

## Success Stories & Educational Materials

Liz Claiborne Inc.  
Labor/Mgmt Awareness Program  
A Coordinated Response to DV  
American Express  
Altria Group, Inc. DV Commitment  
A Successful Resolution  
Educational Literature

### A Coordinated Union/Company/Community Response to Domestic Violence as a Workplace Issue

#### The Incident:

Barbara is a single working mother of three children who works at a telecommunications company and is a union member with the Communications Workers of America (CWA). She was out of work on disability for six months. Shortly before she was expected to return to work she contacted her union representative to request additional time away from the job due to "personal problems". When her union representative gently inquired, Barbara revealed that she was a victim of domestic violence. And, due to the resulting stress and the impact of the violence on her children she needed to extend her disability leave from work. In addition, her ex-husband was to be released from jail and she feared for her life and that of her children.

The union rep explored with Barbara what options were available to her. They included: (a) an extension of disability leave (b) a possible job transfer (c) a possible job relocation. Barbara requested an extension of her disability leave and relocation.

#### The Response:

The following illustrates the steps taken to respond to this union member's need and the union, company and community network that was mobilized on her behalf. The players from the union included the union business agent, the local union president and the director of the union's Work/Family department. The players from the company included the director of the company's Employees Assistance Program (EAP), Barbara's manager from her current position and Barbara's new manager. And, the players from the community included the New York Labor Coalition Against Domestic Violence and local domestic violence service providers.

Both the union and the company are members of a joint labor/management Work/Family Committee, with a track record of addressing domestic violence as a workplace issue through their participation in a model training initiative coordinated by the NY Labor Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Cornell University.

Initially, Barbara was referred to the union's Work/Family Director by the company's EAP Assistant Director, since she was in need of funds to relocate. With Barbara's permission, the union's business agent also contacted the President of Barbara's local union to inform her of Barbara's situation. The union's business agent then reached out to the company's EAP Director to request the extension of her disability leave and to coordinate the logistics of a future job relocation. Both steps were successfully completed and together with the union and company EAP, Barbara's disability leave was extended and a job relocation was approved. With the assistance of her union and the Coalition, Barbara's belongings were packed up and shipped to a storage location.

At the same time, the union reached out to the New York Labor Union Coalition Against Domestic Violence to work with a local domestic violence agency to make arrangements for shelter for Barbara and her children. With the assistance of the agency, Barbara was able to get her children into appropriate mental health treatment and a local school. Because the agency had also done domestic violence awareness training with the local Chamber of Commerce, they were able to arrange for a low cost, long-term loan with a local car dealership so that Barbara could purchase a used car to drive her children to their therapy appointments, school and eventually to work.

The move happened during the holiday season and the family had no funds for presents or a holiday meal. Consequently, the Coalition made a call to a male union member who was responsible for special projects within the NYC labor movement. He inaugurated a fundraising and toy drive to other unions and collected presents for Barbara and her family for them to have as festive holiday as was possible given the circumstances.

Shortly into the New Year, Barbara returned to work at her new location. With the assistance of the union, the company EAP and the cooperation of her new manager, Barbara was able to begin her new job on a part time schedule. This was arranged so that Barbara could get her children settled in their new life and moved into their new home. The management at Barbara's new location implemented safety measures that included taking her name out of the company directory and screening all calls. Soon Barbara moved into a full time position and continued her transition, with her children into their new life.

#### Resolution:

Barbara and her family are now safely relocated to a new location and through the joint efforts of a coordinated workplace and community response she was able to keep her job, enhance her self-esteem and confidence and remain economically self-sufficient.

#### Lessons learned:

One invaluable lesson learned was the importance of having a workplace awareness about the impact of domestic violence on working women and a system in place in order to implement a coordinated response. A second lesson learned was the importance of building on existing cooperative relationships within the workplace. In this case, the existence of the joint labor/management Work/Family Committee provided the forum for the domestic violence initiative to be launched. Finally, without a coordinated union/company and community response all the pieces of Barbara's situation would not have been able to be put into place.

An emergency fund, established by the Labor Coalition, was able to provide immediate resources for unanticipated or uncovered expenses that were also important in facilitating Barbara's move.