



# You are not alone

## Safety Planning at Work

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As a supervisor, you are not expected to be an expert in domestic/intimate partner violence. However, you are responsible for protecting the health and safety of workers in the workplace, as well as for providing support to those you supervise. There are things you can do to support the workers in your workplace and to reduce the likelihood that domestic violence will compromise the health and safety of all workers, including the person experiencing domestic/intimate partner violence:

- Provide the employee with information regarding the City's Employee Assistance Program
- Contact the Employee Assistance Program yourself if you require assistance in identifying appropriate steps to take in supporting the employee
- Discuss individual needs and resources with employees who are experiencing domestic/intimate partner violence, such as:
  - A flexible work schedule or adjusted workload so they can attend medical and legal appointments
  - Time off or temporary leaves. Contact Human Resources if you need to explore available options
  - Safety planning for enhanced security. This can take the form of a "workplace safety plan" or "personal safety plan" or both. Corporate Security can assist you with establishing such plans, where needed
  - Any existing protection orders such as restraining orders, peace bonds or bail conditions
  - Keep lines of communication open
  - Follow up and monitor the situation
  - Provide the employee experiencing domestic violence with a resource list identifying local service providers that offer assistance
  - Respect the employee's privacy as much as possible without compromising workplace safety; every situation is different and privacy and safety issues must be addressed on a case-by-case basis

A workplace safety plan and/or a personal safety plan might be needed for addressing domestic/intimate partner violence in the workplace.

## What is a Workplace Safety Plan?

A workplace safety plan sets out specific actions that will be taken to help keep the workplace and all workers safe from threats of domestic/intimate partner violence.

## What is a Personal Safety Plan?

A personal safety plan is designed to keep a specific employee who is experiencing domestic/intimate partner violence safe while at work. A personal safety plan will depend on the individual's specific situation. Preferably it will be developed in consultation with the employee and tailored to their self-identified needs, keeping the overall safety of the workplace in mind.

Examples of actions that may be included in safety plans are identified below. Not all of these suggestions will be appropriate in all circumstances. In consultation with the employee who is experiencing domestic/intimate partner violence, you may also identify safety plan components that are not on these lists. Consultation with Corporate Security and the EAP may also assist in identifying other appropriate interventions.

A workplace safety plan might include the following prevention steps:

- Making emergency phone numbers readily available — next to or on the phone
- Ensuring the workplace is well lit and secure, both inside and outside
- Making sure employees know how to report concerns or threats
- Specifying when police should be called and when doors should be locked
- Creating code words so staff can discreetly alert others to potential danger
- Installing panic buttons and/or personal alarms for staff

Note: Some of these may already be in place to protect against all forms of workplace violence

A personal safety plan might include the following:

- Establishing clear communication procedures for the employee to report a threat at work
- Providing the perpetrator's photo or physical description to reception, security and/or staff working nearby
- Screening the employee's calls to reduce harassment, providing the employee with a phone that has caller identification or having another employee record a generic voice mail greeting
- Obtaining an emergency contact telephone number, other than the perpetrator's, in case the employee is late or absent from work
- Arranging for an escort to and from the employee's vehicle or public transit at the beginning and end of each work day
- Providing the employee with a parking spot near the building entrance to increase her/his sense of security
- Relocating the employee to another workstation away from windows and doors, or away from the place the perpetrator expects to find them

- Relocating the employee to another worksite
- Connecting the employee with services available in the community or through the workplace
- Integrating strategies that the employee already has in place to increase her/his safety

You may be faced with a situation in which two employees are involved in a domestic/intimate partner violence situation with each other. This can be a highly volatile situation. If two employees are involved in a domestic/intimate partner violence situation with each other, appropriate action may include:

- Eliminating or minimizing the possibility of contact between the employees while at work (e.g. scheduling the workers on different shifts and keeping the schedule private)
- Offering appropriate referrals to both employees, such as giving them information about where they can get help
- Developing a personal safety plan with employees to address their needs at work
- Talking to your employee who is the abuser and being clear about exactly what was said or done, and why it is unacceptable
- Taking disciplinary steps to hold the abuser accountable for any inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour in the workplace
- Making it clear that workplace resources should not be used to harass, stalk, or abuse the partner
- Keeping lines of communication open with both employees

### Sources:

1. Worksafe BC. Addressing Domestic Violence in the Workplace: A Handbook for Employers. 2012.
2. Public Services Health & Safety Association. Addressing Domestic Violence in the Workplace: A Handbook, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. August 2010.
3. Western Education Make It Our Business. Individualized Safety Plan Template. Last visited August 31, 2016. <http://makeitourbusiness.ca/guidelines/individualized-safety-plan-template-0>