

*Neighbours,  
Friends and  
Families:*

*Raising Awareness  
with the Media*



*Neighbours, Friends & Families*

**Communicating with the media is an important part of the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign. Media reports and news coverage are powerful communication tools. Your local media can support the work of this campaign by increasing the availability of accurate information about the warning signs of woman abuse and the local resources available to women, neighbours, friends and families. Consider using the sample letters, press releases and notice for print media included in this booklet to connect with the local media.**

**In this booklet you will find the following templates:**

- Building relationship with media letter
- Sample letter to the editor 1
- Sample letter to the editor 2
- Sample News Release for local NFF launch 1
- Sample News Release for local NFF launch 2
- Media Advisory for local NFF launch
- General News Release about Woman Abuse
- Background facts to include with Media Release
- Notice for print media
- List of quotes from Expert Panel members

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**Templates that you can personalize with contact information from your own community and organization are available on the CD included in the kit or the website at [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca)**



## Building relationship with media letter

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Our community recently began participating in a woman abuse prevention campaign called Neighbours, Friends and Families. The purpose of this campaign is to raise awareness about the warning signs of woman abuse and to engage community members in effectively responding to woman abuse. For more information about the campaign, please visit [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca)

The media can play an important role in the delivery of information to local communities to help women and children in abusive situations. The following strategies can support accurate depictions of woman abuse:

- Place the story or scenario in its proper context by citing local or national statistics about the prevalence of woman abuse.
- Give your audience tips on what they can do to protect themselves and offer support.
- Avoid using euphemisms in a report about woman abuse such as “the relationship had its ups and downs” or “this was a crime of passion”.
- Refrain from making excuses for an abuser such as “he was depressed” or “alcohol may have been a factor”. Instead, identify these as risk factors.
- Sensitively explore the possibility that a violent episode may be part of a larger story of woman abuse.
- Include details about policies and legislation which may help or hinder women dealing with abuse.
- Take the opportunity to include the warning signs of abuse – see the attached list of warning signs.
- Provide some facts about woman abuse:
  - Women are victims of abuse in this country more often than they are of burglary, muggings, property crimes or other physical crimes combined.<sup>1</sup>
  - One out of every four women in Canada say they have been physically abused by their current or former spouse, intimate partner, or date at some point in their lives.<sup>2</sup>
  - Thousands request help from local woman abuse service agencies every year in Canada.<sup>3</sup>
  - Run the phone numbers of local woman abuse programs and shelters, and the Assaulted Women's Helpline at 1-866-863-0511 or 1-866-863-7868 TTY.

We would welcome the opportunity to work together with you to ensure that stories about woman abuse provide the most helpful and useful information possible.

Sincerely,

Members of the local Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign

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1. Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2005

2. Ibid

3. Ibid

*Most Ontarians feel a personal responsibility for reducing woman abuse ... and recognizing it is the first step. Take the warning signs seriously. Visit [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca) for further information or call the Assaulted Women's Helpline at 1-866-863-0511 or in an emergency the police.*



## Sample letter to the editor 1

Dear Editor,

The recent [**murder/murder suicide of ...**] in our community has deeply affected me. I am saddened because great numbers of women experience abuse in our community as they do in communities across the country and around the world. I am saddened because we were not able to help prevent the death of this woman.

In my experience, those closest to abused women often do not recognize or respond to the warning signs. Some may think this is a problem that exists between two people, but this thinking over simplifies the extent of the problem. Woman abuse is a societal problem and it impacts our entire community. It affects our family members, friends, co-workers, children and neighbours. We need to learn to work together. We all have a role to play in preventing this problem.

Now more than ever, raising awareness about the warning signs of woman abuse and providing information about how to get help needs to be a priority for our community. I am a member of a local campaign called Neighbours, Friends and Families. We are a local group of people who come together to raise awareness about the issue of woman abuse and strategize how we can play a role in the prevention of woman abuse in our communities.

We invite all members of the community who were touched by this story to learn more about the warning signs of woman abuse and how to help by visiting [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca).

We all have a role to play in preventing woman abuse in our community.

Sincerely,

A member of the local Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign

*Most Ontarians feel a personal responsibility for reducing woman abuse ... and recognizing it is the first step. Take the warning signs seriously. Visit [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca) for further information or call the Assaulted Women's Helpline at 1-866-863-0511 or in an emergency the police.*



## Sample letter to the editor 2

Dear Editor,

The recent **[murder/murder suicide]** of **[insert name/s]** has left our community shocked and saddened. Many are asking if such tragedies can be predicted and prevented. **[Murders/Murder-suicides]** such as this are motivated by jealousy and a desire to dominate and control one's partner. These are characteristics of abuse.

Intimate partner murders do not occur without warning. Over the past three years, the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee to the Chief Coroner has examined in detail 34 cases involving 88 deaths. In every case reviewed, people around the victim or abuser had some knowledge of the escalating circumstances or the warning signs, but didn't understand their significance.

Neighbours, Friends and Families, a new campaign of the Expert Panel on Neighbours, Friends and Families, the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and the Ontario Women's Directorate, is raising awareness of the signs of woman abuse so that people who are close to an at-risk woman or an abusive man can help. Through research, 15 warning signs and 23 risk factors have been identified to help those around the victim and abuser understand what they are seeing and be able to intervene.

For more information about warning signs and risk factors, visit the the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign website at [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca).

Sincerely,

A member of the local Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign

*Most Ontarians feel a personal responsibility for reducing woman abuse ... and recognizing it is the first step. Take the warning signs seriously. Visit [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca) for further information or call the Assaulted Women's Helpline at 1-866-863-0511 or in an emergency the police.*



## Sample news release for local NFF launch 1

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[date]

[Name of Town/City] – Woman abuse is a serious social problem in our community that everyone can play a role in preventing, said [Name of Community Facilitator] today, in announcing the formation of a Neighbours, Friends and Family campaign in [Name of Town/City].

Intended to foster community organizing, the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign provides communities with information and strategies to help prevent woman abuse, including tools and educational activities to:

1. Recognize the warning signs of woman abuse,
2. Support women and other members of the community who are impacted by woman abuse, and
3. Locate supportive resources in the community.

We know women in Canada who experience abuse are:

- three times more likely than male victims of abuse to fear for their life.<sup>1</sup>
- three times more likely to take time off from their everyday activities because of the abuse.<sup>1</sup>
- more than twice as likely to be injured as male victims.<sup>1</sup>
- twice as likely as men to be the targets of more than 10 violent episodes.<sup>1</sup>

**[Highlight special events, community meetings or forum planned to help increase public awareness and prevention of woman abuse.]**

More information, including awareness raising and promotional materials, can be found on the Neighbours, Friends and Families website at [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca).

For further information contact: [name, telephone and email of local contact]

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1. Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2005

*Most Ontarians feel a personal responsibility for reducing woman abuse ... and recognizing it is the first step. Take the warning signs seriously. Visit [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca) for further information or call the Assaulted Women's Helpline at 1-866-863-0511 or in an emergency the police.*



## Sample news release for local NFF launch 2

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Date)

### NEW CAMPAIGN HELPS PREVENT WOMAN ABUSE IN [NAME OF TOWN/CITY]

[Name of town/city] – [Name of group] is launching a new campaign today in [name of town/city] to help neighbours, friends and families recognize signs of woman abuse and know what action to take.

“Domestic violence is everyone’s business,” said Sandra Pupatello, Minister Responsible for Women’s Issues. “The Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign gives individuals the information they need to recognize the signs of woman abuse and know what to do to help.”

The Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign is part of a province-wide initiative developed in partnership with the Ontario government, the Ontario Women’s Directorate and the Expert Panel on Neighbours, Friends and Families, through the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children. Locally, the campaign is coordinated by [name of committee/group].

“We all have a role to play in preventing woman abuse,” said (name of official, professional title). “Through research by an Expert Panel, 15 warning signs and 23 risk factors have been identified to help those around the victim and the abuser understand what they are seeing and enable them to intervene. Neighbours, friends and families have a crucial role to play in preventing woman abuse, and this campaign provides the tools to help when individuals know a woman is being abused.”

Public service announcements, brochures and wallet cards will be distributed as part of the campaign. A website, [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca), also provides accessible information. The McGuinty government is investing in the campaign province-wide to help individuals know what action to take when they recognize the signs of woman abuse, including information on speaking to abusive men.

“Talking to abusive men is critical to ending woman abuse,” said (name of official, professional title). “Making abuse unacceptable helps deter men from being abusive. Knowing that support is available helps women feel more confident about reaching out. Working together in our community to stand against woman abuse does make a significant difference.”

For further information contact: [name, telephone and email of local contact]

*Most Ontarians feel a personal responsibility for reducing woman abuse ... and recognizing it is the first step. Take the warning signs seriously. Visit [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca) for further information or call the Assaulted Women’s Helpline at 1-866-863-0511 or in an emergency the police.*



*Neighbours, Friends & Families*

## **Media advisory for local NFF launch**

### **MEDIA ADVISORY**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**[Date]**

**CAMPAIGN TO END WOMAN ABUSE TO BE LAUNCHED IN [NAME OF TOWN/CITY]**

**Name of Area** – The (name of local committee/group) will launch a new campaign to help prevent woman abuse in Name:

**DATE**

**TIME**

**LOCATION**

For further information contact: **[name, telephone and email of local contact]**

**[www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca)**



## General news release about Woman Abuse

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[date]

[Name of Town/City] – Woman abuse is a serious social problem in our community that everyone has a role to play in preventing, said [Name of Community Facilitator] today, in response to the recent woman abuse fatality in [Name of Town/City].

The Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign focuses on the prevention of woman abuse, highlighting the importance of recognizing the warning signs and locating supportive services in the community to help keep women safe.

[Insert quote from Community Facilitator about the importance of neighbours, friends and family members recognizing warning signs and acting on them]

#### Some of the warning signs include:

**He** puts her down

**He** does all the talking, dominates the conversation

**He** checks up on her all the time, even at work

**He** tries to suggest he is the victim and acts depressed

**He** tries to keep her away from you

**He** acts like he owns her

**He** lies to make himself look good or exaggerates his good qualities

**He** acts like he is superior and of more value than others in his home

**She** may be apologetic and makes excuses for his behaviour or becomes aggressive and angry

**She** is nervous about talking when he's there

**She** seems to be sick more often and misses work

**She** tried to cover her bruises

**She** makes excuses at the last minute about why she can't meet you or she tries to avoid you on the street

**She** seems sad, lonely, withdrawn and is afraid

**She** uses more drugs and alcohol to cope

**(Warning signs apply equally to gay and lesbian relationships.)**

More information about the warning signs of abuse can be found on the Neighbours, Friends and Families website at [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca).

For further information contact: [name, telephone and email of local contact]

*Most Ontarians feel a personal responsibility for reducing woman abuse ... and recognizing it is the first step. Take the warning signs seriously. Visit [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca) for further information or call the Assaulted Women's Helpline at 1-866-863-0511 or in an emergency the police.*

## Background facts to include with media release

### BACKGROUNDER

[Date]

### WARNING SIGNS AND RISK FACTORS FOR WOMAN ABUSE

The following 15 warning signs and 23 risk factors for woman abuse have been identified through research. They can help individuals around the victim and abuser understand what they are seeing and enable them to intervene.

#### Warning Signs He May Be Abusive

**He** puts her down

**He** does all the talking and dominates the conversation

**He** checks up on her all the time, even at work

**He** tries to suggest he is the victim and acts depressed

**He** tries to keep her away from you

**He** acts as if he owns her

**He** lies to make himself look good or exaggerates his good qualities

**He** acts like he is superior and of more value than others in his home

#### Warning Signs She May Be Experiencing Abuse

**She** may be apologetic and makes excuses for his behaviour or becomes aggressive and angry

**She** is nervous about talking when he's there

**She** seems to be sick more often and misses work

**She** tries to cover her bruises

**She** makes excuses at the last minute about why she can't meet you or she tries to avoid you on the street

**She** seems sad, lonely, withdrawn and is afraid

**She** uses more drugs or alcohol to cope

**Indicators for Risk of Future Harm: the Danger May Be Greater if...**

**He** has access to her and her children

**He** has access to weapons

**He** has a history of abuse with her or others

**He** has threatened to harm or kill her if she leaves him: He says "If I can't have you, no one will."

**He** threatens to harm her children, her pets or her property

**He** has threatened to kill himself

**He** has hit her, choked her

**He** is going through major life changes (e.g. job, separation, depression)

**He** is convinced she is seeing someone else.

**He** blames her for ruining his life.

**He** doesn't seek support

**He** watches her actions, listens to her telephone conversations, sees her emails and follows her

**He** has trouble keeping a job

**He** takes drugs or drinks every day

**He** has no respect for the law

**She** has just separated or is planning to leave

**She** fears for her life and for her children's safety or she is in denial and cannot see her risk

**She** is in a custody battle, or has children from a previous relationship

**She** is involved in another relationship

**She** has unexplained injuries

**She** has no access to a phone

**She** faces other obstacles (e.g. she does not speak English, is not yet a legal resident of Canada; lives in a remote area)

**She** has no friends or family

The Assaulted Women's Helpline (1-866-863-0511, TTY 1-866-863-7868) can provide practical support to those who feel they may know an abused woman or abusive man. The Helpline is anonymous and confidential and is provided in up to 154 languages.

For further information contact: **[name, telephone and email of local contact]**



*Neighbours, Friends & Families*

## **Notice for print media**

**Neighbours, Friends and Families is hosting a community forum this [date/time] to talk about woman abuse in our community. Please join us at [location] as we share information and ideas about how our community can help prevent woman abuse. For more information about Neighbours, Friends and Families visit [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca)**

**All are welcome!**

*Most Ontarians feel a personal responsibility for reducing woman abuse ... and recognizing it is the first step. Take the warning signs seriously. Visit [www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.on.ca) for further information or call the Assaulted Women's Helpline at 1-866-863-0511 or in an emergency the police.*



## List of quotes from Expert Panel members

**“Domestic violence is everyone’s business,” said Sandra Pupatello, Minister Responsible for Women’s Issues. “The Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign gives individuals the information they need to recognize the signs of woman abuse and know what to do to help.”**

**Honourable Sandra Pupatello**  
*Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, Government of Ontario*

**“In most of the tragedies we see, the key people are right there beside the victim; they’re friends, family, co-workers and neighbours.”**

**“In the majority of cases there were several risk factors that family, friends or co-workers could have identified. Had they understood the significance of what they were seeing, they might have been able to inform the person who became the victim of the risk or they may have been able to intervene with the abusive man.”**

**Dr. Peter Jaffe**  
*Academic Director  
Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children,  
Member of the Expert Panel for Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign*

**“Woman abuse is a societal issue and as a society we all have a role to play.”**

**Alfredo Marroquin**  
*Program Coordinator, SalvAide  
Administrative Coordinator for Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign*

**“When community members step forth and really make a choice to end violence against women; that contributes to the healing of the whole community, because then it’s not isolated. That’s what this whole campaign is about. Abuse is not just in the house of the man beating up the woman, especially in the smaller communities, it affects all members.”**

**Terry Swan**  
*Program manager, Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centers  
Member of the Expert Panel for Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign  
Chair of the Aboriginal Expert Panel for Neighbours Friends and Families Campaign*

**“Unless we figure out how to engage everybody; it will be very difficult to end woman abuse.”**

**Tim Kelly**  
*Executive Director, Changing Ways  
Chair of the Expert Panel for the Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign*

continued on next page



## List of quotes from Expert Panel members (cont'd.)

**“We can point to almost every case [where a woman is killed by her intimate partner] and find that somebody knew something but they didn’t understand the significance of it and they didn’t understand what to do about it.”**

**Al O’Marra**

*(former) Chief Counsel, Office of the Chief Coroner and Chair of the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee*

**“...a lot of times families where abuse is occurring look good on the outside. The neighbours would rather believe that nothing is happening, when in fact it is. I think the warning signs are important because they help us to think about what we are seeing. This encourages a person to take some action when we notice something that doesn’t feel right.”**

**Tracey Marshall**

*Durham Regional Police, Police Risk Assessment Expert  
Member of the Expert Panel for Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign*

**“We need family members, we need neighbours, we need friends to get on board to assist us in trying to keep people safe.”**

**June Dobson**

*Ontario Provincial Police, Provincial Abuse Coordinator  
Member of the Expert Panel for Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign*

**“We always hear that ‘he’s a good father, a good provider’ so he must be a good man. However, good fathers or good men don’t beat the crap out of children’s mothers’. You can’t be a good father and abuse your children’s mother. We know children who witness violence against their mothers are as traumatized as if they were abused directly. This is one of the messages we need to give to Neighbours, Friends and Families.”**

**Debbie Ball**

*Executive Director, Faye Petersen Transition House  
Member of the Expert Panel for Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign*

**“Bringing an end to woman abuse will require vast changes among individuals, communities, institutions, and systems. The Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign is about communities taking action to build a society in which violence against women is unacceptable in our homes, in our families, and in our network of friends.”**

**Wendy Komiotis**

*Executive Director, Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC)  
Member of the Expert Panel for Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign*

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*Neighbours, Friends & Families*