

# Facts on Working Women

ST. LOUIS COUNTY LIBRARY  
DEPOSITORY

NOV 07 1996

0336A

U.S. Department of Labor  
Women's BureauNo. 96-3  
October 1996

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: A WORKPLACE ISSUE

Each year about one million women become victims of violence at the hands of an intimate-- a husband, ex-husband, boyfriend, or ex-boyfriend. Some estimates are even higher. Women are about six times more likely than men to experience violence committed by an intimate.<sup>1</sup>

At work, women are also more likely than men to be attacked by an intimate, whereas men are more likely to be attacked by a stranger. Each year nearly one million individuals become victims of violent crime while working or on duty. During the period 1987-1992, five percent of the women victimized at work were attacked by a husband, ex-husband, boyfriend, or ex-boyfriend compared to one percent of men who were victimized by an intimate.<sup>2</sup> When an employee is the target of attack in the workplace by an intimate, other employees may also be placed at risk.

Homicide is by far the most frequent manner in which women workers are fatally injured at work. Although more women at work are killed in the course of a robbery or other crime, or by a work associate, during the period 1992-94, 17 percent of their alleged attackers were current or former husbands or boyfriends.

For Black women, the figure was 28 percent, and, for Hispanic women, 20 percent.<sup>3</sup>

### Domestic Violence Doesn't Just Affect a Woman Outside of Work

Domestic violence can interfere with a woman's ability to get, perform, or keep a job.

One small pilot study of employed battered women found that almost three-quarters reported being harassed by their abusive partners in person or by telephone while at work and more than half reported missing three days of work each month because of abuse.<sup>4</sup>

In another small non-random study of domestic violence victims, 96 percent of those who were employed had some type of problem in the workplace as a direct result of their abuse or abuser. These included being late (more than 60 percent), missing work (more than 50 percent), having difficulty performing one's job (70 percent), being reprimanded for problems associated with the abuse (60 percent), or losing a job (30 percent).<sup>5</sup> Sometimes the abuser actually prevents the victim from working outside the home at all.

### What Employers Can Do

Many employers are unaware that domestic violence affects their employees' job performance or don't know how to help them effectively. Others are aware of the problem,



but don't feel that business should play a role in addressing it.

A survey of Fortune 1000 companies, conducted for Liz Claiborne, Inc. in 1994, found that:

--4 out of 10 corporate leaders surveyed were personally aware of employees in their companies who have been affected by domestic violence;

--nearly half (49 percent) said that domestic violence had a harmful effect on their company's productivity;

--forty-seven percent said it had a harmful effect on attendance;

--forty-four percent said it had a harmful effect on health care costs;

--one-third believed domestic violence affected their balance sheet; and

--two-thirds agreed that a company's financial performance would benefit from addressing the issue of domestic violence among its employees.

Only 12 percent said that corporations should play a major role in addressing the issue. Yet, over half (58 percent) of the 100 senior executives who were interviewed sponsored domestic violence awareness or survivor support programs, and nearly three quarters offered domestic violence counseling or assistance programs. Forty-three percent said they would definitely respond to the problem in the future.

Some organizations have been pioneers in responding, and others are signing on.

For example:

--Polaroid Corporation has addressed the issue of domestic violence in a variety of ways over several years. In 1994, the President of Polaroid initiated the Chief Executive Officer's

Project, extending a charge to businesses large and small and corporations across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to collaborate with battered women's shelters. Businesses agree to provide training for their managers and supervisors and biannual luncheon seminars for employees, develop a family violence protocol for employees, and provide a shelter with in-kind services, volunteers, employees' professional expertise and/or corporate financial support. Shelters also agree to provide various forms of support.

--In 1991, Liz Claiborne initiated a public service campaign called "Women's Work." It seeks to educate the general public about domestic violence and raise corporate America's awareness of the need to deal with the problem. For its own employees, Liz Claiborne has a strong Employee Assistance Program that offers counseling and referrals. It also sponsors a series of family stress seminars during business hours.

--The CEO of Marshalls Department Store has volunteered at a shelter for battered women. The company has conducted a campaign to educate its own workers and has raised money for the Family Violence Prevention Fund's national public education campaign.

In 1995, the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor developed the *Working Women Count Honor Roll*, a program challenging businesses, nonprofits, unions, and state and local governments to initiate new programs or policies that make real, positive workplace change in the areas women say they need it the most. More than 1,300 organizations, public and private, large and small, pledged to institute changes affecting more than two million workers.

Both Polaroid and Marshalls have made *Working Women Count Honor Roll* pledges, as have several other organizations trying to



Domestic Violence, An AFSCME Guide for Union Action

Director, Women's Rights Department  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO  
1625 L Street, NW  
Washington, DC  
(202)429-5090

Domestic Violence, A Guide for Union Action  
(February 1996)

New York City Labor Union Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Cornell University/New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations  
Metropolitan District Office  
16 East 34th Street, 4th Floor  
New York, New York 10016  
(212)340-2810

Includes information on what unions can do, supporting a co-worker, and personal safety plans.

Domestic and Workplace Violence

United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, AFL-CIO, CLC  
1775 K Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20006-1598  
(202)223-3111

"Sample Contract Language to Protect Workers from on-the-job Assault," in the factpack Assault On The Job, We Can Do Something About It! (1993)  
Service Employees International Union, AFL-CIO, CLC  
1313 L Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20005  
(202)898-3200

**ENDNOTES:**

1. Violence Against Women: Estimates from the Redesigned Survey, Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, August 1995.

2. Violence and Theft in the Workplace, Crime Data Brief, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, July 1994.

3. "Fewer Women Than Men Die of Work-Related Injuries, Data Show," in Fatal Workplace Injuries in 1994: A Collection of Data and Analysis, Report 908, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, July 1996.

4. New York Victim Services Agency Report on the Costs of Domestic Violence, 1987.

5. "Domestic Violence: An Occupational Impact Study," Domestic Violence Intervention Services, Inc., Tulsa, Oklahoma, July 27, 1992

6. John Howard, MD, JD, "State and Regulatory Approaches to Preventing Workplace Violence," in Occupational Medicine: State of the Art Reviews, Vol. 11, No. 2, April-June 1996, Philadelphia, Hanley & Belfus, Inc. Consultation Services for the Employer, OSHA 3047, 1995 (Revised), Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor.

7. John Howard, MD, JD, "State and Local Regulatory Approaches to Preventing Workplace Violence," in Occupational Medicine: State of the Art Reviews, Vol. 11, No. 2, April-June 1996, Philadelphia, Hanley & Belfus, Inc.

8. Employee Benefits in Medium and Large Private Establishment, 1993, Bulletin 2456, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, November 1994. Employee Benefits in Small Private Establishments, 1994, Bulletin 2475, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, April 1996.

9. Catherine K. Ruckelshaus, "Unemployment Compensation for Victims of Domestic Violence: An Important Link to Economic and Employment Security," in Clearinghouse Review, special issue 1996.

**Ida L. Castro**  
**Women's Bureau**



♀ Create a safety plan to use at work and away from work. If you are being threatened at work, you can let your employer know of the threat. The employer should then take specific precautions to ensure your safety and the safety of other employees who may be at risk as a result of the threat. In California, under the Workplace Violence Safety Act, employers can seek a temporary restraining order and injunctive relief “on behalf of the employee” if the employee has suffered unlawful violence at the workplace or has received a credible threat of violence that could reasonably be carried out at the workplace.<sup>7</sup>

♀ If your place of employment has an Employee Assistance Program, contact an employee assistance counselor for counseling and referrals. Employee assistance programs are available to almost two-thirds (62 percent) of employees in medium and large private sector workplaces and one out of seven employees (15 percent) in small private sector workplaces.<sup>8</sup>

♀ Suggest that your employer address domestic violence. The National Workplace Resource Center on Domestic Violence has many materials that can help employers do that.

♀ If you are represented by a union, seek the union’s help.

♀ Contact the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) of the U.S. Department of Labor if your employer is not taking steps to ensure your safety at work. The Occupational Safety and Health Act requires employers to furnish their employees with a safe and healthful workplace. OSHA can supply information and guidance to businesses interested in making their workplaces safer.

♀ Contact your State occupational safety and health agency to see if and how they seek to prevent and address domestic and other forms of violence at work. In California, the Division

of Occupational Safety and Health has issued Guidelines for Workplace Security.

♀ You may be entitled to leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act if you are seriously injured as a result of domestic violence, and as a result have become incapacitated and unable to work. The Family and Medical Leave Act is enforced by the Wage-Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor.

♀ If you quit your job for reasons related to domestic violence, you may be able to obtain unemployment benefits. More than a quarter of the States permit award of benefits to domestic violence victims.

Other laws, such as wrongful discharge laws and laws protecting employees who must miss work in order to testify in court may protect your employment.<sup>9</sup>

In Rhode Island, a 1996 law protects employees from discrimination, such as discharge, solely because they have sought or obtained a protective order.

### Resources

Violence Against Women Office  
U.S. Department of Justice  
10th & Constitution Ave, NW, Room 5302  
Washington, DC 20530  
(202) 616-8894

National Workplace Resource Center on Domestic Violence  
383 Rhode Island Street, Suite 304  
San Francisco, CA 94103-5133  
(415)252-8900

The Impact of Violence in the Lives of Working Women: Creating Solutions - Creating Change (1996)

NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund  
99 Hudson Street  
New York, NY 10013  
(212)925-6635



help victims of domestic violence. The following are some examples of these pledges:

--In 1995, the City of Tacoma, Washington initiated a broad-based domestic violence educational campaign targeted at its 180,000 citizens and 3,500 employees. The campaign included classes on the prevention of domestic violence, articles in the employee newsletter, the appointment of a committee of employees to recommend services for victims and their families, and the inclusion of information on domestic violence as an insert in all city resident utility bills.

--In 1995, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees/Service Employees International Union signed a collective bargaining agreement which gave the Commonwealth's 21,000 employees up to 10 days paid leave to attend necessary legal proceedings or activities in instances where the employee or his/her children is a victim of domestic abuse.

--The Bank of Boston Foundation is funding the Elizabeth Stone House, a battered women's shelter, to train residents to run small businesses.

Employers who wish to address domestic violence as a workplace issue will find a source of information and support in the National Workplace Resource Center on Domestic Violence, a project of the Family Violence Prevention Fund established in October 1995. Current initiatives of the Center include: a resource library of best corporate practices on domestic violence prevention; employee education materials; leadership of National Domestic Violence Workplace Education Day on October 1, 1996; and a Domestic Violence Advocacy Network, which can respond to members' requests for speakers, counselors, or legal experts.

Employers may also wish to contact their State's Occupational Safety and Health consultation program for help in recognizing and correcting workplace violence hazards and in improving their workplace security program.<sup>6</sup>

### What Unions Can Do

Labor organizations can address and are addressing domestic violence at the workplace in a variety of ways. For example, they can:

--negotiate provisions in collective bargaining agreements for employee assistance services, paid legal assistance, and paid time off for family emergencies;

--sponsor workshops;

--produce and/or distribute publications and/or include articles on domestic violence in union newsletters;

--work with shelters (donate or help raise funds, support for funding, donate services, provide volunteers); and

--train stewards and union members.

Some of the publications on domestic violence produced by unions are listed in the resources section at the end of this publication.

### What Employees Who Are Victims of Domestic Violence Can Do

Victims of domestic violence often feel isolated. But you don't have to face domestic violence alone. The following are some things you can do or that may be available to you:

♀ Call the nationwide, 24-hour, toll-free domestic violence hotline. The number is 1-800-799-SAFE and the TDD number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-787-3224. Callers can receive counseling and be referred directly to help in their communities, including emergency services and shelters.



**WOMEN'S BUREAU  
REGIONAL OFFICES**

**Region I: Boston**

Ms. Jacqueline Cooke, RA  
John F. Kennedy Federal Building  
Room E-270  
Boston, MA 02230  
Phone: (617) 565-1988  
Fax: (617) 565-1986  
(Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts,  
New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont)

**Region II: New York City**

Ms. Mary C. Murphree, RA  
201 Varick Street, 601  
New York, NY 10014-4811  
Phone: (212) 337-2389  
Fax: (212) 337-2394  
(New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico,  
Virgin Islands)

**Region III: Philadelphia**

Ms. Cornelia Moore, RA  
Gateway Building, Room 2450  
3535 Market Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19104  
Phone: (215) 596-1183  
1-800-379-9042  
Fax: (215) 596-0753  
(Delaware, District of Columbia,  
Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia)

**Region IV: Atlanta**

Ms. Delores L. Crockett, RA/Field Coordinator  
1371 Peachtree Street, Room 323  
Atlanta, GA 30367  
Phone: (404) 347-4461  
Fax: (404) 347-1755  
(Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi  
North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee)

**Region V: Chicago**

Ms. Estelle Cortinas, Acting RA  
230 S. Dearborn Street, Room 1022  
Chicago, IL 60604  
Phone: (312) 353-6985  
1-800-648-8183  
Fax: (312) 353-6986  
(Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin)

**Region VI: Dallas**

Ms. Dolores Bischof, Acting RA  
Federal Bldg., Suite 735  
525 Griffin Street  
Dallas, TX 75202  
Phone: (214) 767-6985  
Fax: (214) 767-5418  
(Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico,  
Oklahoma, Texas)

**Region VII: Kansas City**

Ms. Rose Kemp, RA  
Center City Sq. Building  
1100 Main St., Suite 1230  
Kansas City, MO 64105  
Phone: (816) 426-6108  
1-800-252-4706  
Fax: (816) 426-6107  
(Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska)

**Region VIII: Denver**

Ms. Oleta Crain, RA  
1801 California Street, 905  
Denver, CO 80202-2614  
Phone: (303) 391-6756  
1-800-299-0886  
Fax: (303) 391-6752  
(Colorado, Montana, North Dakota,  
South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming)

**Region IX: San Francisco**

Ms. Barbara Sanford, Acting RA  
71 Stevenson Street, Suite 927  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
Phone: (415) 975-4750  
Fax: (415) 975-4753  
(Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii,  
Nevada)

**Region X: Seattle**

Ms. Karen Furia, RA  
1111 Third Avenue, Room 885  
Seattle, WA 98101-3211  
Phone: (206) 553-1534  
Fax: (206) 553-5085  
(Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington)