

## Employer's Guide

### Developing Workplace Policies to Address Domestic Violence

- How can employers address DV in ways that uphold their obligations by law and keep workers as safe as possible?
- How can we keep the needs of those experiencing violence at the center of our responses to workplace violence?

Effective January 2020, all employers in Newfoundland and Labrador are required to address situations of violence in their workplaces by taking every reasonable precaution to eliminate and/or minimize risks from all types of violence, including domestic violence (DV). Although inadequate on its own, a clear, comprehensive, and effective workplace policy is a necessary starting position to keep workers and workplaces safe from violence. The follow through from policy to practice is crucial and can best be accomplished with a plan for ongoing community consultations and training - leading to increased awareness and effective procedures that meet the needs of all workers and workplaces.

This Guide was developed to assist employers build the tools and capacity to recognize and address the seriousness of DV in their workplaces. The information is outlined in a checklist format<sup>1</sup> that describes the work necessary to create systemic change in workplaces, while recognizing the wide range of workplace settings where this Guide will be used. The checklist consists of three overall steps and a series of considerations to help employers design and implement DV policies. Workplace training is critical for everyone, including managers, supervisors, co-workers and union representatives in order to develop a better understanding of the dynamics of DV. Training topics should include DV myths and warning signs, the shared responsibilities to address DV in the workplace, information on nearby frontline agencies, reporting requirements, and supports for both DV survivors and perpetrators.

Action	Status	Details/Update
<b>Step 1: Develop a DV Policy</b>		
Determine if you need a stand-alone policy or if this policy would fit better under an already existing workplace violence policy.		
Identify the community agencies and contact people who can help you understand the impacts of domestic violence on workplaces.		
Identify the risks within your business/organization. Involve your employees and hire a consultant if you need assistance.  Determine timelines to address risks: those that can be fixed immediately and those that will take longer. Many risks can be addressed swiftly and effectively, for example: additional lighting on parking lots and around buildings, visibility and security at entrances, security cameras around buildings, and intercoms.		
Write your own policy beginning with your commitment to build a workplace without violence. Pledge to help protect DV survivors and all workers from the effects of DV in workplaces. State that the policy applies to DV survivors and anyone using workplace resources to perpetrate violence, such as sending harassing emails or making abusive phone calls.  Outline procedures and personnel responsible for investigating and resolving concerns and complaints.  Include processes for documenting and monitoring ongoing situations.		
Post a shorter summary policy statement in key workplace locations and define terms such as "workplace", "employee," and "domestic violence."  Outline your DV leave policy for workers experiencing DV and designate staff who can assist with safety planning.		

<sup>1</sup> The intention here with a checklist format is to suggest a list of key areas of focus necessary for workplace cultural change, to eliminate workplace violence. A checklist for one workplace may not be suitable for others, and the work needs to be seen as ongoing.

Identify supports and local resources that are available to ensure safety, including contact information for community organizations <a href="https://sjwomenscentre.ca/dvatworknl">https://sjwomenscentre.ca/dvatworknl</a>		
<b>Step 2: Communication and Training</b>		
Share your DV policy with management and staff. Mandatory workshops are co-facilitated with representatives from frontline service organizations. All workers, supervisors and union representatives are trained and know when, and how the policy applies to them. Staff know who to contact for support and assistance (usually a designated HR manager). Your DV training is incorporated into all onboarding for newly hired staff.		
One or more members of your occupational health and safety (OHS) committee receives DV training based on trauma-informed principles <sup>i</sup> . This person supports the company's DV policy and assists with survivor's safety plans.		
Training addresses the company's confidentiality policy and procedures, especially in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying the designated staff members responsible for safety planning and protocols.</li> <li>The sharing of information – restricted to those responsible to protect worker's safety and with the knowledge of the survivor.</li> <li>Assurances that there will be no reprisals against DV survivors for seeking help.</li> <li>Assurances that staff will not be punished for reporting concerns to management.</li> <li>Identifying assistance available for perpetrators who voluntarily seek help.</li> </ul>		
Supervisors and union representatives are informed about protocols and procedures related to the investigation and resolution of concerns and complaints, including the processes required to document and monitor ongoing situations. Protocols are established to connect with police, including restraining/protection orders.		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Details/Update</b>
<b>Step 3: Internal Processes – Action and Follow Through</b>		
An inter-departmental team is in place to support those designated with responsibilities to develop, coordinate, and monitor personal safety plans in consultation with DV survivors.		
Your state of readiness as an organization is reviewed and updated annually, including security measures for safety planning, emergency procedures and reporting critical incidents. The inter-departmental team will incorporate new information, as required, to update any changes in the designated people responsible for training, safety planning and reporting.		
You have developed processes to debrief and learn from any DV situations that may arise. Be prepared for the impacts of vicarious trauma on employees, especially among co-workers who are often the first ones aware of DV incidents.		
A list of resources is available to identify external organizations and contacts with expertise in DV - including supports for perpetrators.		
Continue to strengthen relationships with local community organizations and train staff to build a healthy workplace culture. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invite Indigenous organizations or groups with established expertise in the development of anti-racist curriculum to co-facilitate sessions on healthy workplaces and respectful workplace culture free of discrimination, racism, and violence.</li> <li>Build (or join) a local working group of employers and frontline organizations - with shared opportunities for training and collaboration focused on strategies and initiatives to reduce workplace violence.</li> </ul>		

<sup>i</sup> Trauma-informed approaches focus on safety, trust and engagement. Trauma-informed practice is about our 'way of being' in relationship with DV survivors. Safety and empowerment are central and must be embedded in policies, practices, and staff relations. (Adapted from the Trauma-Informed Practice Guide, 2013, BC Provincial Mental Health and Substance Use Planning Council. [https://bccewh.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2013\\_TIP-Guide.pdf](https://bccewh.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2013_TIP-Guide.pdf))