

Domestic Violence Policy



10 Steps to creating a domestic violence policy for your workplace

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation requires that if a risk of injury to workers from violence is identified, an employer must establish procedures, policies, and work environment arrangements to eliminate or minimize the risk ([s4.29](#)). If an employer learns of a domestic violence situation that puts workers at risk in the workplace, this resource will assist in developing a policy.

But why wait until you learn of a threat before taking action? Situations can change quickly and there may be little or no warning about an employee's violent partner or family member. Employers may wish to develop policies before domestic violence touches the workplace.

If you create a domestic violence policy, it should be adapted to the needs of your workplace — one size does not fit all. A policy should be inclusive because domestic violence can happen to anyone — regardless of age, gender, marital status, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, culture, or ethnicity.

The following 10 steps will help in creating a policy that works for you, your workplace, and your employees. More resources can be found at www.worksafebc.com/domesticviolence.

Step 1

Decide which policy format best meets your needs. Do you need a **stand-alone policy** or an **integrated policy** where domestic violence is included in other workplace policies? If you already have a policy dealing with violence in the workplace, consider updating it to deal with domestic violence as well.

Step 2

Include a **corporate or management statement**. This is a short and broadly focused message stating your organization's position on domestic violence and your pledge to help protect your workers from its effects.

Step 3

State clearly **why you created the policy** and why addressing domestic violence in the workplace is important. For example, a workplace policy on domestic violence can help you:

- Address safety concerns
- Meet legal responsibilities
- Support employees
- Build a violence-free workplace
- Foster a safe and respectful workplace culture
- Encourage work-life balance
- Promote employee health and wellness
- Increase productivity



Step 4

Provide clear **definitions** with examples in your policy. Words, terms, and concepts that people might need to know include:

- What is *violence*?
- What is *domestic violence*? How does it differ from other types of violence?
- Who can suffer from domestic violence?
- You may want to include a definition of *workplace* if your type of business makes this unclear.

Step 5

Create an **application statement**. Tell your workers to whom, when, and how the policy will apply. Ideally, the policy should apply to victims of domestic violence as well as to anyone using the workplace or workplace equipment to perpetrate violence (e.g., sending harassing emails, making abusive phone calls). Include a start date and review date (every 2–3 years). Revise and develop your policy based on your experience, the experiences of other workplaces, and the insights of community experts. You can also learn from research in areas of violence against women, progressive human resources management, co-operative labour relations, and occupational safety.

Step 6

Identify the **specific actions** you will take to address domestic violence in the workplace.

- What safety planning will you do?
 - Do you already have a workplace safety plan in place? If not, tell your employees you will develop one and tell them when it will be completed and reviewed.
 - Who will be involved in creating a personal safety plan for a victim?
- Will you rely on outside expertise to assist? If so, who (e.g., police, someone from an anti-violence organization)?

- What kind of risk assessments will be carried out and when will they be conducted?
- Do you offer flexible work hours and scheduling policies?
- Are there policies and practices for granting leave to victims?
- Can you make special accommodations and return-to-work arrangements for victims?
- Is there an employee assistance program available to victims and/or perpetrators?
- What accountability measures do you have in place for perpetrators of domestic violence?

Look at the materials available at www.worksafefbc.com/domesticviolence to learn about available resources, other actions you can take, and other processes and practices you can put in place.

Step 7

Make sure everyone understands their **responsibilities** under the policy.

- Who is responsible for doing what under the policy?
- What actions are inappropriate and unacceptable in the workplace?
- Who are the contacts for reporting incidents?
- Who is responsible for following up on reports? What actions must they take?
- Who is responsible for dealing with restraining orders or other protection orders?
- What role does the Joint Health and Safety Committee and/or the health and safety representative play?
- What should staff do in the event of an emergency incident at the workplace?



Step 8

Set out the **training** you will provide to your employees to allow them to fulfill their responsibilities under the policy. How often will you refresh the training?

Step 9

Make a clear statement that staff will not be punished for reporting issues or bringing concerns to management. There will be **no reprisals** against victims for seeking help with safety planning or support for domestic violence. Also let abusers know that if they voluntarily seek help, you will provide it or find someone who can provide professional help in stopping their behaviour (when appropriate).

Step 10

Publish your new policy. Make sure every employee receives and reads a copy. Remember to give new employees a copy. Post your policy in conspicuous places around the workplace. Leave a copy in your visitors' area so customers and clients know that you have addressed this important issue.