



SOROPTIMIST  
Best for Women

*Improving the lives of women and girls through  
programs leading to social and economic  
empowerment.*

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF THE AMERICAS

## Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence November 25

### What is the Workplace Campaign?

The Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence is an ongoing effort to raise awareness about a seldom addressed domestic abuse issue: domestic violence as a workplace concern.

Domestic violence is a workplace issue because of the effect it has on women and on businesses. Women do not leave abuse behind when they leave their homes. Their abusers often harass them at work, by telephone or e-mail. In the worst case scenario, perpetrators come to the workplace and threaten women and their co-workers. Furthermore, domestic violence can lead to lateness, absenteeism and uneven work performance.

Businesses also suffer if they do not have guidelines in place to deal with domestic violence. In addition to an increased risk of workplace violence, it also costs businesses productivity. According to a World Bank study, one in five work days lost for health reasons by women is the result of domestic violence.

These costs spill over to the economy of the entire country. Domestic violence costs countries millions of dollars in health care, police and court costs, and lost productivity. A study conducted by the Inter-American Development Bank, found that the cost of domestic violence to businesses in Canada was \$1.6 billion per year, including medical care and lost productivity. In the United States researchers have found that losses arising from domestic violence range from \$10 - \$67 billion per year.

The Workplace Campaign seeks to provide information about what can be done to keep women safe at work while giving possible victims access to services that could help them. Clubs across the federation place cards in employee paycheck envelopes and leave stacks in women's restrooms. This is a safe environment where women can feel comfortable picking up a card. Approaching women in the workplace is important because women who are being abused are often isolated from friends and family members by their abuser. Often, the work day is the only time that the victim is away from her abuser. This may be her only opportunity to find out about the type of support and services available to her. Furthermore, the newly designed cards also provide information about what co-workers can do to help keep women safe at work.

Each year the Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence takes place on November 25th, the International Day for the Elimination of violence against Women. The day was designated in December 1999 by the United Nations' General Assembly. The UN invited governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to organize activities to raise public awareness of the problem. Women have been holding events on this day since 1981. The date marks the 1961 assassination of the three Mirabal sisters, political activists in the Dominican Republic, ordered by the Dominican ruler Rafael Trujillo.

For more information about domestic violence as a workplace concern, please see the white paper available at [www.soroptimist.org](http://www.soroptimist.org).

## How to Participate on November 25

### Four Steps to Success

Follow the five simple steps below to have a successful workplace campaign:

#### Step 1: Create Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence Cards

SIA has designed these cards to help clubs raise awareness about domestic violence as a workplace concern. The cards are available on the SIA website as a writeable PDF document, which is easy for clubs to personalize and print at a local print shop or online printing company. Below are instructions for creating a personalized Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence card.

To add club name and local contact information:

- Open the PDF file of the card found in the Program Section of the SIA website.
- Select the Hand Tool, which appears as a small white hand.
- Move the Hand Tool to where it says "Click Here to Type..."
- A cursor will appear.
- Delete the text that says "Click Here to Type..." and type in the correct information.
- Once the card is personalized, select Save As from the File menu to save.

After personalizing the card, save the file onto a CD and take it to a local print shop (most print shops have email addresses, so you can email the file if you prefer). Or, if you prefer you may email the file to an online printing service. This is especially recommended if you are printing large quantities. For more in depth printing instructions, please visit the SIA website.

The hotline cards are also available as a sales item from SIA. Visit the [Soroptimist Store](#) on the SIA website to order cards.

**Step 2: Distribute the Cards.** Place the cards in women's restrooms in workplace settings, and, if possible, in employee paycheck envelopes. Target restrooms in the workplaces of club members and other public offices or restrooms. Offices with a large number of female employees would be ideal.

Find non-Soroptimists to join the campaign. The more women that join the effort, the more offices that can be included in the campaign and, ultimately, the more women that can be reached.

**Step 3: Raise Awareness.** Clubs may wish to incorporate other domestic violence awareness events into workplace campaign activities. If the club cannot participate on November 25th, plan events for the closest convenient day. The following are suggested projects that Soroptimist clubs have completed during past campaigns:

Hold a candlelight vigil on the International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women, to commemorate victims of violence.

Host an educational seminar involving local law enforcement, local politicians, health care or social service professionals, and other community members.

Volunteer at local domestic violence shelters, and/or collect supplies and raise funds for shelters.

Distribute purple ribbons.  
Lobby local governments to pledge their support to ending domestic violence.  
Tuck hotline cards into tissue packs, and hand the tissues out in public.  
Form support groups for victims of violence.  
Create informational displays about domestic violence for local libraries and schools.

**Step 4: Incorporate domestic violence guidelines at your place of employment.** Download the [Domestic Violence Workplace Policies](#) from the program section of the members' area of the SIA website. Launch your effort to adopt these guidelines on November 25th.

#### One Step Further: Additional Ways to Help

As stated earlier, the workplace may be the one place where a woman is separated from her abuser. This may be the only place where she is safe to receive help and support.

Members are encouraged to keep their eyes and ears open for signs that a woman in their office may be being abused. Some warning signs include a woman showing feelings of fear and social withdraw; bruises or physical complaints that show evidence of assault; intermittent crying and/or outbursts of anger while talking with a domestic partner on the phone; increased absenteeism; reduced productivity and/or a lack of concentration.

There are two things can be done to help women in this situation. The first is to make sure the office has policies in place to help victims of domestic violence. These policies can include training supervisors and workers on recognizing and responding to domestic violence; offering flexible work schedules for doctor or court appointments; and/or screening telephone calls and e-mails. Soroptimist provides [Domestic Violence Workplace Policies](#) in the program section of the SIA website. These guidelines contain instructions and information to members and clubs to implement domestic violence policies in their workplaces.

Women who may be victims can be approached by members. If it is a woman not known well, try to establish a rapport. Respect her privacy if she is not ready to talk. Members should let her know she is safe to come to them whenever she is ready and you will help. If she wants to talk, listen without judging and assure her that she is not alone or at fault. Encourage her to save threatening e-mail or voicemail. Offer to screen her calls and e-mails and to walk her to her car at the end of the work day. In addition, make sure she has contact information for local domestic violence victims' services agencies.

For more information about setting up a workplace policy or helping women individually, contact the program department at SIA headquarters at [program@soroptimist.org](mailto:program@soroptimist.org).