

PART 2: Self-assessment quiz

Points to think about when you examine the case studies

There are early warning signs for domestic violence. With the right responses, this violence can be prevented or reduced. Situations have to be handled on a case-by-case basis. “One size fits all” answers are less effective than solutions crafted to respond to the victim’s and co-workers’ needs and preferences. Here we offer some points to think about as you prepare to address domestic violence in your workplace.

Cases 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 reflect a crisis that has to be handled right away.

You need to respond to this issue right away to keep people safe and to lessen workplace trouble. Some actions that can be taken are listed below:

Recognize: These are cases where you are concerned about a person’s safety at this time. Don’t ignore the warning signs. Don’t oversimplify or minimize.

Respond: Take it seriously. Be clear and sensitive: violence or threats of violence are not acceptable. Call the police if there is a risk of looming harm. Refer the victim to the Assaulted Women’s Help Line or her local women’s shelter. Work with the right people in your workplace to put security measures in place right away.

Refer: Offer help to document and report. Encourage risk and threat assessment. Help her to find the assistance she needs: safety planning and security measures.

Cases 6, 7 and 8 are harder to see as issues of domestic violence. Ignoring the warning signs will not reduce the risk. You can offer support and information about helpful resources even if your employee does not disclose that they are a victim of domestic violence.

In these cases, you need a swift and effective response. However, there is no crisis happening at this time. You can take more time to consult and plan your response to each case. For example, some actions you might think about are:

Recognize: Do not under-react just because it is not a crisis. Recognize the early signs of risky situations. Find out what workplace supports you need.

Respond: Respect the woman’s decision to not disclose, but do not wait for her to come to you. Express concern. Listen and validate. Do not judge or blame.

Refer: Offer help. Identify information and resources (internal and external). Try to identify the resources she needs. Respect confidentiality so long as it does not affect her safety.

Cases 9, 10, 11 and 12 let you know you need a pro-active and complete prevention program to address domestic violence.

You have time to develop a planned program that fits your workplace needs and resources. You may decide to create a separate domestic violence workplace program. You might want to build this policy within your workplace safety or violence prevention program. For example, some actions you can take include:

Recognize: Do not under-react. Recognize that doing nothing is not a strategy. Train managers and others to identify risk signs and signs of violence. Through awareness and education, communicate your commitment to violence prevention, including domestic violence.

Respond: Act with a bias towards prevention. You might start small or in a phased-in manner. Focus on a coordinated, comprehensive and competent process to address domestic violence.

Refer: Work with internal workplace resources (such as healthy & safety, human resources and security) and community resources (such as police and violence against women specialists). Use internet resources to help design your approach. Turn to specialized, professional risk assessment and audit specialists.

Learning to recognize, respond and refer

Recognize

Be aware of the signs of risk and violence for victims, potential victims and abusers.

Provide information through awareness and education: posters and notices in bathroom stalls, on bulletin boards (in hallways, lunchrooms and on the intranet of your workplace), distribute *Neighbours, Friends and Families* brochures, hold a lunch and learn session, invite local women abuse experts to do a workshop.

Train managers, supervisors, human resources and health and safety officers, security personnel and union representatives to recognize the signs of violence and abuse, to identify when workplace flexibility and supports may be needed, to respond effectively and confidentially, and to whom to refer – internally and externally – when a situation arises.

Train co-workers to recognize the signs of violence and abuse too and encourage them to become caring and engaged bystanders.

Use – and circulate – the *Make It Our Business* and *Neighbours, Friends and Families* brochures, safety card and guidelines.

Take threats and the early warning signs of violence seriously. Consult an expert when you are not sure if what you are seeing poses a risk. Recognize when you need to take immediate action.

Respond

Know how to respond sensitively and appropriately. You are trying to support victims of domestic violence and keep your employees safe, whether the woman discloses or not.

An effective response will usually include some basic actions:

- creating a risk and threat assessment to identify safety and security needs
- identifying flexibilities and options in the workplace to make it easier for the victim of domestic violence get the help she needs to rebuild her life
- doing safety planning to keep herself and her children safe
- identifying security measures to keep her and others safe and protected
- using the *Make It Our Business Guidelines* to plan your responses

When you are offering help and support to victims of violence, remember that you are not a counsellor or therapist. Do **not** give personal advice or counselling. Express your concern, but don't judge or blame her. Help your employee or co-worker find the help she needs.

Refer

An effective response is linked to referral: find out who you or the victim of violence can turn to for help, and the information and resources you can suggest for follow-up.

Internal resources:

- Select a person in your workplace, or create a team to look at cases of domestic violence when they are identified.
- Make sure that all employees know who to talk to in case domestic violence is identified in your workplace.

External resources:

- Call your local Police Service and ask for a specialist in domestic violence.
- Contact local woman abuse experts through the local Women's Shelter or Sexual Assault Centre.
- The Assaulted Women's Helpline offers a 24-hour crisis line for abused women in Ontario and others who want to support them. The service is anonymous and confidential. They offer services in up to 154 languages. Helpline staff can also support you in safety planning or connecting you with experts and services in your community. For more information about their services visit www.awhl.org or call 1-866-863-0511 or TTY 1.866.863.7868.
- See the Make It Our Business Guidelines for Finding Community Resources for Workplace Domestic Violence

You are not alone. You are not expected to be the expert on domestic violence, threat assessment, helpful flexible work arrangements or security measures. *Make It Our Business* and *Neighbours, Friends and Families* have resources to help: brochures, safety cards, guidelines, and links to additional workplace and woman abuse/domestic violence resources and services.

This project is funded by  Ontario

The views expressed in this campaign are those of The Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women & Children, Faculty of Education, The University of Western Ontario. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of Ontario.