

Western Education Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children



**Make It Our Business**

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Domestic Violence in the Workplace

An introduction: what everyone needs to know...

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Domestic violence is not a private matter: We all have a role to play

**Winner of the 2015 Avon Global Communications Award for Exemplary Messages to Prevent Gender-Based Violence Worldwide**




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**Why are we here?**

In almost every case of domestic homicide, we found that the people around the victim know what was going on – but didn't know what to do about it...

Al O'Marra  
(Former) Chief Counsel Coroner's Office of Ontario



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**Why are we here?**

Workplaces are unprepared to respond to domestic violence and workers have been harmed, harassed and killed at work.



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**Workplace Homicides**





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**CAN WORK BE SAFE, WHEN HOME ISN'T?**

Initial Findings of a Pan-Canadian Survey on Domestic Violence and the Workplace






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### Prevalence Rates

- 33.6% experienced / are experiencing DV
  - 53.5% experienced DV at work
- 35.4% know a co-worker experiencing/experienced DV
- 11.8% know a co-worker behaving abusively to spouse

Increased prevalence with vulnerability

- Aboriginal respondents
- Respondents with disabilities
- Sexual orientation other than heterosexual

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### Domestic Violence in the Workplace

Category	Percentage
DV continued at work	53.5%
DV did not continue at work (or no response)	46.5%

**ABUSIVE ACTS AT OR NEAR WORKPLACE**

abusive phone calls/text messages	40.6%
stalking/harassment near workplace	20.5%
abuser physically came to workplace	18.2%
abusive email messages	15.6%
abuser contacted co-workers/employer	14.5%
other	2.2%

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### Impact on Co-workers

- 28% were stressed or concerned
- 11% work was affected
- 10% dealt with frequent phone calls / messages / emails
- 3.4% harmed or threatened

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Among those exposed to DV...

**38%** reported that DV affected their ability to get to work

**8.5%** had lost a job due to DV

“He pretended to be security and dragged me out of work.”

“I was in trouble for missing a lot of work and now I can’t miss work without a doctor’s note.”

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### Disclosure of Domestic Violence in the Workplace

Recipient	Percentage
Co-worker	81.6%
Supervisor/Manager	44.7%
Union	12.5%
HR/Personnel	10.7%
Designated DV person	6.1%
Other	7.9%

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### Ontario OHS Act

Under section 32.0.4 of the Act

if an employer is aware or ought to be aware that domestic violence that is likely to expose a worker to physical injury may occur in the workplace, the employer must take every reasonable precaution to protect the worker

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## Due Diligence

- Implement a plan to identify hazards
- Corrective action to prevent accidents or injuries
- If charged under OHS legislation
  - exercised due diligence = not liable
- Must prove
  - every precaution reasonable in the circumstances, were taken to protect the health and safety of workers

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety



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## What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is defined as any form of physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse, including financial control, stalking and harassment.

It occurs between opposite or same-sex intimate partners, who may or may not be married, common law, or living together. It can also continue to happen after a relationship has ended.



2014 Pan-Canadian DV Study  
CREVAWC / CLC

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## Domestic Violence

- Happens across all social classes in all type of workplaces
- Perpetrators can be in positions of power - professionals, managers, police, judges,
- Also occurs in same sex relationships
- Can occur between co-workers, managers



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## A System of Violence

- Physical:** slapping, choking, punching, threats
- Sexual:** threats, force used for sexual acts
- Verbal:** making degrading comments or forced acts
- Emotional:** confinement, threats to children, pets
- Economic:** stealing/controlling money/possessions
- Spiritual:** using beliefs to manipulate / control
- Stalking:** persistent, unwanted following or watching, use of electronic devices to monitor



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## Domestic Violence – 3 Types

### Situational couple violence

- most common / arguments escalate to violence
- not characterized as one being fearful of the other

### Coercive control\*

- abusive partner controls and coerces
- pattern of behaviour

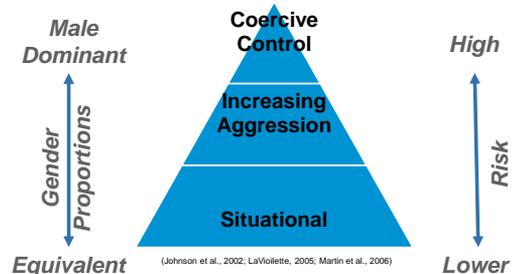
### Violent Resistance

- victim of coercive control fights back



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(Johnson et al., 2002; LaViolette, 2005; Martin et al., 2006)



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## Coercive Control - Woman Abuse

- Highest risk cases (DVDRG)
- Most serious injuries (Stats Can)
- Preventable (because predictable)
- Men and women experience domestic violence differently – it is a gendered issue
- Men also experience coercive control – need support

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## Understanding Risk

- All domestic violence is harmful
- Coercive control presents the highest risks
- Start from the assumption of potential coercive control
- Situations can escalate suddenly - single incident can be dangerous
- Some groups are at greater risk / experience more barriers

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## Warning Signs & Risk Factors – Dupont Inquest

**Warning signs are critical events**

- Visible warning signs and risk factors
- Should raise possibility of danger

**Opportunities to intervene**

- Can be missed because of uncertainty or missing information
- Organizations and individuals are unprepared

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## Critical Events & Missed Opportunities

Month	Warning Signs	Opportunities
Oct 03	0	0
Mar 04	1	0
Apr 04	2	1
May 04	1	0
June 04	2	1
July 04	1	0
Sept 04	1	1
Oct 04	1	1
Nov 04	1	1
Jan 05	2	1
Feb 05	1	1
Mar 05	2	2
Apr 05	2	4
May 05	3	6
June 05	3	6
July 05	3	6
Aug 05	3	6
Sept 05	3	6
Oct 05	37	84

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Oct 03	0	0
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Sept 04	1	1
Oct 04	1	1
Nov 04	1	1
Jan 05	2	1
Feb 05	1	1
Mar 05	2	2
Apr 05	2	4
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June 05	3	6
July 05	3	6
Aug 05	3	6
Sept 05	3	6
Oct 05	37	84
Nov 05	3	6

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## Domestic Violence Death Review Committee 2012 Report

229 cases resulted in 328 deaths since 2002

Deaths:

- 29 children (11%)
- 212 women (80%)
- 23 men (9%)

Perpetrators:

- 2 women (3%)
- 62 men (97%)

45% of cases are homicide - suicides

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**RECOGNIZE:**  
What are the warning signs? risk factors?

**RESPOND:**  
Every precaution reasonable in the circumstance

**REFER:**  
Who else needs to be involved?

**REPORT:**  
Is there an obligation to report?

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**Recognize: “Aware or Ought to be Aware” Workplace Warning Signs**

- Obvious injuries
  - bruises, black eyes, broken bones, hearing loss
  - often attributed to falls, being clumsy or accidents
- Clothing inappropriate for the season
  - long sleeves and turtlenecks, wearing sunglasses, unusually heavy makeup
- Uncharacteristic absenteeism or lateness

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**Recognize: “Aware or Ought to be Aware” Workplace Warning Signs**

- Change in job performance
  - poor concentration and errors, slowness, inconsistent work quality
- Requests for special accommodations
  - leave early, change schedule
- Disruptive phone calls, visits

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**Recognize: Risk Factors indicate elevation of risk**

- A history of domestic violence
- Actual or pending separation
- Obsessive behaviour
- Depression of the perpetrator
- The level of violence is increasing
- Prior threats / attempts of suicide
- Threat to kill
- Prior attempts to isolate victim
- Victim had intuitive sense of fear
- Perpetrator unemployed

  
DVDRC 2012 Report

•39 risk factors identified that indicate potential for lethality

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**Women at Greater Risk**

**Aboriginal women**

- 8 times more likely to be killed (CWF, 2014)
- 1,182 missing/murdered women in Canada (RCMP, 2014)

**Women with disabilities (15.5% of pop)**

- 60% experience some form of violence (CWF, 2014)

**Young women (16-24)**

- Domestic violence most likely to occur with individuals in their 20s & 30s. Women 20 to 24 years old experience the greatest risk. (Stats Can, 2013)

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**Women at Greater Risk**

**Immigrant women**

- Do not experience higher rates but may be more vulnerable due to economic dependence, language barriers, lack of knowledge of community services

**Women in Rural Communities**

- Isolation, lack of transportation, long response time for police, firearms in the home, responsibilities for livestock

Canadian Women's Foundation

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## Respond: Strategy–Interrupt Isolation

Isolation is a factor that is always present in situations of woman abuse

...It could even be considered a necessary condition

As the abuse escalates – the isolation becomes more profound ...for everyone



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## Respond: SNCit! Conversation

1. **SEE it** - Visible warning signs and risk factors
2. **NAME it** – name your concern
3. **CHECK it** – Ask questions, see help, take appropriate action – refer/resources

**SEE it – NAME it – CHECK it**



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## What if she doesn't disclose?

- Continue to watch for warning signs and risk factors
- Have another SNCit conversation if you see more warning signs
- Provide information about resources in the workplace & the community
- If you are worried, talk to your supervisor



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## After Abuse is Disclosed

- Use every reasonable precaution
- Risk assessment, safety planning & risk management
- When to leave is the decision of the woman experiencing abuse
- Separation is the most high risk period!
  - Requires extra attention to safety planning & risk management



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## How Can I Support My Co-Worker?

- Tell her you believe her and that it is not her fault
- Offer your support
- Know where to find help in your workplace and community



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## Why Doesn't She Leave?

**Understanding the Traps:**

- Fear
- History of abuse – grew up in abusive home
- Afraid to be on her own
- Blames herself for the abuse
- Economic uncertainty - poverty
- She loves him – believes he can change
- She doesn't want to move the children
- Pressure from her family / cultural norms

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## Workplace Domestic Violence Scenarios

WATCH FOR WARNING SIGNS & RISK FACTORS

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**RECOGNIZE:**  
Is it domestic violence?  
– Warning Signs? Risk Factors?

**RESPOND:**  
Every precaution reasonable in the circumstance

**REFER:**  
Who else needs to be involved?

**REPORT:**  
Is there an obligation to report?

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## As Kim's Supervisor

- Responsible to "protect workers"
- What warning signs & risk factors are present?

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## Warning signs

- Performance issues (late, quality of work)
- Declared stress

## Risk Factors

- In process of separating
- Partner 'looking for a place'
- Pregnancy

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## SNCit Conversation

**See it:** warning signs – risk factors

**Name it:** “Separation is a stressful time. I am concerned about you.”

**Check it:** “Is there any reason to worry about your safety? Are you ok?”

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## What happens next? (due diligence)

- Disclosure
  - risk assessment and safety plan
  - Involve experts
- No disclosure
  - watch for more warning signs / risk factors
  - SNCit conversations
  - provide resources

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## Safety as a Priority

- Safety takes precedence over confidentiality
- Information shared on a ‘need to know basis’
- Everyone discloses threats or incidents
- Workplace culture promotes open communication about concerns
- Workers should not try to decide the seriousness of what they see or hear

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## Safety Planning

Develop a Safety Plan – it’s critical!

- Staying in the Relationship
- Getting Ready to Leave
- Leaving the Relationship
- After Leaving



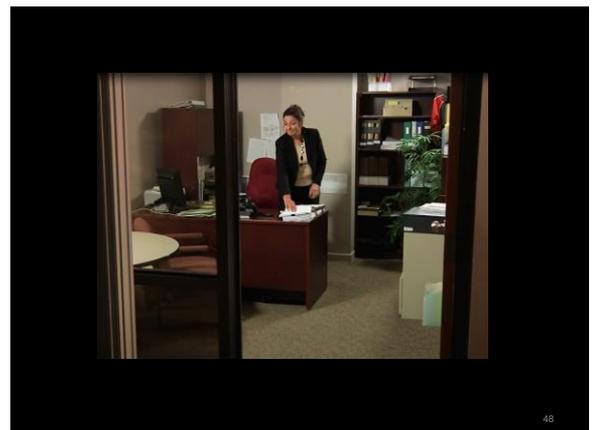
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## Reporting

- All workers must report:
  - Exercise of Physical Violence
  - Attempt to exercise violence
  - Threat to exercise violence
- Policies can encourage earlier reporting

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**Recognize - Respond – Refer - Report**

- Norma received a threat
- A co-worker overheard the threat - responsibility to report This obligation applies to all workers, including managers
- There is no obligation to report to police – only internal workplace designates
- The responsibility is to create a safety plan, not to involve police

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**If there is an immediate threat to safety**

- Call 911
- Call security
- Advise your supervisor
- Trust your instincts!

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**All workers – every reasonable precaution**

Teach everyone:

- to recognize warning signs and risk factors
- how to report an incident, attempt and/or threat of violence
- how to summon immediate assistance

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**Link between economic independence, being in paid employment and DV**

1. Women with a history of DV have:
  - a more disrupted work history
  - are consequently on lower personal incomes
  - have had to change jobs more often
  - more often work in casual and part time roles
2. Being employed is a key pathway to leaving a violent relationship

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## 24 Hour Crisis Line (link to local services)

- The Assaulted Women's Helpline
- Crisis Line where help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year:  
Greater Toronto Area: 416-863-0511  
Toll Free: 1-866-863-0511  
TTY: 1-866-863-7868  
#SAFE: #7233 on your mobile phone (Bell/Rogers/Fido/Telus)

<http://www.awhl.org>

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## CREVAWC Resources

- Safety Planning Tips  
<http://www.makeitourbusiness.com/guidelines/safety-planning-at-work>
- Individualized Safety Planning Template  
<http://www.makeitourbusiness.com/content/individualized-safety-plan-template-0>
- Online Risk Management Training  
<http://onlinetraining.learningtoendabuse.ca/>

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Workplace Resources

Community Resources

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## Make It Our Business Training Program

**Level 1: Developing Awareness**

- Provide information to all employees with brochures and web link

**Level 2: Basic Education**

- 1 hour presentation to all employees
  - 3 hour enhanced education option available

**Level 3: Leadership Development**

- Day long interactive session for supervisors & managers

**Level 4: Sustaining Culture Change**

- 2 day workshop for senior leaders / teams

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## Everyone has a role to play

You don't have to be a hero or fix the situation.  
Little things you do can make a big difference.  
Take the warning signs seriously.

**Learn more at:**  
[www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca)  
[www.makeitourbusiness.com](http://www.makeitourbusiness.com)

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## New Release

**Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence Online Training:**  
[www.learningtoendabuse.ca/responding-disclosures-sexual-violence](http://www.learningtoendabuse.ca/responding-disclosures-sexual-violence)

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Please evaluate this webinar:

<http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/crevawc/april-14-2014-webinar/>

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