

WHY EMPLOYERS SHOULD CARE: IMPACTS OF DIPV ON THE WORKPLACE

THE IMPACT AND COSTS OF DOMESTIC/INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (DIPV) ON THE WORKPLACE ARE FAR-REACHING.

When it enters the workplace, DIPV can:

- Affect employee productivity (e.g. decreased focus on tasks)
- Lead to a loss of concentration, which could become a hazard for workplace security
- Lead to **presenteeism** as well as absenteeism
- Impact employee morale – for either the employee subjected to DIPV or for their co-workers (e.g. frustration, fear for their safety)
- Create an environment of suspicion, fear, and distrust
- Put other employees at risk
- Create major costs to employers and the workplace.

Absenteeism and poor productivity are perhaps the most obvious costs to workplaces. However, **presenteeism**, low staff morale, and strained relations between employees caused by DIPV are all contributors to an inefficient and toxic workplace.

THE COST\$ OF DOMESTIC AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE :

DIPV creates tremendous costs to society, including workplaces. The annual cost of DIPV is an estimated \$7.4 billion (Justice Canada, 2009), which includes an estimated **\$77.9 million per year lost to employers due to tardiness, distraction, and absence, which all contribute to decreased productivity and outputs¹.**

¹ "... three types of costs comprise the losses to employers: lost output from victims' absences, lost productivity due to tardiness and distraction, and administration costs for victims' absences." (Zhang, T., Hoddenbagh, J., McDonald, S. & Scrim, K. 2012. An Estimation of the Economic Impact of Spousal Violence in Canada, 2009. Department of Justice Canada. [Available here.](#))

Third party costs are estimated at close to \$1 billion in Canada and include expenses for services and programs such as the following, in addition to employer costs:

- Housing services
- Justice or court services
- Police services
- Educational or training programs
- Medical help

Money to pay for these services comes from public donations, corporate sponsorship or taxation.

In other words,

DIPV costs everyone.

IMPACTS OF DOMESTIC AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE ON THE WORKPLACE

When DIPV enters the workplace, it is not just the victim/survivor² who is impacted. Employers, managers and co-workers of the victim or the abuser may also feel the effects and consequences of the abuse.

How does DIPV **enter** the workplace?

Before understanding how DIPV affects the workplace, it is important to understand how it enters the workplace. Here are some examples:

- The abuser sends threatening e-mails or voice messages
- The abuser humiliates the victim by criticizing or degrading them in front of other staff
- The abuser constantly contacts the workplace and other staff in an effort to keep tabs on the victim
- The abuser shows up at the workplace to check in on the victim
- The abuser shows up at the workplace at the end of the day to walk the victim out as a form of control
- The abuser shows up at the workplace to visit co-workers in order to gather information about the victim's whereabouts
- The abuser hits, slaps or pushes the victim at their workplace

²Please note: the word "victim" is used throughout our toolkit where the term "survivor" could also be used to describe people subjected to domestic or intimate partner violence. While some identify as surviving the experience and others, as being victimized, we respectfully acknowledge that some people subjected to abuse do not relate to either term.

How does DIPV *impact* the workplace?

A recent survey³ demonstrated that for 38% of Canadian respondents who experience DIPV, it affected their ability to either get to work or show up on time, and over 50% reported that at least one abusive act happened at or near their place of employment.

DIPV can also impact the workplace in the following ways:

- Co-workers become concerned, annoyed, or frustrated at having to cover for the employee who may be performing poorly. Some may believe the employee is just being lazy.
- Co-workers and other employees may become distressed or feel uncomfortable at work.
- Co-workers may be unsure of what information to share if approached by the abuser or if questioned by other employees.
- Co-workers may become concerned about their own safety and wellbeing.
- Co-workers may be afraid of being accused or threatened by the abuser, so they may distance themselves from the victim so as not to become targeted.
- Co-workers and employees may be unaware of the abuse, and they could perceive the victim as distant or unfriendly, which could lead to the victim feeling isolated, depressed, or incompetent.
- Organizational productivity may suffer based on the distraction created by the insidious nature of the violence.

What can employers do to help?

There are many different things that can be done to make the workplace a safer environment for employees. No matter how small a gesture, it will pay off – not only for the victimized employee, but for other employees too – even the entire workplace. Ultimately, the results of society's actions are cumulative, and everyone benefits from promoting healthier and safer homes, workplaces, and communities.

Early intervention in the workplace such as helping employees feel safe in addressing their personal safety issues and connecting them to appropriate resources can help stop DIPV from occurring and contributes to a healthier, more productive workforce.

In addition, financial insecurity is a key barrier for someone who is being abused. Due to financial constraints, they often stay in or return to abusive relationships. Having them maintain employment may increase their financial stability and independence. Flexibility on the part of employers, such as allowing someone time off, flexible shifts, or helping them feel safe at work can allow them to stay employed and remain financially stable.

Refer to following fact sheets for workplace measures that can be adopted:

- [Rights and Responsibilities of Employees and Employers](#)
- [Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence and the Law](#)
- [Supportive Workplace Policies, Practices and Programs](#)
- [Creating a Positive Workplace](#)
- [Being a Good Corporate Citizen](#)
- [Being a Trauma-Informed Employer](#)

³ Can Work Be Safe When Home Isn't? Initial Findings of a Pan-Canadian Survey on Domestic Violence and the Workplace. Canadian Labour Congress & Western University's Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children. [Available Here.](#)

How Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence Enters the Workplace	Impact on the Victim	Impact on the Workplace	Consequences for Employer
Abuser sends threatening e-mail, voice messages and/or faxes	Fear, inattention, increased fatigue	Other staff concerned, annoyed at having to "cover" for colleague who is performing poorly; co-workers may think victim is lazy	Consequences for Employer
Abuser humiliates the victim by criticizing or degrading them in front of other staff	Low self-esteem, low confidence, anxiety related symptoms such as headaches, nervousness	Other staff may become distressed or feel uncomfortable at work	Staff take work time discussing situation; less productive because of discomfort at work
Abuser constantly contacts workplace and other staff in an effort to "keep tabs" on the victim; abuser stalks the victim	Mistrust other staff because they are giving out information; fear for personal safety	Staff are unsure of what information to share and have safety concerns about their own well-being	Staff productivity may decrease contributing to increased conflict with others; safety concerns
Abuser is jealous of others in the workplace, the abuser "shows up" at the office	Increased anxiety and avoids interaction; fear of losing job; physical symptoms related to anxiety such as ulcers, headaches	staff are afraid of being accused by the abuser; staff may distance themselves from the victim; other staff feel at risk	Employer must address safety issues and increased absenteeism for physical symptoms; negative impact on staff relationships
Abuser hits, slaps or pushes the victim at their workplace	Victim experiences humiliation and/or shame; anxiety from trying to hide injuries	Co-workers may fear for their own safety and require counselling	Absenteeism and safety concerns; in some situations staff may be performing job duties that they have not been trained for; employee morale is affected
Abuser physically assaults victim outside work environment or at home	increased anxiety from trying to hide the abuse; physical injuries	staff may not know about the abuse; perceive victim as distant or unfriendly	poor team performance; conflict among staff; victim may miss work because of injuries
Abuser sexually assaults victim	Shame, self-blame, self-hatred; victim withdraws from co-workers; unwanted pregnancies; forced abortions; sexually transmitted diseases	Staff view victim as distant; communication among staff poor; negative work environment	Human resources must address issue of team building and possible staff conflicts
Abuser threatens to kill the victim	Victim feels trapped in the relationship; feels nobody cares; may be afraid, isolated or desperate	Other staff unaware of death threats and reacts negatively to the victim's anxiety/ stress; others may fear for their own safety if aware of death threats against victim	Supervisors may have to deal with staff anxieties and fear; productivity drops