



United Way  
Toronto

# Helping women who have been abused



Domestic violence against women and children exacts a terrible toll. Thousands of Canadian families are affected each year, with long-term physical, emotional and psychological effects, including the increased risk of substance abuse and suicide, not only for women but also for their children.

Many victims of abuse are reluctant to involve the authorities because they do not want the abuser to be removed from the home, go to jail or have a criminal record. They may not believe that involving the criminal justice system will protect them from physical retaliation, or they may feel tied to their abuser because of their immigration status. Economic barriers such as the lack of affordable housing and childcare also discourage women from leaving abusive situations.

By providing emergency shelter and counselling, parenting skills, employment training and legal help, United Way agencies are a lifeline back to safety for many women and their children, ending the cycle of violence. Education and counselling programs for young people at risk of becoming victims or abusers also help to protect future generations of Toronto families.

## *Did you know...*

- *It is estimated that 7% of Canadian women 15 years of age and over in a married or common-law union, whether current or past, experienced spousal violence in the previous 5 years.*
- *Common assault (61%) was the most frequently reported violent offence committed by a current or ex-spouse, followed by major assault (14%), uttering threats (11%) and criminal harassment (8%).*
- *Between 1997 and 2006, young women (aged 15 to 24) were killed at a rate that was nearly 3 times higher than for all female victims of spousal homicide.*
- *In one year from 2003-2004, more than 95,000 women and children were admitted to 472 shelters across Canada.*
- *On an average day, there are approximately 6,100 women and dependent children in shelters, the majority of whom are there to escape abuse (76% of women and 88% of children).*



## You gave me back my mother

For years, Edie MacEachern watched her father hit her mom. She remembers huddling in a bedroom of their home with her siblings. They had no choice but to listen helplessly.

After years of debilitating abuse, her mother turned to a United Way-funded agency for assistance. Edie says it was a decision that saved her mother's life and changed her own.

"I couldn't understand why she wasn't strong enough to defend herself—strong enough to defend her own children," she says. "But watching her gather the strength and courage she needed to escape the abuse and start a new life helped me understand the woman she truly is."

Today, Edie uses the hardships her family has endured as an example of human strength and resolve. Now she is a member of United Way's Speaker's Bureau, volunteering to share her story to help donors understand the tremendous difference their support makes.

"United Way gave me back my mother," says Edie. "You can't imagine how wonderful that feels. And every day, I am so thankful that United Way funds programs that help families like mine."

## Your donation helps women who have been abused by supporting:

- ▶ Emergency shelter and counselling
- ▶ Legal assistance and court support
- ▶ Outreach to isolated women
- ▶ Counselling for children who witness violence in the home
- ▶ Public education programs to prevent abuse and support for teens who experience dating violence

## United Way's work in the community

*Of the broad network of agencies that United Way Toronto funds, 50 support women who have been abused and their children. Because of your help, they have a way out. The road to safety is long and perilous but shelters can provide a safe haven. Counselling, advocacy, parenting skills, legal help, housing support and employment training can help break the cycle of violence.*

*In just one year, United Way agencies provided 75,623 nights of shelter and 210,499 hours of counselling for women/partners who have been abused, helping them to begin new lives free from violence.*

## How your generosity makes an impact

**\$108** provides a woman who has been abused with two hours of legal assistance, helping her understand her legal rights.

**\$260** provides four 1.5-hour counselling sessions for two women who have been abused, helping them leave a life of violence.

**\$600** provides clothes and school supplies for two young women living at a shelter, helping them escape violence and establish a new start.

**\$1,500** provides two weeks of food for a 27-bed shelter that helps abused women and their children rebuild their lives.