

6. Creating A Positive Workplace

The purpose of this fact sheet is to offer suggestions for employers interested in creating a workplace in which employees feel safe, happy and valued. This is important because research shows that without support, individuals who are constantly abused grow to have low self-esteem. They may develop poor concentration and decision-making skills. They may feel depressed. Helping people feel better about themselves, improves their well-being and productivity. There are numerous ways which employers can address employee morale generally, while contributing feelings of self-worth for victims of violence in particular. Employers can help to create a positive work environment by:

- promoting employee awareness of family violence issues.
- modelling respectful behaviour throughout the workplace.
- introducing initiatives to boost employee morale and alleviate stress.

Educating all employees about family violence creates an open and supportive work environment for everyone.

*Health Canada has a guide for delivering workplace workshops. Check out: **Awareness Information for People in the Workplace: Dating Violence***

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/pdfs/violence.pdf (English)

Promote Employee Awareness of Family Violence Issues

Employers can create awareness of family violence issues and educate staff about how to deal with family violence when it spills into the workplace. Here are a few tips on things that you could do at your work site:

- put up family violence prevention posters and displays;
- invite noon hour speakers such as police officers or other professionals and

publicize these “lunch & learn” or “brown-bag lunch” discussion sessions;

- post a list of family violence community resources, such as service agencies, phone numbers and addresses in safe spaces, such as the washroom or cafeteria
- having a professional development day for management and staff to review company policies dealing with family violence and the workplace.
- circulate monthly messages about family violence. For example, send out messages to all employees or enclose messages with pay-cheques (see “Model Policy, Safety Plans and Messages” in the toolkit, or access them on the Internet.)



A Workplace Toolkit

Model Respectful Behaviour

To ensure that family violence programs are given the opportunity to succeed, employers must model respectful behaviour within their workplace. Employers, supervisors, managers and employees, must show respect for each other. Bullying, intimidating or harassing tactics are never appropriate. Employees should know that their employer does not tolerate such behaviours. Any person who does experience violence, even if it originates in their homes, should be encouraged to approach their employer for assistance. Management should proactively support employees by:

- being understanding and approachable;
- protecting the confidentiality of staff;
- respecting the decision made by the person who is living-with family violence
- letting the person who has experienced violence know that he or she is a valued member of the work team;
- addressing job performance problems in constructive ways and offer counselling;
- meeting with the staff regularly to discuss job performance;
- ensuring that all human resources staff are aware of the family violence policy;
- remaining flexible when dealing with staff experiencing family violence issues;
- working with unions to address the problem of family violence in the workplace;
- being supportive of an employee who is taking steps to live a violence-free life;
- ensuring that workplace responses are culturally sensitive and appropriate;



Boost Employee Morale and Reduce Stress

Help create a positive workplace and improve employee morale, for example, by:

- offering wellness and stress reduction initiatives, such as yoga classes;
- encouraging physical activity such as noon hour walks or exercise classes;
- supporting employee appreciation initiatives;

“Employers should actively promote health and wellness programs that increase awareness of the problem and inform employees of available sources of assistance, including workplace personnel who are trained and available to serve as confidential sources of information, support, and referral to local domestic violence service providers.”

*Domestic Violence Policy for Counties,
New York State, 1999*