experienced discrimination. The Centre's services range from legal assistance in filing an application at the Human Rights Tribunal to legal representation on human rights applications. Contact: 1-866-625-5179 (toll free), in Toronto at 416-314-6266, TTY 1-866-612-8627 (toll free).

**Legal Aid Ontario: [www.legalaid.on.ca](http://www.legalaid.on.ca)**

Legal aid is available to low-income individuals and disadvantaged communities for a variety of legal problems, including victims of domestic violence and parents seeking custody of children to protect them from abuse. See "Can I get Legal Aid?" under the "Getting Legal Help" section of this organization's website.

Contact: 1-800-668-8258 (toll free) or 416-979-1446.

**Lawyer Referral Service:**

This service is offered by the Law Society of Upper Canada for those in crisis (domestic abuse) or facing a child protection issue. For more information, visit [www.lsuc.on.ca](http://www.lsuc.on.ca) and follow the links "For the Public," then "Lawyer Referral Service."

Contact: 1-800-268-8326 (toll free) or in Toronto 416-947-3330.

**Family Law Information Centres:**

Located at family courts in 17 areas throughout the province, Family Law Information Centres provide information on alternative dispute resolution and issues related to separation, divorce and child protection. Information about court process and community resources is also available. For a complete listing of services and Family Law Information Centre locations, visit the website of the Ministry of the Attorney General: [www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca](http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca).

**METRAC's Community Justice Program:**

This program provides access to legal information for vulnerable communities of women experiencing violence. These include women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, rural women, deaf women, young



women, older women and immigrant and refugee women. It also offers training on legal issues for service providers working with female victims of violence, as well as workers from other sectors (e.g. health, housing, settlement) who support diverse groups of women.

Contact: 416-392-3148 or [legaldirector@metrac.org](mailto:legaldirector@metrac.org)

**Ontario Women’s Justice Network: [www.owjn.org](http://www.owjn.org)**

This website provides information and resources on how the legal system works and issues relating to violence against women. The

OWJN promotes an understanding of the law with respect to such violence. It also provides accessible legal information to women and their supporters in a way that reflects women’s diverse experiences and realities.

**Other Helpful Information:**

**Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women and Children (UWO): [www.crvawc.ca](http://www.crvawc.ca)**

This Centre promotes the development of community-centred action research on violence against women and children. Useful information and tools are available under “Community Outreach” and “Research.”

**Neighbours, Friends and Families: [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca)**

Offered in English, Aboriginal and French, this website has many practical resources including: helping abused women, safety planning for women at risk, talking to abusive men and related links. The Neighbours, Friends and Families public education campaign raises awareness about the signs of female abuse so others can help

**Ontario Women’s Directorate (OWD): [www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd/english](http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd/english)**

A division of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, the OWD provides a focus for Ontario government action on issues of concern to women. The two key areas of activity are preventing violence against women and promoting women’s economic independence. Resources in English and French are available for women, organizations and youth.

**Make it Our Business: [www.makeitourbusiness.com](http://www.makeitourbusiness.com)**

Make it Our Business is a campaign of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women & Children (CREVAWC) and adds to information in the Neighbours, Friends and Families public education campaign about how to recognize the signs of domestic violence. The goal is to provide resources to employers to develop strategies to prevent domestic violence in the workplace. It also includes information for victims to keep themselves safe and supported when domestic violence follows you into the workplace.

**Her Own Way: A Woman’s Guide to Safe and Successful Travel:**

[www.journeywoman.com/travel101/herownway.html](http://www.journeywoman.com/travel101/herownway.html)



This site provides tips and advice to heighten the safety and well-being of Canadian women travelling alone, in pairs or in groups. Sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, this information is primarily for foreign travel.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ACWS – Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters

EAP – Employee Assistance Program

IPV – Intimate Partner Violence

HSR – Health and Safety Representative

JHSC – Joint Health and Safety Committee

OHSA – Occupational Health and Safety Act

OWJN – Ontario Women’s Justice Network

Perpetrator – the person committing the act of domestic violence

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# Addressing Domestic Violence in the Workplace

## A Handbook for the Workplace

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