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# Organizations cast light on domestic, workplace violence

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When Rachelle Trudel flipped on a talk show earlier this year, she saw herself in the television screen.

Three young women were being interviewed about their experiences being molested by their father and brother.

"I thought to myself wow, this happened to me in the 1960s. And had an a-ha moment," she said. "It's still happening in this day and age."

Trudel doesn't see herself as a victim – or a survivor. She spoke at a recent Victims of Crime Awareness Week event about violence against women hosted by two Ottawa organizations.

Trudel told how important it was to get involved if you see or suspect a woman being abused.

"It's time to assist and provide people with tools and self-esteem to believe in themselves," she said.

The event focused specific signs to show if a woman in your workplace is being abused – and, told the audience there are things you can do about it. "Tardiness or unexplained



Photo by Kristy Wallace

Bailey Reid of the Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign told a crowd of men and women about the importance of helping a co-worker if you suspect there's domestic violence happening in their life.

absences, change in job performance, isolation from colleagues, unexplained bruises or injuries – these are just some of the warning signs," said Bailey Reid of the Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign.

Reid, as well as the Hintonburg-based Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women

your workplace.

The presentation was all part of National Victims of Crime Awareness Week that wrapped up April 15.

"There's still a workplace culture that allows for discrimination, harassment and for sexist jokes to go unchallenged," said Erin Williams of the coalition.

Reid said an abusive work environment for a woman could include any physical action that can threaten the employee, harassment, unwelcome comments or bullying and intimidation.

But a piece of legislation recently passed also allows for the workplace to get involved if a female employee is being abused at home.

Williams highlighted Bill 168, which is an act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace. It was passed in June 2010 requires workplaces to have the necessary policies, programs, measures and procedures in place.

Reid, who's from the Neighbours, Friends and Family campaign funded by Crime Prevention Ottawa, said her work helps educate people in how they can

help a woman they're friends with, related to – or even work with.

"Bill 168 requires that when employers have knowledge of abuse, they keep a woman safe while at work," Reid said. "But it's important that we highlight what the warning signs are in the workplace."

However many employees might think it's none of their business to get involved, or are afraid if they do something it will make the situation worse.

But violence is not a private issue, said Reid, and will only get worse if there's no intervention.

From the employer's perspective, she said it's important they foster a work environment including safety planning and posting emergency phone numbers if you suspect someone is being abused at home.

Trudel said there needs to be options for people to move forward, and each of us have the ability to re-write the script of someone's life.

"We can each be a part of a new beginning and write a new script," she said. "The impact and ripple effect is larger than life itself."