

The purpose of this fact sheet is to suggest some things that employers, unions and employees can do to help eliminate family violence. We all have a social responsibility to prevent family violence. This fact sheet will profile “better practices” that others are using to assist victims and become good corporate citizens in the area of family violence.

Perhaps you can adopt some of these initiatives... or come up with ideas of your own.

A: What Employers Can Do

Many businesses have found ways to become “good corporate citizens.” The following are examples of how some employers have chosen to demonstrate their social responsibility. We have divided the employer initiatives into three categories.

In New Brunswick, Aliant Telecom devotes a page at the front of the phone book on services and information for victims of abuse.

Baxter Foods in Saint John periodically donates frozen foods to Hestia House, the local shelter.

Irving Tissue in Moncton donates bathroom tissue to Crossroads, the local shelter.

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suggestions, along with examples of what others have done, here in New Brunswick and elsewhere:

- If your workplace publishes a catalogue, newspaper or other publication, you could use a page to list phone numbers and other resources for abuse victims.
- Grocery stores could donate goods to local transition homes such as food or even toothpaste!

- Manufacturers could donate supplies to agencies that help the homeless or local transition homes.
- Hotels could offer free rooms to victims of abuse, for example, when there are no vacancies at the local transition house or other agencies that provide shelter.
- Hotels could donate used bed linen, spreads, and towels to the local transition house.

The Fredericton Inn has donated used linens and bedding to Gignoo Transition House, New Brunswick's only transition house for First Nations Women.

In one town, a local hotel provides passes for the staff and residents of the Transition House to bring women and children staying at the house for a swim.

1. DONATE SERVICES OR PRODUCTS

If your business offers a specific product or service, there are great ways for you to become a good corporate citizen. Here are some

- Taxi companies could provide free rides to people in crisis who are leaving an abusive relationship and need transportation to a safe shelter. Free ride programs could be co-ordinated with police and transition houses.
- Lawyers could offer pro bono services to victims of domestic violence or to shelters for abuse victims. (*Did you know that many victims of abuse stay in the relationship because they are afraid of losing custody or access to their children?*)

The law firm Forbes Roth Basque in Moncton does pro bono corporate and other work for Crossroads, the local shelter for abused women. A lawyer with the firm also sits on Crossroads' Board of Directors.

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- Kennels or veterinarians could cover the expenses of boarding pets while victims of abuse establish a safe place to live. *(Did you know that victims of abuse sometimes delay seeking shelter because the abuser has threatened to kill or harm the pets or farm animals?)*

The Animal Rescue League in Saint John boards pets for women who go to Hestia House, the local shelter. Women in Transition (Fredericton) works with the Oromocto SPCA to foster pets of women who would otherwise not seek safety.

Hoyt's Moving and Storage in Moncton picks up and stores larger items such as couches donated to Crossroads, the local shelter, free of charge until the shelter needs to use them.

- Storage companies could offer free storage to people in the process of leaving abusive relationships.
- Daycare programs could arrange to care for children of staff who have lived with family violence at reduced rates.

- Telecommunication companies can provide free cell phones to victims of abuse to help them access community resources or emergency services, especially if they are restricted in using their home phone.

2. SPONSOR COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

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Amazon.ca

Amazon.ca makes arrangements with transition houses and violence prevention organizations to have a link on their web sites. The person browsing the website can connect directly to Amazon.ca and order a video, DVD, a book, or software. In return, for each purchase that originates from that link, Amazon.ca makes a contribution to help cover the cost to maintain the organization's website.

Bell Mobility

Bell Mobility launched a campaign entitled Recycle, Reuse, Redial, a national wireless phone recycling program. Bell Mobility will donate refurbished phones generated through the program to more than 90 women's shelters across Canada. The program has started in Ontario and Quebec and is expanding. Bell Mobility will also provide refurbished phones and a subsidized rate plan for women transitioning to life outside a shelter.

The Body Shop

The Body Shop recognizes the importance of responding to family violence, and has responded in its own way through the **Stop Violence Against Women Campaign**. "The Body Shop has chosen Stop Family Violence because of our commitment to Defend Human Rights and Activate Self Esteem. In 1995, at the United Nations World Conference for Women in Beijing, China, domestic violence was declared the number one human rights violation facing woman and children around the world. The Body Shop believes that ALL people deserve the same rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." These rights are often denied in an abusive relationship. Women that are abused often have low self-esteem, and feel ashamed, inadequate, afraid and sometimes even responsible for the abuse."

In Canada, the Body Shop has been involved with family violence prevention education since 1994. It helps raise money for local family violence resources through donating part of the sale on certain products. Its public education campaign has not only raised awareness about violence against women within the company itself, but customers have become increasingly aware of the issue. The organization helped establish a fund that directly helps women in violent relationships.

www.bodyshop.com

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Liz Claiborne Inc.

Liz Claiborne, Inc. is another example of good corporate citizenry. The company makes it clear that family violence cannot be tolerated. *"Love is Not Abuse"* is a section on the Liz Claiborne Website, which provides information on family violence for the general public. The company

launched the Women's Work program in October 1991 as a way to recognize the people who had made the company a success over the years. The program began as a series of community-based, public art projects designed to heighten awareness of, and encourage positive social change on issues of particular concern to women and their families. The site also

has online handbooks for women, teenagers, and parents. Liz Claiborne held a *"Stop the Violence"* film contest, where people could submit short films on the topic of family violence.

Polaroid Corporation

This company also demonstrated a corporate "best practice" in the area of family violence prevention and education in the workplace.

Polaroid was paired with Transition House, which is the battered woman's shelter located near the company's corporate headquarters, to provide in-kind service, volunteers, employees' professional expertise and/or corporate financial support.

(Mighty and Leach. *Cutting Deep: Workplace Stress and Family Violence in a Climate of Downsizing.*)

ADT Security Services

Since 1991, ADT has contributed to ending domestic violence by implementing *DVERS (Domestic Violence Emergency Response System)*, a program, which donates portable security systems to victims of domestic violence.

DVERS program information

"The immediate objective of the DVERS program is to provide participants with added security and some peace of mind within their own home. Long-term, it is hoped that public knowledge of the DVERS program will act as a deterrent to would-be abusers. It is also an excellent opportunity to establish and strengthen close, long-term working relationships with local police authorities and social service agencies across the country. The DVERS program is a very important component of ADT's overall philosophy of using corporate resources to give back to the communities where we do business."

Source: DVERS brochure, downloaded from www.adt.ca.

Liz Claiborne says:

"Nearly one-third of all Americans say they know a woman who has been physically abused by her husband or boyfriend in the past year. These women are our daughters, sisters, mothers and friends. Domestic violence is everybody's problem and everybody needs to be part of the solution."

*Liz Claiborne Inc.
www.lizclaiborne.com/loveisnotabuse*

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3. GOOD SAMARITAN ACTIVITIES

- Organize a summer BBQ or a winter bowling tournament for kids staying at a transition house.
- Hold a dress down day and collect donations for charity.

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B: What Unions Can Do

- Advocate for family violence programs and practices.
- Support union members who are leaving a violent family relationship.
- Support a local transition house.
- Do a safety audit in the workplace/community.
- Donate part of your yearly union membership dues to help fund family violence and the workplace programming.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees has developed a family violence prevention program, called "Solidarity Against Violence" with the intent of encouraging local CUPE unions to develop their own local actions.

Solidarity Against Violence. (1995). Ottawa, ON: Canadian Union of Public Employees.

C: What employees can do

Employees do not have to wait for the employers to take the lead - they can come up with their own ideas about how to respond to family violence.

Employees can do their part and not just rely on Employee Assistance Programs

- Staff can donate business clothes to organizations that help women re-enter the workforce.
- Casual Friday monies can be collected and donated to help fund or establish transition shelters.
- Employees can set-up their own "buddy system", where a staff person is paired with a colleague who may be experiencing family violence.

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What are you doing? Please send us a letter or email and we will include it on our web site.

www.toolkitnb.ca