

Government of New Brunswick – Women’s Equality Branch  
**Domestic, Intimate Partner or Sexual Violence**



***What is domestic, intimate partner violence?***

Domestic violence is defined as any violent, threatening, dominating, coercive or controlling behavior between family members, and includes intimate partner violence between past or present partners. Domestic, intimate partner violence also includes the deprivation of food, clothing, medical attention, shelter, transportation or other necessities of life. Domestic, intimate partner violence can take many different forms:

- Physical abuse includes hitting, pinching, slapping, pushing, punching, kicking, burning, stabbing or shooting. It may also include threats to cause harm.
- Psychological abuse, sometimes referred to as emotional or verbal abuse, includes put-downs, name calling, jealousy, isolation from family and friends, and threats to leave the relationship or to commit suicide if the victim does not cooperate.
- Sexual abuse includes unwanted touching or sexual activity. It may include control over birth control, forced pregnancies, abortions or the transmission of Sexually Transmitted Infections.
- Financial abuse occurs when an individual uses finances to control another individual. This could include forcing a person to hand over all or part of their salary or by denying someone access to their own finances.
- Spiritual abuse occurs when an individual uses religious or spiritual matters to control their partner. Examples of spiritual abuse include forcing someone to follow a particular faith or to give up their religion.

***What is sexual violence?***

Sexual violence is any harmful behaviour perceived by the victim to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted and takes place without consent or understanding of the victim. Sexual violence encompasses a continuum of behaviors, for example, street harassment, coercion, sexual harassment at work, intimate partner sexual violence, sexual assault, sexual exploitation and other behaviors. Some are criminal in nature (e.g., sexual assault), while others are non-criminal but steeped in attitudes that condone and normalize the behavior.

***Is it against the law?***

All forms of violence are wrong and many are against the law. The *Criminal Code of Canada* sets out the offences that may apply to situations of domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence and are dealt with in the criminal justice system. Other types of domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence are not criminal but may affect individuals and warrant accessing a leave. It is important to note that not all victims report domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence to the police.



### ***Who are the victims of domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence?***

Domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence affects all genders, orientations, ages, economic statuses, cultures and abilities.

With that said, according to statistics, women and girls are more likely to be subjected to gender-based violence. The continuum of violence is broad therefore victims may be subjected to it in a variety of environments – at home, at work, at school or going about regular activities in the community. The emotional and psychological impact of violence on victims can be significant and result in long term health affects.

### ***How can domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence affect a workplace?***

Domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence affects an individual's personal life in many ways - violence is not confined to the home. A person subjected to violence may carry the burden and the risks associated with the violence to work.

Domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence can enter the workplace when an abuser attempts to harass, stalk, threaten, assault, or injure a victim at work. For example, the abusive partner may call or send threatening messages, may be constantly "checking up" on their partner, may come to their place of work where they may humiliate their partner in front of colleagues or may physically assault them. Further, the perpetrator of the violence may work at the same place as the victim.

There are often no witnesses to domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence, therefore a victim can suffer in silence if they do not believe they can safely disclose to someone.

The victim may feel fear, anxiety, be distracted and they may miss work while healing from emotional trauma, injuries or trying to hide injuries. When the violence spills over into the workplace, it is not just the victim who is impacted. Employers, managers and co-workers of the victim may also begin to feel the effects and consequences of the violence. Staff may become concerned, annoyed, or frustrated at having to "cover" for the employee who is performing poorly especially if they do not know or understand what the victim is going through. Staff may fear the abuser as well and to ensure their safety may distance themselves from the victim which may make the victim feel even more alone.

### ***How do I know if someone is a victim of domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence?***

It may be difficult for victims to discuss when domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence has occurred. While, some victims may not tell anyone about the violence, you may notice:

- Physical injuries.
- Absenteeism – the employee may be sick more often or have unexcused absences from work.
- Unwanted phone calls and visits, possibly disruptive, from an abusive, current or former partner.
- The employee may make excuses for their partner's inappropriate or abusive behaviour and explain injuries as "falls", "accidents" or "being clumsy".
- Tries to cover up bruises with unseasonal clothing, such as long-sleeves or turtlenecks in summer, or wearing heavy makeup.

- The partner checks up on the employee by increased number of phone calls, emails or faxes (there may be strong reactions to these calls or reluctance to talk with the partner).
- Change in job performance, such as poor concentration, more errors, slowness or inconsistent work quality.
- Anxiety, shame, fear, emotional distress or depression.
- Co-workers may observe sexual harassment in a workplace and notice how a victim is affected by the behavior emotionally and in their work performance.
- Bystanders are often present when victims are sexually harassed in the street.
- Often, we don't know who is a victim. It is important to create a supportive workplace where people are encouraged to disclose and feel comfortable doing so.

### ***How can I support a victim of domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence in the workplace?***

Domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence are not private matters. Care and support can be offered to employees and colleagues who are subjected to violence. It is important to be understanding and acknowledge that violence is not the victim's fault. When an employee is experiencing or has experienced a traumatic event, their ability to cope may be impacted.

When helping a victim of domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence:

- Put the victim's safety first.
- Use the NB Family Violence and the *Workplace Toolkit: It's Your Business* to assist in taking appropriate action.
- Create a supportive environment at work where employees are encouraged to seek help.
- Let them know you believe them.
- Let them know it's not their fault.
- Take the situation seriously as people's safety may be at risk.
- Help the employee make a safety plan [www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca/en/safety-planning](http://www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca/en/safety-planning).
- Support other employees who may be distressed.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Post a list of support services that are available in your region.

***If someone is in immediate danger call 911.***

Tips to make things safer for victims of domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence:

- Have both a personal safety plan and a workplace safety plan based on the individual's situation, needs, risks and resources.
- The safety plans should be created with the employee, to ensure that their specific needs are met.
- Addressing sexual violence in the workplace requires sensitivity and planning particularly if the victim and perpetrator are co-workers or interact with one another in the workplace (e.g., delivery person or tech support).

An employer could assist with a workplace safety plan which could include:

- Arrange for employee to park close to the building in a well-lit visible area.
- Have a safe walk or buddy system.

- Screen phone calls, remove name from contact list and office door.
- Allow flexible work hours or alternate work locations for the victim. Flexible hours will allow them to be able to attend services or counseling, and if their work hours change frequently, then it could be more difficult for the abuser to track them.
- Inform employees about domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence leave under the Employment Standards Act.
- For more information and tips on workplace safety plans, go to the NB Family Violence and the Workplace [www.toolkit.nb.ca](http://www.toolkit.nb.ca).

Personal safety plans may include:

- Where to go in case of an emergency, who to contact, and what they should bring with them.
- Changing telephone numbers.
- Relocating (temporary or permanently).
- Having a plan for an emergency.
- Learning how to clear internet search history (in case one is looking for resources online).
- Ensuring you are not inadvertently providing information of your whereabouts through cellphones or social media.
- For more information on how to create a safety plan, visit PLEIS-NB's website [www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca/en/safety-planning](http://www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca/en/safety-planning).

### ***I need more information – where can I look?***

The NB Family Violence and the Workplace toolkit ([www.toolkit.nb.ca](http://www.toolkit.nb.ca)) has information and resources on a variety of topics including definitions, the impact on the workplace, sample policies, and tips on how to create a healthy work environment. The toolkit website is intended for both large and small employers to help support employees who are the victims of violence.

Information and resources about sexual violence are available, including but not limited to the following.

Fredericton Sexual Assault Centre  
[www.fsacc.ca/en](http://www.fsacc.ca/en)  
 506-454-0437

L'Eclipse, Edmundston  
[www.escalemadavic.com/eclipse.html](http://www.escalemadavic.com/eclipse.html)  
 506-739-7729

South Eastern Sexual Assault Centre, Moncton  
[www.crossroadsforwomen.ca/en/programs-services/south-eastern-sexual-assault-centre-sesac](http://www.crossroadsforwomen.ca/en/programs-services/south-eastern-sexual-assault-centre-sesac)  
 1-844-853-0811



## ***Other resources***

New Brunswick Human Rights Commission

To make a complaint regarding sexual harassment, contact the NB Human Rights Commission at 1-888-471-2233 (toll-free).

ENG - [www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/nbhrc.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/nbhrc.html)

FRN - [www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/fr/ministeres/cdpnb.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/fr/ministeres/cdpnb.html)

### Employment Standards

For all questions regarding domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence leave under Employment Standards Act, contact the Employment Standards Branch at 1-888-487-2824 (toll free) or 506-453-2725.

ENG - [www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/post-secondary\\_education\\_training\\_and\\_labour/People/content/EmploymentStandards.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/post-secondary_education_training_and_labour/People/content/EmploymentStandards.html)

FRN - [www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/fr/ministeres/education\\_postsecondaire\\_formation\\_et\\_travail/Personnes/content/NormesDemploi.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/fr/ministeres/education_postsecondaire_formation_et_travail/Personnes/content/NormesDemploi.html)

## ***What services are available for victims of domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence?***

There are many professions and services that have expertise in dealing with domestic, intimate partner or sexual violence. A directory of services for victims of abuse is available at the following link

[www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca/en/Directory\\_of\\_Services\\_for\\_Victims\\_of\\_Abuse](http://www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca/en/Directory_of_Services_for_Victims_of_Abuse)

This guide, created by Public Legal Education and Information Service of NB, is designed to help victims find services and programs when they are in a crisis and for longer term support. Additionally, some employees may have access to an Employee Assistance Program or health plan which may offer support services