

Domestic violence in the workplace

OHS information for employers and workers

This resource provides information about domestic violence as a workplace hazard.

KEY INFORMATION

- Domestic violence is included in the definition of violence in the *Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act*.
- If an employer knows that a domestic violence incident might come into the workplace, they must take steps to protect workers.
- Workers must report to their employer or supervisor if they think domestic violence might be, or is, occurring at the work site.

Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviour used by one person to gain power and control over another with whom the person has, or has had, a personal relationship, including dating, marriage, adult interdependent partnerships, custody, blood relationships and adoption, as well as relationships stemming from these situations. This can range from subtle, intimidating behaviours to violent acts that result in physical harm or death.

Domestic violence can include physical violence, sexual abuse, financial control, emotional and psychological intimidation, verbal abuse, stalking and using electronic devices to harass and control.

Domestic violence is a workplace hazard

Domestic violence becomes a workplace hazard, not a limited personal issue, when it occurs at, or spills over into, the workplace, putting the targeted worker at risk and posing a threat to co-workers. This is why domestic violence is included in the legislated workplace health and safety definition of violence (*OHS Act*, s. 1 (rr)).

Legislation requires every employer to have a violence prevention plan in place. As per Part 27 of the OHS Code, the plan must include a violence prevention policy and procedures.



When an employer is aware that a worker is or is likely to be exposed to domestic violence at a work site, the employer must take reasonable precautions to protect the worker and any other persons at the work site likely to be affected.



-OHS Code Part 27, s. 390.3

Recognizing domestic violence

Signs of domestic violence include:

- reduced productivity and engagement
- absenteeism or difficulty getting to work
- reluctance to go home after work
- harassing phone calls, frequent text messages and emails
- obvious injuries

As a situation escalates, there is potential for harm to the victim, to their co-workers and possibly even clients.

Policy and procedures

Employers

If domestic violence is, or may be, a hazard at a work site, employers must develop and implement appropriate policy and procedures as part of their violence prevention plan. Consider creating a domestic violence safety plan that includes:

- A process for workers to report domestic violence incidents they are a part of or have witnessed.
- Training to help workers recognize domestic violence.

Providing support for individuals suffering from domestic violence can protect the worker and other potential victims.

- Help victims develop an individual safety plan.
- Keep an updated list of organizational supports and local resources.
- Post domestic violence awareness resources in the workplace: fact sheets, posters, information about local supports.

- Be prepared to allow time off to help the worker make themselves safe. Eligible employees can take up to 10 days of unpaid, job-protected leave due to the effects of violence in the home. To learn more about domestic violence leave, visit the Alberta.ca [Domestic violence leave](#) webpage.

Workers

Workers are obliged to report if they believe domestic violence may be a threat or if a domestic violence incident occurs at the work site.

- Call 911 for immediate concerns.
- Recognize signs that a colleague may be in a domestic violence situation.
- If you feel comfortable doing so, approach the victim with a simple, “Are you okay?”
- Keep a record of your actions.

For more information

Domestic violence leave

[alberta.ca/domestic-violence-leave.aspx](#)

Family violence – Find supports

[alberta.ca/family-violence-find-supports.aspx](#)

Harassment and violence in the workplace (LI045)

[ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/li045](#)

Domestic Violence and Your Workplace – Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters

[acws.ca/workplace-training](#)

Make It Our Business – Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children

[makeitourbusiness.ca](#)

Contact us

OHS Contact Centre

Anywhere in Alberta

- 1-866-415-8690
- Edmonton and surrounding area
- 780-415-8690
- Deaf or hard of hearing (TTY)
- 1-800-232-7215 (Alberta)
- 780-427-9999 (Edmonton)

Notify OHS of health and safety concerns

[alberta.ca/file-complaint-online.aspx](#)

Call the OHS Contact Centre if you have concerns that involve immediate danger to a person on a work site.

Report a workplace incident to OHS

[alberta.ca/ohs-complaints-incidents.aspx](#)

Website

[alberta.ca/ohs](#)

Get copies of the OHS Act, Regulation and Code

Alberta Queen’s Printer

[qp.gov.ab.ca](#)

OHS

[alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code.aspx](#)

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