

# Why Employers Should Care About Family Violence

It's common for today's companies to promote the personal safety and well-being of their employees, because it benefits the employees, the employer and the company's bottom line.

Studies estimate that family violence costs Canadians over a billion dollars each year. As citizens and community members, we pay for the cost of the services required to respond to family violence, including: police, legal aid, courts, crisis intervention, healthcare, victims' assistance, emergency shelters, housing, resource centres and counselling.

Because the effects of family violence often spill over into the workplace, caring about family violence makes good business sense for employers. The cost of family violence to employers can include:

- reduced employee productivity
- increased absenteeism
- lost earnings
- decreased employee morale
- strained relations between co-workers
- higher company health expenses
- potential liability issues if harm comes to someone at the workplace

Helping employees feel safe in addressing their personal safety issues and connecting them to appropriate community resources can often prevent family violence from happening in the first place. If it already exists in a family, early intervention in the workplace can help stop it.

## Family violence affects virtually every workplace

Many victims of family violence keep the abuse in their lives a secret, out of shame and/or fear. So, employers may not always know that a problem exists. However, statistics show that it's highly likely it is either already affecting or will affect workers in every business, regardless of size or location.

## Did you know?

- Domestic violence in the workplace has been identified as the fastest growing type of workplace violence in Canada but less than half of Canadian workplaces have policies to manage this risk.
- One in four Canadian women will be affected by family violence during her lifetime.
- Eight per cent of Manitoba women report being physically or sexually assaulted by an intimate partner.
- While men may also be victims of abuse, women are more often subjected to violence by their partners and are more likely than men to report injuries, experience lost productivity, suffer multiple assaults, fear for their lives and experience negative emotional consequences.
- Among those at highest risk of violence are young women, Aboriginal women and women who are separated from their partners.

While family violence cuts across gender, race, age and income levels, companies employing large numbers of women in the highest risk categories are likely to have the greatest percentage of workers being abused by their partners. Employers also need to be aware of the signs of family violence and of the services available to employees who are abusing their partners and need counselling to deal with their abusive behaviour. These employees may also show abusive behaviour toward other employees.

Research also suggests that 70 per cent of victims of partner abuse are victimized at work at some point, making family violence an issue in almost every organization.

Even small efforts by employers can have positive results. Something as simple as distributing information about services available in the community can help a family violence victim who previously had no idea where to turn. Manitobans have access to a broad range of agencies offering free resources and professional support for men, women and children affected by family violence. Employers can play a principal role in connecting employees with these resources.

Good corporate citizens recognize that family violence prevention benefits their employees as well as the company's bottom line and helps create safer, healthier communities. Becoming part of the solution to end family violence is in the best interests of every business.

Note: For information on data sources contact the Family Violence Prevention Program at **945-1709** or toll-free within Manitoba at **1-800-282-8069 (ext. 1709)**.