

What if we had a **Women's Advocate** in all CAW workplaces?



“Women need an Advocate at work.”

Peggy Nash
ASSISTANT TO
THE PRESIDENT



Our union has long been a leader in the effort to eradicate violence against women.

Human rights are a CAW priority: from union education about women’s rights and workplace harassment, to leadership programs that empower women in the workplace and the union, to collective bargaining language that protects women from discipline if they are subjected to harassment or violence. We’ve also bargained ‘right to refuse’ language in exceptional cases of workplace harassment.

One outstanding gain for CAW women is the groundbreaking Women’s Advocate program. These specially-trained, easy to contact workplace representatives have been instrumental in creating healthier workplaces and safer communities. We work closely with management ensuring strong cooperation to achieve this goal.

One of the best tools the union has to prevent violence against women and workplace harassment is the Women’s Advocate program. You can negotiate this tremendous resource in your workplace. Make it a priority and work to end violence against women.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peggy Nash". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sincerely,
Peggy Nash

CAW  **TCA**
CANADA
www.caw.ca

“Ending violence
through equality”

Julie White

DIRECTOR, CAW
WOMEN’S DEPARTMENT



The success of the Women’s Advocate program will be measured not only by the number of Advocates we have negotiated in collective agreements but also by the hundreds of CAW women who have been supported, believed, validated and empowered.

Women who connected with their workplace Women’s Advocate found they were not alone, that it was their right to be free from violence, and were provided with the support and community resources they needed to leave a violent relationship. Their jobs were protected when they needed time off work to find safety. Women who found support through their workplace Women’s Advocate, often went on to live a life free from violence.

I am encouraged by the shift in responsibility. Women as well as men in the CAW now understand that ending violence against women is not just a women’s issue – it’s a union issue. We believe that it is our collective responsibility to eradicate violence against women and we do it because it is the right thing to do.

We know we cannot end violence against women at the bargaining table alone but the Women’s Advocate program provides women with support and resources when often there is nowhere else to turn.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie White". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of "Julie" being a large, stylized "J".

Sincerely,
Julie White



Women are five times more likely to speak to someone they know... Advocates play a frontline role.



FAQs on the **Women's Advocate** Program

What is a Women's Advocate?

A Women's Advocate is a specially trained workplace representative who assists women with concerns such as workplace harassment, intimate violence and abuse. The Women's Advocate is not a counsellor but rather provides support for women accessing community and workplace resources. The women's advocate program is an excellent example of a successful joint union management initiative that helps create respectful, healthy and safe workplaces.

What role does a CAW Women's Advocate perform in the workplace?

The most important role is to assist women who are faced with situations of harassment, violence or abuse in the workplace or in their personal lives. Women are five times more likely to speak to someone they know when they are looking for help. The Advocate is there to help women access workplace or community services. Advocates are also there to assist the workplace union committee with other issues facing our members.

How does the Women's Advocate Program benefit the employer?

By affecting the bottom line. If a Women's Advocate can keep just one woman working who is experiencing violence, the employer will have benefited. Early prevention strategies minimize the effects of violence for women by providing avenues through which they can seek assistance. When the Advocate assists women with support and resources she helps women stay at work.

What is the role of the employer?

The employer assigns a female management support person to work jointly with the CAW Women's Advocate from the bargaining unit. The role of the employer is to provide the Women's Advocate with training, support and adequate resources to effectively do her job.



Women who were helped have this to say...

“She was like a snowplow clearing the way. I still had to drive my car in the storm but she moved the barriers to help me keep the vehicle moving.”

“After what happened I wanted to curl into a little ball and die. The Advocate at my work site was supportive and linked me to someone trained to help. She was a life saver.”

Why does a Women’s Advocate have to be trained?

Women who are in abusive relationships risk further violence, even death, as they seek to leave or break contact with the abuser. The Advocate needs to be trained “in depth” to recognize signs, make appropriate referrals and work with the employer to consider safety planning for the workplace if necessary.

What is the cost of training?

The week long training costs include lost time, travel, accommodation and registration.

Who are the victims of violence?

While some men do experience violence within an intimate relationship, the vast majority of victims are women.

According to a 2006 *Statistics Canada’s Report on Family Violence in Canada*; 84% of victims who reported spousal violence to the police were women. Over a 10 year period police reports showed in chronic abuse incidents 97% of the perpetrators were men.

The *Domestic Violence Death Review Committee 2005 Annual Report to the Chief Coroner* concluded that “domestic violence fatalities are not gender-neutral events”. Of the 100 cases they examined 93% of the victims were women.

Does an employer assume added liability?

No. Although employers sometimes fear that they will expose themselves to added liability, in fact they have an obligation to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstance for the protection of a worker. Violence is a recurring issue and if not addressed through workplace violence prevention programs it can often end tragically.

Incidents of workplace violence can take their toll in other intangible ways. By having proper tools in place in the form of a formal workplace violence prevention program, employers can better protect their workers and their organizations, and do what the law requires at the same time.

Women who were helped have this to say...

“I like that I was given options not advice and not judged.”

“Because of the support and quick referral to counselling I was strong enough to carry on when I was in a hard time of my life: being at work was my only place of sanity and safety.”



Three reasons why employers should be part of a campaign to end violence against women

First reason:

It makes economic sense

In a survey, 56% of senior corporate executives were aware of employees who have been affected by violence. Violence against women affects the workplace when an abuser harasses an employee who is on the job, or when a victim is absent because of injuries or stress.

Health care costs related to violence against women are estimated at billions per year.

Women who experience violence were significantly more likely to report being in “fair or poor” health and almost twice as likely to be coping with some form of depression.

Second reason:

A safe workplace is an employer’s responsibility

Violence against women is a security and liability concern. An abuser’s interference in the workplace or in the work success of his “target” is one of many ways that an abuser exercises and flaunts his power and control.

Third reason:

It’s our collective responsibility

Employers can make a difference in their workplaces and in the lives of employees who are facing abuse by sending a clear message that they are on the side of ending violence.

Recognizing it is the first step. Taking the warning signs seriously and being supportive can make a real difference. We all have a role to play.

“Harassment is nipped in the bud with an Advocate”

“Our Advocate is our voice with our leadership.”

“She keeps us informed of issues that matter to us as women in the union.”



Negotiating Women’s Advocate program language

To find out more about the Women’s Advocate Program or view model language please go to www.caw.ca/women, email women@caw.ca or call **1-800-265-1891**.

Role of the Women’s Advocate

In the workplace:

- Listen, believe, validate and assist.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Respect a woman’s right to make her own decisions.
- Promote access to community services.
- When necessary help plan for future safety.
- Work with leadership.

In the community:

- Lobby for child care, housing and funding for women’s programs.
- Promote women’s equality campaigns.
- Network with coalition partners.
- Speak out, take action!
- Get involved. Be a voice.

“Sometimes women don’t realize how much danger they’re in. The six month window after the end of a relationship is the most dangerous time. As an Advocate I’m trained to identify risks and refer women to the appropriate agency to help eliminate those risks.”



A Women's Advocate:

Someone who can listen and help when a woman is...

- facing violence or abuse in her relationship
- experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace
- in need of community resources



What if

the union could be there
for her when she has
nowhere else to turn?

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