



# Domestic violence in the workplace

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# Domestic violence in the workplace

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Violence, no matter where it takes place, can impact all areas of someone's life--including their workplace. Someone you know, including employees, or their children, could be a victim.

Any person suffering abuse from a family member or intimate partner is experiencing domestic violence. It is a behavioural pattern of abuse by an intimate partner or a family member to gain power and control.

You may have also heard similar terms such as:

- family violence
- gender-based violence
- intimate partner violence, or
- violence against women

No matter how we label it, domestic violence can happen to people of all genders. It happens in all racial, economic and religious backgrounds. It exists in relationships regardless of sexual orientation.

Domestic violence can include:

- stalking
- verbal abuse
- use of property, children, or pets to threaten and intimidate
- physical violence, sexual, emotional, and psychological intimidation
- use of electronic devices to harass and control (technology-facilitated abuse), or
- economic abuse such as
  - withholding or stealing money, or
  - stopping a partner from reporting to work.

# Recognize the signs

Some victims may not realize that the actions they are enduring constitute domestic violence, and colleagues witnessing such behaviour or hearing victims' stories may not be aware either. Signs that domestic violence has entered the workplace may include:

## Actions by the perpetrator

- stalking the victim
- hiding the victim's identification cards
- verbally abusing victim and/or co-workers
- repeatedly phoning, texting or emailing the victim
- interfering with the victim's mode of transportation
- showing up at the workplace and questioning co-workers about victim's whereabouts

## Reactions by the victim

- attempting to cover bruises
- being sad, lonely, withdrawn
- missing work more often than usual
- making excuses for perpetrator's behaviour
- acting nervous when speaking in the perpetrator's presence
- having trouble focusing on tasks, or being disengaged from work

## What you can do

Victims of domestic violence are more likely to confide in a colleague than a supervisor or a human resources advisor. It is often difficult to know what to say or do if a colleague approaches you in confidence. You may wish to consider training on how to recognize the signs and how to offer support.

When in doubt, there are 4 things you can do to help:

1. Make time for your colleague
2. Listen and empathize
3. Encourage them to seek professional support
4. Provide them with contacts or programs that can provide more support

## Related links

### Help for victims

- Call 9-1-1 in emergency situations
- Contact your departmental Employee Assistance Program
- Access Shelter Safe, which helps women and their children seeking safety from violence and abuse by connecting women with their nearest shelter
- Learn more about stopping family violence, and find supports and services in your area

### Related reading

- Support, training and guides on domestic violence in the workplace
- Domestic violence in the workplace - for employers
- WorkSafe BC: Addressing Domestic Violence in the Workplace: A Handbook for Employers Outside of B.C.
- Public Services Health and Safety: Addressing Domestic Violence in the Workplace

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