



OSSTF/FEESO

Women's Advocate

PROGRAM

"If The Women's Advocate program was available to me at the time I was facing abuse, it would have provided me with some much needed support in my workplace and helped me navigate the often daunting process of getting support in my community."

—OSSTF/FEESO Member,
about the Women's Advocate Program

"Programs like the Women's Advocate Program raise awareness about violence and better allow women a way out of violent situations."

—Barb MacQuarrie,
Community Director of the Centre for Research and
Education on Violence against Women and Children,
Western University.



Support in every District



WOMEN'S ADVOCATES PLAY A

frontline role.



WHY DO WE NEED A WOMEN'S ADVOCATE PROGRAM?

OSSTF/FEESO believes that the union has a role to play in assisting members who are experiencing workplace sexual harassment, intimate violence and abuse. Research has shown that 1 in 3 workers have experienced domestic violence in their lifetime and 82% of those workers reported that domestic violence had negatively affected their work performance. This violence does not occur just at home. 53% of those workers said they had experienced violence at or near the workplace. 37% said that it negatively impacted their co-workers and 5% lost their job as a result of the domestic violence.¹

WHAT DOES THE OSSTF/FEESO WOMEN'S ADVOCATE DO?

Women's Advocates are not counsellors. They are specially trained volunteers who can provide support for women who may need assistance accessing workplace supports and community services or resources. The Women's Advocate can:

- provide members with information/resources to support them in dealing with domestic violence/harassment;
- connect with the local BU to support members who need necessary workplace supports;
- assist members in connecting with local community agencies that can assist them;
- provide additional advocacy to members as required;
- act as a resource to the district and bargaining unit local leaders on issues around gender/sexual violence and/or abuse; and
- provide information/training to district/bargaining unit members on issues around gender/sexual violence and/or abuse.

¹Wathen, C. N., MacGregor, J. C. D., MacQuarrie, B. J. with the Canadian Labour Congress. (2014). Can Work be Safe, When Home Isn't? Initial Findings of a Pan-Canadian Survey on Domestic Violence and the Workplace. London, ON: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women and Children.

HOW DOES SOMEONE BECOME A WOMEN'S ADVOCATE?

Women's Advocates are selected by their local districts through an application process. OSSTF/FEESO then provides, in-house training. The program draws on the work of organizations with expertise on issues of violence and provides links to the many resources available in the union, and in the community. The ultimate goal is to give the OSSTF/FEESO Women's Advocate the knowledge, tools and confidence to provide support to members in need.

WHAT IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

1. A call will go out encouraging interested members to complete an application form and submit it to their district.
2. Districts will review the applications and select members to be trained as Women's Advocates. Each district will select 2 to 5 members, depending on the size of the district
3. Selected members will attend a training conference in Toronto, April 24–25, 2020 all expenses paid.
4. Trained Women's Advocates will return to their districts to provide support to their local members.
5. OSSTF/FEESO asks Advocates to commit to participating for at least 2 years in the program.
6. On-going support will be provided as needed.

A WOMEN'S ADVOCATE:

Someone who can listen and help when a member is:

- Facing violence or abuse in her relationship
- Experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace
- In need of community resources and/or workplace supports

Someone who will:

- Listen, believe, validate and assist
- Respect confidentiality
- Support a woman's right to make her own decisions
- Provide links to community services
- Acts as a liaison, between women and their union leadership.

