

*I just wish I had seen some signs:
domestic violence in the workplace*

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Domestic violence in the workplace

Liana White's life and the life of her unborn child ended tragically in July 2005. She was murdered by her husband, who was found guilty and is currently in serving time in prison. Their daughter Ashley now lives with her grandmother, Liana's mom. Liana worked at the Royal Alexandra Hospital, in Edmonton.



I was unaware of the staggering statistics. . .

- Alberta leads the provinces in domestic assault, homicide-suicide, stalking and is third in domestic homicide.
- From 2000 – 2006, over 170 homicides are conservatively estimated as domestic violence related. This represents about one third of all homicides in the province.
- There are approximately 8 attempted femicides for each femicide in Canada.

I was unaware of the staggering statistics. . .

During the 2007 – 2008 fiscal year, in Alberta:

- Over 12,000 women and children were resident in shelter.
- Over 14,000 women and children were turned away.
- Shelters received nearly 70,000 crisis calls.
- 50% of women admitted into Alberta emergency shelters self-identify as Aboriginal.

ACWS and HSAA respond



- ACWS is an NGO providing leadership and representation for all the 41 women's sheltering organizations in Alberta (www.acws.ca).
- HSAA is a province-wide union representing healthcare workers and funds the project (www.hsaa.ca).

ACWS and HSAA respond



- ACWS has leading expertise on domestic violence:
 - Multi-year aggregate data on women resident in shelters.
 - Participation in RESOLVE, a 3-province longitudinal domestic violence study (both include workplace matters).
- For nearly 40 years HSAA has provided leadership for their members (85% women):
 - Long-term, direct experience with domestic violence in the health sector workplace.

Teamwork: ACWS and HSAA



- The ACWS/HSAA partnership addresses an identified knowledge and intervention gap on workplace violence.
- We are responding to the fastest growing category of workplace violence in Canada: domestic violence.

The work begins in November 2007



- Why HSAA was interested.
- Their generous response: a universal problem receives a province-wide intervention.



The workplace environment

- The International Labour Organization ranks Canada fourth in numbers of women reporting assault and sexual assault in their workplace (of 32 countries; 1998).
- Less than 50% of Canadian workplaces have policies to manage this risk (Conference Board of Canada 2001).

The workplace environment

For victims:

- 70% of individuals suffering from domestic violence are victimized at work.
- There were 84 critical events and missed opportunities prior to Lori DuPont's murder.
 - *Peter Jaffe, PhD Ontario Fatality Inquiry*

The workplace environment

For Alberta victims:

Partner interfered with work: **68%**

Partner harassed at work: **50%**

Partner refused to let her work: **47%**

Partner's arrest history: **76%**

Partner convicted: **64%**

Alberta highest for interference;
lowest for arrest and conviction.

Resolve data (2006),
cited in "Women Seeking Safety," Jane Ursel (2008).

The workplace environment

For perpetrators:

Employers Against Domestic Violence Study (USA 2001)

- Several abusers made costly and dangerous mistakes on the job as a result of perpetrating domestic violence.
- Most abusers used company phones, e-mail and vehicles in order to perpetrate domestic violence.
- Most abusers used paid work time in order to attend court for matters relating to their perpetration of domestic violence.
- 10% of employers posted bail for abusers or granted them paid leaves of absences for court dates related to domestic violence.

Over 75% of perpetrators who have been charged
used workplace resources.

(Maine Department of Labor: 2004)

The legal environment

Alberta's Occupational Health and Safety Code:

- Violence must be considered a hazard.
- Employers must develop policies and procedures.
- Employers must provide staff training.

Criminal Code of Canada Bill C-45 amendment :

- Failure to take all reasonable care for the protection of workers is defined as criminal negligence.
- Managers and supervisors and anyone who gives direction to a worker may be liable.

What unions can do

- *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).
- *Train* stewards and union members.

The HSAA and ACWS Partnership



Workplace Wellness and Safety: what we all can do

HSAA funds ACWS:

- To research, design, test and distribute resources for Alberta workplaces.
- To develop workplace information designed to engage men in the intervention process.
- Contributes to ACWS implementation of the *1st World Conference of Women's Shelters*.

The HSAA and ACWS Partnership



Workplace Wellness and Safety: what we all can do

HSAA partners with ACWS:

- On focus groups and research groups to garner information.
- In conference presentations to disseminate information about the project.
- In media events to develop public awareness of the issues.

The HSAA and ACWS Partnership



ACWS is developing materials, processes and training that contribute towards keeping Alberta's employees safe and enable employers to prevent and intervene with informed promising practice.

What we are learning

- The value of partnership with labor, government and the corporate sector.
- The pervasiveness of the need.
- The urgent call for solutions.
- The lack of interventions and knowledge of how to safely intervene:
 - People end up doing nothing.
 - People who try to intervene end up victims.

We know what Canadians want in their workplace.



In ranked order:

1. Respectful treatment.
2. Healthy and safe work environment.
3. Trustworthy senior management.
4. Work-life balance.
5. Sense of pride and accomplishment.
6. Training to do job effectively.

Rethinking Work, national worker survey.
EKOS Research Associates & The Graham Lowe Group, fall 2004.

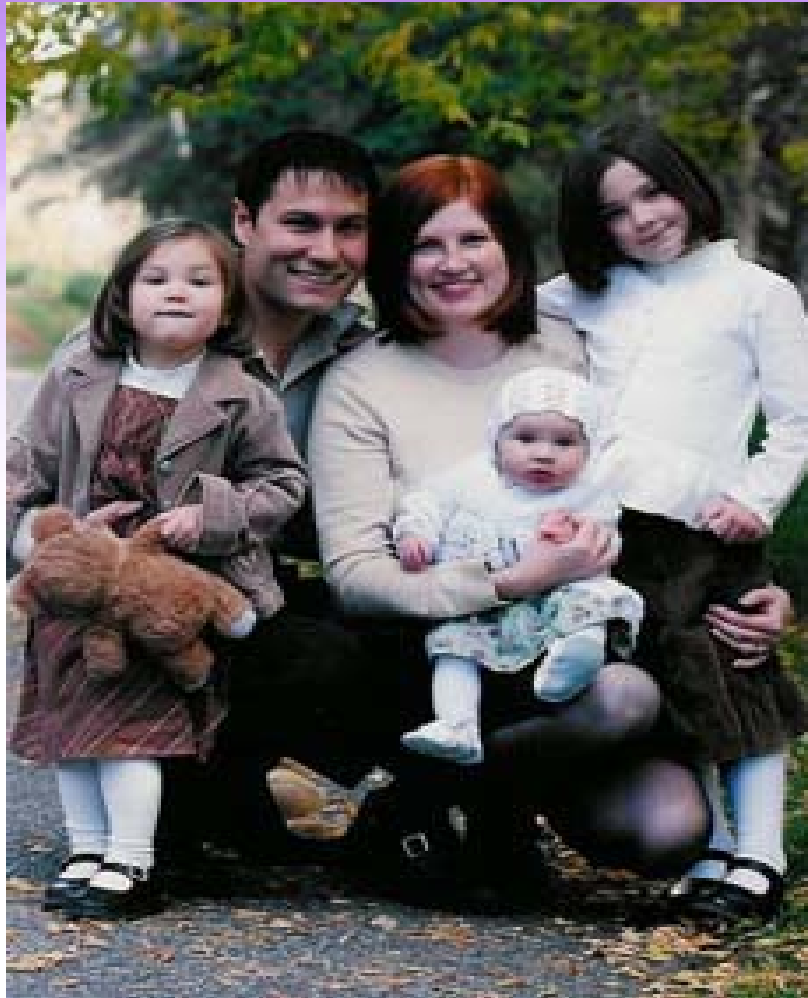
I could never have predicted that domestic violence would come into my life in this way. . .



Being involved in a highly publicized murder case has not only been very trying on my family life, but in my work life as well. . . Everyone at work knew what I was going through (and continue to go through to this day) and they all felt it, they could see it on my face.

Colleague of Liana White

Tragedy in Alberta



Tragedy in Calgary

Joshua Lall murders his family, a house guest and then kills himself. Only his youngest daughter survives.

June 2008

Thank you for your attention.