



## Make It Our Business

# Eight Compelling Reasons Employers Should Address Domestic Violence

Domestic violence in the workplace is the fastest growing type of workplace violence in Canada. In fact, 70 percent of victims are abused both at home and at work. While some employers are addressing the issue, many more are not.

Here are eight compelling reasons for employers to take action:

### 1. Domestic Violence Affects Many Employees:

One third of Canadian workers report that they have experienced domestic violence at some point in their life. 35% of employees know a co-worker who they believe is experiencing, or has previously experienced domestic violence and 12% reported having at least one co-worker who they believe is being abusive, or has previously been abusive, toward his/her partner. <sup>1</sup>

### 2. Domestic Violence is a Security and Liability Concern:

Ninety-four percent of corporate security directors rank domestic violence as a high-security problem at their companies.<sup>2</sup> Over half of Canadian workers who experienced domestic violence said the abusive acts continued at or near the workplace.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Domestic Violence Threatens Performance and Productivity:

Among those who experienced domestic violence:

- 38% reported that it affected their ability to get to work
- 81% reported that it negatively affected their performance, most often due to being distracted, or feeling tired and/or unwell <sup>4</sup>

Among those who perpetrate domestic violence

- 53% of offenders felt their job performance was negatively impacted
- 75% had a hard time concentrating on their work
- 19% reported causing or nearly causing workplace accidents <sup>5</sup>

Domestic violence decreases employee morale. <sup>6</sup> The total economic impact of spousal violence in Canada is estimated at more than \$7.4 Billion annually.<sup>7</sup>

### 4. It's the Law:

The Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act obliges employers to address domestic violence in their workplaces.

### 5. Domestic Violence Hurts Employee Health:

Domestic violence costs the Canadian health care system nearly \$4.1 billion in direct medical and mental health care services annually.<sup>8</sup>

### 6. Management Recognizes the Costs:

In 1994, two-thirds of executives surveyed said their company's financial performance would benefit from addressing the issue<sup>9</sup> and 91 percent acknowledged that domestic violence impacted both the personal and working lives of their employees.<sup>10</sup>

### 7. Taking Action Works:

After participating in domestic violence training, the rate of one factory's employees asking for counseling increased by 14 times.<sup>11</sup> When a sample group of 40 abused employees used the counseling services, their absenteeism went from higher than average to normal.<sup>12</sup>

### 8. Employers Can Make a Difference:

Many corporations, government agencies and domestic violence experts are already addressing domestic violence with great success. You can make a difference in your workplace and in the lives of employees who are facing abuse!

<sup>1</sup> Wathen, C. N., MacGregor, J. C. D., MacQuarrie, B. J. with the Canadian Labour Congress. (2014). Can Work be Safe, When Home Isn't? Initial Findings of a Pan-Canadian Survey on Domestic Violence and the Workplace. London, ON: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women and Children.

<sup>2</sup> National Safe Workplace Institute Survey, as cited in Solomon, C.M. (1995). Talking Frankly about Domestic Violence. Personnel Journal, 74, 64-66.

<sup>3</sup> Wathen, C. N., MacGregor, J. C. D., MacQuarrie, B. J. with the Canadian Labour Congress. (2014). Can Work be Safe, When Home Isn't? Initial Findings of a Pan-Canadian Survey on Domestic Violence and the Workplace. London, ON: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women and Children.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Schmidt, M. C., & Barnett, A. (2011). How does domestic violence affect the Vermont workplace? A survey of male offenders enrolled in batterer intervention programs in Vermont. Montpelier, VT: Vermont Council on Domestic Violence.

<sup>6</sup> Occupation Health & Safety Council of Ontario (OHSCO) (2010). Domestic Violence Doesn't Stop When Your Worker Arrives at Work: What Employers Need to Know to Help. Retrieved from [http://www.osach.ca/products/resrcdoc/OHSCO\\_EmployerBooklet.pdf](http://www.osach.ca/products/resrcdoc/OHSCO_EmployerBooklet.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Department of Justice Canada (2012). An Estimation of the Economic Impact of Spousal Violence in Canada, 2009. Serving Canadians.

<sup>8</sup> Varcoe, C., Hankivsky, O., Ford-Gilboe, M., Wuest, J., Wilk, P., Hammerton, J., & Campbell, J. (2011). Attributing Selected Costs to Intimate Partner Violence in a Sample of Women Who Have Left Abusive Partners: A Social Determinants of Health Approach. Canadian Public Policy, 37(3), 359-380.

<sup>9</sup> Roper Starch Worldwide for Liz Claiborne, 1994. Addressing Domestic Violence: A Corporate Response. New York: Roper Starch.

<sup>10</sup> Patrice Tanaka & Company, Inc. (October 16, 2002). News Release: Corporate Leaders See Domestic Violence as a Major Problem that Affects their Employees According to Benchmark Survey by Liz Claiborne, Inc. Contact Lauree Ostrofsky (212) 229-0500, x 236.

<sup>11</sup> Urban, B.Y. (2000). Anonymous Foundation Domestic Abuse Prevention Program Evaluation: Final Client Survey Report. Chicago, IL: The University of Illinois at Chicago. Contact byurban@aol.com.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.