

# **“Who Will You Help” Ontario’s Anti-Violence Campaign**



Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne has launched a campaign to reduce the levels of violence and sexual violence against women in Ontario by putting the realities of violence and sexual violence up front and center. Citing statistics that 1 in 3 women will experience some form of sexually assault in their lives the Premier wants everyone to be aware and take responsibility for ending the violence.

In her “Who Will You Help campaign” Wynne draws particular attention to several issues including sexual violence, violence against aboriginal women, violence against women on college and university campuses, domestic violence and violence and harassment in the workplace.

## **Everyone Should Be Able To Work in a Safe and Healthy Workplace**

Saying that it is everyone’s responsibility to stop violence and harassment the Ontario government has laid out a plan that includes requiring organizations to actively take steps to help recognize and take action against violence in the workplace. Accordingly the Ontario government has laid out a 4-step process for developing a workplace violence policy and program.

### **Developing a Workplace Violence Policy and Program**

#### ***Step 1) Recognizing the Hazard or Workplace Violence***

Learn your legal responsibilities; Collect Workplace Information; collect community Information Collect information about Similar Workplaces

#### ***Step 2) Assessing the Risks of Workplace Violence***

Review information from your Workplace, the Community and Similar Workplaces; Review your Existing Policies, Programs; Training Complete the Workplace

## Violence Assessment

### **Step 3) Control the Risks of Workplace Violence**

Create or Adapt a Workplace Violence Policy; Develop Your Workplace Violence Program: Measures and Procedures to Control Risks Identified in your Assessment; Develop your Workplace Program; Put Your Workplace Violence Policy and Program into Practice

### **Step 4) Monitor and Evaluate**

#### **Recognize the hazards**

Collecting information is a useful step in understanding the scope and dimensions of a problem. Surveying your workplace can provide you with the information you need to identify the risks to personal safety your workforce experiences or perceives. Conducting focus groups, surveys and interviewing managers and all workers is an important step in this process. Provide employees with options for providing you with information including surveys, a reporting hotline (or webform), suggestion box, workplace safety committees and incident reporting forms.

Ensure you are tracking information about reported incidents, your training and awareness efforts, concerns and feedback from employees on an ongoing basis. Creating a safety committee to review safety and related information and procedures can be a useful and transparent measure indicating your desire to address this issue.

#### **Take Action to Take Control**

Once you have gathered information and assessed your risk factors you can take action to put in place elements that help minimize potential risks in your workplace. Building your policies and programs begins with understanding the risks in your workplace and clarifying what steps you can take to minimize them. Your policies and training should be based on the realities of your workplace.

#### **Consider elements of your workplace that may create additional safety risks**

- Physical aspects of your workplace (doors, access, exits, security measures such as panic buttons and visibility elements such as corner mirrors for stairs and blind spots, adequate lightning in parking lots)
- Specific jobs at more risk (working alone or in small numbers, working in a community based setting or mobile workplace)
- Situations that create more risk (working at night; working directly with people including unstable people such as clients and customers)
- Activities that create more risk (transporting money or people; working in high crime areas)

Integrate training into your workplace on a regular basis not only delivered during orientation or a once a year training seminar. Components of training can be rolled out on a regular basis in meetings, conversations and materials so that monitoring of potential workplace violence is an ongoing activity.

## **Violence Inside and Outside the Workplace**

Training your employees that a culture of violence and harassment is wrong and on the steps to prevent, monitor and report it is a key way you can reduce the experience of violence in and outside the workplace. Ontario Premier Wynne wants the message to be heard that violence including domestic violence against women does not stop when your employee arrives at work. Often co-workers have a significant opportunity to identify domestic violence. Many victims of domestic violence experience that violence in a way that makes it difficult for them to work and maintain their performance at work. It is important that employees and managers are trained on the ways to spot when domestic violence is entering the workplace.

Not all domestic violence can be spotted by physical signs including injury and bruise. Your employee may receive threatening calls, unwanted visits, have to leave unexpectedly or arrive late and when on the job, mention fears for themselves, their children or their property and more.

Reducing domestic violence against women means not turning a blind eye to the warning signs. An employee who is late, tired, unable to concentrate may be in need of supports and intervention more than discipline or termination. Often victims of domestic abuse learn not to speak up so when they are disciplined at work they say nothing.

Premier Wynne wants more workplaces to give and be the voice of victims of violence by taking action to help, stop and prevent violence against women. The Ontario government does not suggest that these programs are designed only for women. The programs, policies and training put in place can be of benefit to any male and female employees who may be vulnerable to or are experiencing violence inside or outside work. Your organization has a duty and a requirement to ensure your workers are safe and free from violence and threats of violence. Take the time today to review your policies and training and ask yourself what more you can be doing to help someone today.

## Resources

Action Plan To Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment In Ontario

Ontario Health and Safety Act

Domestic Violence Does Not Stop When Your Employee Arrives at Work: What Employers Need to Know