

The purpose of this fact sheet is to explain why it makes good business sense for employers to care about family violence. The impact and costs of family violence on the workplace are far-reaching.

- Affects employee productivity.
- Leads to absenteeism.
- Impacts on employee morale.
- May put employees at risk.
- Creates substantial costs for employers.

In Canada, as well as in the United States, numerous studies have looked at the direct and indirect economic impact on businesses when workers are experiencing violence in their personal relationships. Estimates place the costs of family violence to businesses in the billions of dollars. Poor productivity is perhaps the most obvious cost to businesses. However, absenteeism, low staff morale, and strained relations between employees may all contribute to an inefficient work force.

Family violence also creates tremendous costs to society generally. Family violence impacts on law enforcement and the criminal justice system, healthcare services, crisis services, and the education system. Money to pay for these services comes from public donations, corporate sponsorship or taxation. In other words, we all

contribute to the costs of family violence, including social programs for victims such as transition houses, second stage housing, subsidized housing, and counselling services.

The diagram below provides an overview of the social costs of family violence on different sectors of society.

Family Violence

It's Your Business

A British Columbia study on family violence and the workplace estimated the annual cost in that province alone would be \$1,000,000,000 (1 Billion Dollars) a year.

Kerr, R. and McLean, J. (1996). Paying for Violence — Some of the Costs of Violence Against Women in B.C. Victoria, B.C.: British Columbia Ministry of Women's Health

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Everyone Pay\$ For Family Violence

Services to Support Abused Women and Children

Find Housing \$

- Transition houses
- Second-stage shelters
- Rent-to-income housing
- Volunteer programs
- YWCA
- Emergency housing

Use Justice System \$

- Family court
- Assessments
- Criminal court
- Legal aid
- Victim/witness programs
- Probation services
- Parole services
- Incarceration
- Criminal injuries compensation
- Men's counselling programs

Struggle with Employment \$

- Time off work
- Loss of productivity
- Retraining programs
- Lost tax revenues due to death, injury or incarceration

Contact Police \$

- Police surveillance/response
- Police investigation
- Access to reports



Seek Educational Support \$

- Special education
- Violence prevention programs
- Tutor services
- Social work services

Contact Social Agencies \$

- Counselling programs
- Mental health services
- Sexual assault centres
- Child welfare services
- Foster care
- Youth services
- Education & prevention programs
- Volunteer programs
- Kids Help Line
- Aboriginal women's centres
- Immigrant & visible minority women's services
- Disabled women's services
- Daycare

Seek Medical Help \$

- Ambulance service
- Emergency medical care
- Hospital stays
- X-rays, lab work
- Doctors' appointments
- Dental treatments
- Drug and alcohol centres
- Chiropractors
- Prescription drugs
- Eating disorder clinics
- Psychiatric institutions
- Community health clinics
- Services for children labelled as having attention deficit disorder

Seek Income Assistance \$

- Welfare
- Mother's allowance
- Unemployment insurance
- Enforcement of child support payments

Adapted from The Web, developed by Cape Breton Inter-Agency on Family Violence

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So, what can employers do?

It is sometimes overwhelming to read about how extensive and widespread family violence is in our society. And the costs, which are in the billions of dollars, may seem enormous and impossible for

any one individual or business to tackle. This is a common feeling, even for the frontline service providers working daily with victims of abuse. Being part of the solution is frustrating at times, but the rewards are great.

In 1995, one of the first studies on family violence against women estimated the economic costs to Canadians at \$4.2 billion dollars per year.

Greaves, L., Hankivsky, O. and Kingston-Riechers, J. (1995). Selected Estimates of the Costs of Violence Against Women. London, ON: Centre for Violence Against Women and Children.

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Everything you do to support victims of family violence makes a difference. No matter how small your contribution, even putting out pamphlets about abuse in a safe space (the employee's washroom for example), will pay off, not only for the victimized employee, but possibly for other workers and your entire business.

Ultimately, the results of our actions are cumulative, and we all benefit from promoting healthier and safer homes, workplaces, and communities.

"The last thing that helped me make up my mind to leave was the support that I felt when I got my first job... It was just in a local grocery store stocking shelves but before long I was working on cash and getting lots of compliments about how good I was. When my shift was over Sam would come to pick me up and if I wasn't standing outside waiting for him he would lean on the horn. One day the manager said to me, 'Your husband shouldn't treat you like that. It's disrespectful and abusive. You work hard and don't deserve to be treated like that.' It hit me like a ton of bricks. Somebody thinks that I am worthwhile. Somebody thinks Sam is not treating me properly. I felt a lot better about myself. And when I read the pamphlet about woman abuse that had been placed in the washroom, it was like it was describing me. I realized that I wasn't alone and that there were even shelters where women could go for safety."

An Excerpt from Doherty, D. and Hornosty, J. (2004) "Abuse in a Rural and Farm Context", in Understanding Abuse: Partnering for Change, edited by Stirling, M. Cameron, A. Nason-Clark, N. and Miedema, B. University of Toronto Press.

You can make a difference!

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Notes

**Family
Violence**

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