



Addressing Family Violence:

A Guide for PEI Workplaces

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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If you want to talk to someone about family violence, please contact your Supervisor, Manager or HR Manager or connect with the services listed in Appendix A.

Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook has been created as a resource for workplaces in Prince Edward Island to help them recognize and respond to employees affected by family violence. The suggestions contained in this handbook are intended as guides to:

- Raise awareness about the dynamics of family violence and potential impacts on the workplace
- Provide specific guidelines for managers and supervisors to help them support employees affected by family violence
- Provide information to help keep employees safe and prevent family violence situations from escalating into a workplace hazard.

The dynamics of family violence are complex. It is important to note that this guide does not replace the services of trained professionals such as counsellors, victim support workers, police officers and legal counsel who may need to be involved. Each circumstance is unique and employees affected by family violence should be encouraged to use the resources that best suit their needs.

This handbook includes information and guidelines about:

- The social and financial effects family violence has on a workplace
- The signs of family violence
- Ways to help prevent family violence from escalating into the workplace
- How to talk about family violence

Why is this important?

Many workers and employers still believe that family violence is a private issue and hesitate to become involved. However, the effects of family violence often extend outside the home. Family violence can enter the workplace when an abuser attempts to harass, stalk, threaten, or injure a victim at work. This can endanger co-workers and clients as well as victims, putting an entire workplace at risk. The implications of family violence can range from reduced employee productivity to serious injuries and even death.

Although we sometimes think of family violence as a private, family problem, it does not stop when an employee goes to work. Workplace incidents involving family violence can have severe consequences.

People experiencing family violence often feel isolated due to shame and fear, and may be reluctant to ask for help. The silence surrounding this kind of violence can put other workers and the workplace at risk. Creating opportunities for workers to feel more comfortable talking about family violence can help to prevent it from entering a workplace and can assist with your plans to address violence should it arise.

What is Family Violence?

Family violence affects, or will affect, all people in Prince Edward Island. Family violence is connected to abuse of power and control, and to injustice based on sex, race, age, class, sexual orientation, and physical or mental ability. Individual history, family history, and current circumstances play a role in family violence.

Family violence is known by many names: child maltreatment, child abuse, incest, child exposure to family violence, intimate partner violence, spousal violence, woman abuse, family violence, sibling abuse, parent abuse, elder abuse, and abuse of older adults.

Family violence can affect anyone, from any demographic: cultural, national and ethnic origin, socio-economic status, education, gender, age and physical or mental ability.

Family violence can take many forms: harassment, verbal abuse, threats, financial abuse, psychological abuse, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, neglect, damage to property, injury to pets, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and homicide.

Family violence can happen between: current and former intimate partners (married and unmarried couples, including same-sex couples, and dating partners); a legal guardian or parent and child; blood, marriage or adoptive relatives; and a live-in caregiver and care recipient.

Family violence hurts. It can cause physical and psychological harm. Family violence violates the victim's rights and freedoms. Family violence harms the healthy development of children and youth.

Family violence is a public health issue, a criminal justice issue, and a human rights issue. To address family violence, all of us in Prince Edward Island must work together and share our resources.

This description of family violence comes from the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention.

When we refer to family violence in this handbook, this is what we mean.

The Effects of Family Violence in the Workplace

Family violence can have serious implications for the workplace, including:

- Reduced employee productivity and motivation
- Loss of focus, which can also lead to increased risk of injury
- Increased absenteeism
- Replacement, recruitment, and training costs if victims are injured or dismissed for poor performance
- Higher company health expenses
- Decreased worker morale
- Strained co-worker relationships
- Potential harm to employees, co-workers, and/or clients when a violent abuser enters the workplace
- Liability costs if a member of the public or another employee in the workplace is harmed



Family violence has serious impacts on the health of victims and their families as well as on the health care system. Physical health effects include injury, disability, chronic pain, and problems related to alcohol and substance abuse. Impacts on mental health can include depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicide attempts. Increased absenteeism and sick time, and decreased work productivity stemming from family violence could result in high costs to your organization. The social and emotional costs are even greater.

Signs of Family Violence

While it can be difficult to recognize, there are many signs that might indicate someone is experiencing family violence. You may notice that the person is less productive than usual or see changes in social behaviour. Being aware of potential signs of family violence can help you to respond in a helpful way. Research has shown that some of the more visible signs of abuse might indicate an escalation of violence that could enter a workplace.

Family violence can take many forms. A victim of family violence might be late for work because their partner is:

- Hiding or stealing car keys or transportation money
- Hiding or stealing identification cards
- Failing to provide childcare
- Physically restraining or assaulting them before work

Although many of these signs are not exclusive to family violence, the following table provides some signs to be aware. You may notice others.

Work Productivity

- Having trouble concentrating
- Often arriving late
- Missing work more frequently than usual
- Less productive
- Making excuses for poor work performance
- Receiving frequent phone calls and emails from a partner

Social Behaviour

- Behaving differently than usual
- Appearing withdrawn and isolated
- Engaging in fewer social activities than usual
- Making last minute cancellations
- Using drugs and/or alcohol to cope
- Apologizing for a partner's behaviour

Escalating Abuse

- Appearing flustered by incoming phone calls or emails from a partner
- Trying to cover up bruises and scratches (e.g., wearing long sleeves or turtleneck tops in summer)
- Showing signs of strangulation (this is a major risk factor for future homicide of women)
- Receiving unannounced visits from a partner at work
- Acting nervous when a partner shows up at the workplace
- Being followed to/from work by a partner



Examples of abusive behaviour

A perpetrator might:

- Show up at the workplace and ask co-workers questions about the victim (e.g., Where are they? Who are they with? When will they be back?)
- Lie to employers and co-workers about the victim (e.g., say that the employee is ill, out of town, or at home with a sick child)
- Threaten co-workers
- Verbally abuse and intimidate the victim or co-workers
- Damage the victim's or organization's property
- Physically harm the victim and/or co-workers

Jealous and controlling behaviour may also include:

- Controlling the victim's finances
- Isolating the victim from family, friends, and co-workers
- Threatening to harm the victim's family, children, property, or pets
- Threatening the victim with deportation or arrest by police
- Threatening the removal of the victim's children by the authorities
- Accusing the victim of cheating, perhaps with a co-worker
- Forcing the victim to have children or sabotaging birth control efforts — a practice known as “reproductive coercion”



Guidelines for Managers and Supervisors Supporting Employees Affected by Family Violence

The following is a list of guidelines that can help Managers, Supervisors and Human Resources support an employee who is a victim of family violence.

When an employee discloses that they are a victim of family violence, it is important to believe the employee. Do not judge. Acknowledge the courage it takes to talk about family violence. No matter how terrible a situation sounds, victims of family violence are more likely to downplay their situation than to exaggerate it. They also tend to understate their fear. Take it seriously if someone tells you about an experience of family violence, or if they express fear.

Avoid giving personal advice. Family violence involves the perpetrator taking control away from the victim so it is important not to engage in the same behaviour, even when the intention is to help. Unfortunately, your personal advice may actually be unsafe since you will only know the parts of the story your employee feels comfortable sharing. A common piece of advice given to victims is to leave their partner, but telling them to leave a relationship before they are ready and have safety measures in place can be dangerous. Rather than giving advice, you can provide support, information, and contact details for resources and trained professionals.

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A female victim is at greatest risk of homicide around the time she leaves or is preparing to leave an abusive partner.



Conversation Guidelines for Managers and Supervisors

- Listen and provide support. Tell your employee, “Help is available. I am here if you need me and there are programs with special expertise that can help.”
- Since it can be difficult to identify someone experiencing family violence, approach conversations with caution. Remember to bring up family violence only in a safe and private environment. You can start a conversation with statements such as:
 - “I’m concerned about you. You’re such a good employee, but you seem distracted and upset recently.”
 - “Sometimes when a person’s performance changes at work, it could mean they are experiencing difficulties in their personal life. Could this be happening to you?”
- If the victim discloses abuse, be supportive, remain non-judgemental when you ask questions, be clear, and be sensitive. You could ask:
 - “What can we do to help you feel and be safer at work?”
 - “Has your partner ever threatened to come to work?”
 - “Can I give you information about resources that can support you?”
- Certain statements might make victims feel like you don’t believe them or that you are blaming them for allowing their situation to continue. Furthermore, experts advise that victims of family violence should not be encouraged to leave a relationship before they feel ready and have assessed that it is safe. When talking to your employee, do NOT say things like:
 - “This is so hard to believe”
 - “Things may get better with time”
 - “I can’t believe you put up with this”
 - “Your partner just doesn’t seem like that kind of person”
 - “If you’re still with the abuser, it must not be that bad”
 - “You can’t stay in this situation, you have to leave”
- Discuss individual needs and resources with employees experiencing family violence, such as:
 - A flexible work schedule or adjusted workload so they can attend medical and legal appointments;
 - Time off or temporary leaves;
 - Personal safety planning for enhanced security.
- Discuss any existing protection orders such as restraining orders, peace bonds, or bail conditions.
- Keep lines of communication open.
- Follow up and monitor the situation.

Show that you are supportive, remain non-judgemental when you ask questions, be clear, and be sensitive.



Support Guidelines for Managers and Supervisors

"In situations of immediate danger, call 911."

- Offer to help employees experiencing family violence connect with local service providers — keep a list of victim support services on hand, including police, local victims' service and antiviolence programs, transition house programs (shelters), and other resources (See Appendix A).
- If you have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at your workplace, let your employee know that they can access this service for support.
- Respect your employees' privacy as much as possible without compromising workplace safety: every situation is different and privacy issues must be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- People experiencing family violence are most commonly referred to as victims or survivors. Asking what kind of language your employee is most comfortable using creates an opportunity to help them feel empowered, valued, and heard.
- Keep it confidential. If there is a threat to the workplace, tell your employee that you will only share the information on a need-to-know basis. If you do need to share information, a more empowering approach is to tell the victim you will try to do it when they are present, or ideally allow them to share the information.
- Invite them to participate in creating a personal safety plan for their time at work (described below). They should also be encouraged to contact a local victim support program, such as Family Violence Prevention Services or Victim Services, to get additional information and support to create a personal safety plan with trained professionals.

Respect your employees' privacy as much as possible without compromising workplace safety



Guidelines for Managers and Supervisors to Create a Workplace Safety Plan

It is important to contact local organizations or professionals that work in family violence (such as Victim Services) to help you create a safety plan. To the extent possible, safety planning should include the employee. The following are examples of actions that could be included in a safety plan. Not all steps listed will be appropriate for every workplace or all family violence situations. Think about what else you can do and what is appropriate in your workplace.

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
- Setting up an interdisciplinary team of key personnel (e.g., management, human resources, security) who can work with external specialists (e.g., police, threat assessment professionals, victim support organizations) to ensure the organization can respond quickly and effectively when an employee discloses concerns about family violence.



"If you feel unsafe starting a conversation with someone experiencing or perpetrating violence, contact a professional for help. Safety is your primary concern and you should not put yourself or anyone else in your organization in a situation that seems unsafe."

A *personal safety plan at work* might include:

- 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 victim's calls to reduce harassment, or providing the victim with a phone that has caller identification and having another employee record the 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 (if this is safe for the escort)
- Providing the employee with a parking spot near the building entrance to increase their 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, if available
- Connecting the employee with services available in the community and government or through the workplace
- Integrating strategies the victim already has in place to increase their safety



Keep communication open and look for opportunities to help or connect employees with resources

What if the Employee is the Perpetrator?

You may become aware that an employee is using work hours and/or equipment such as telephones and emails to harass a partner. If your employee makes threats or commits acts of violence in the workplace, it is important to take immediate action. Be direct about what you have seen but avoid making judgments. Point out that you are talking to the individual because you are concerned about both parties in the relationship (and any children they may have).

If you are dealing with an employee who you suspect or have confirmed is a perpetrator of family violence (either against a fellow employee or someone outside of the workplace), the following guidelines are recommended:

First, take steps to ensure the safety of the workplace. If your employee confides that they are being violent at home, or you otherwise become aware that your employee is abusing a partner, you might try the following:

- If there is immediate danger, call 911 or building security. If you cannot make these calls, ask another staff member to make them.
- If it is safe to do so, state that this behaviour needs to stop. Refer your employee to professional, community, or workplace.
- Don't force the employee to seek help and don't argue about the abuse. Keep communication open and look for opportunities to help or connect them with resources, such as the Turning Point Program.¹
- If you feel safe and comfortable in doing so, you can open a conversation by saying things such as:
 - "I appreciate you coming forward with this. There are community and government resources with counsellors that can help you. Would you like me to connect you with them now?"



¹ For more information about the Turning Point Program, please refer to Appendix A

- Point out that you are not qualified to help directly, but can help your employee connect with trained professionals.
- Be mindful of the personal safety of yourself and your employees and do not physically intervene in a violent situation or try to mediate relationship issues.

What if the victim and perpetrator are both employees?

You may be faced with a situation in which two employees are involved in a family violence situation with each other. This can be a highly volatile situation.

If the victim and perpetrator are both employees, 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 victim's schedule private)
- Offering appropriate referrals to both employees, such as giving them information about where they can get help²
- With the assistance of local organizations or professionals that work in family violence (such as Victim Services), develop a personal safety plan with the victim to address their needs at work³
- Talking to your employee who is the abuser and being clear about exactly what they said or did, and why it is unacceptable
- Taking necessary steps to hold the abuser accountable for any inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour in the workplace

Point out that you are not qualified to help directly, but can help your employee connect with trained professionals



² Please see Appendix A for services
³ Please see Appendix A for services

- Making it clear that workplace resources should not be used to harass, stalk, or abuse the victim
- Keeping lines of communication open with both employees

“Encourage employees to talk about family violence in general and to report threats.”

Appendix A: Services

Anderson House

1-800-240-9894 (toll free) • (902) 892-0960 (Charlottetown area) 24 hours a day/7 days a week
admin@fvps.ca • www.fvps.ca/anderson-house/

Anderson House provides a substance-free emergency shelter for women and their children, as well as an Island-wide 24 hour crisis line. Anyone can call Anderson House for information in regards to services. Anderson House will provide short-term, emergency shelter while working with clients on planning for safety, exploring housing options and creating contacts to support for next steps.

Chief Mary Bernard Memorial Women's Shelter

1-855-297-2332 (toll free) • (902) 831-2332 (Lennox Island) 24 hours a day/7 days a week
womensshelter@lennoxisland.com

Chief Mary Bernard Memorial Women's Shelter provides emergency shelter for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women and their children experiencing family violence and homelessness. The shelter has programs that will help with life skills, parenting skills as well as employment support. Shelter staff will also provide a variety of information and resources to meet individual needs. Emergency stays at the shelter can be up to six weeks. Aboriginal women who have left a violent relationship or who find themselves in a homeless situation can apply and be assessed for a one year stay at the shelter. Male children 14 years and younger can stay. Lennox Island Band Members can apply for the 1 year stay.

Victim Services

Charlottetown: (902) 368-4582 • Summerside: (902) 888-8218
Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/justice-and-public-safety/victim-services

Victim Services provides free, confidential services to men, women and children who have been victims of violence, or any other crime. Workers can explain the court process, the justice system, and the status of a case. They can provide short-term counselling, help to prepare a victim and community impact statement, provide information regarding recovery of financial losses and make referrals for support services needed. Victim Services will also help assess risk, make a safety plan and can help obtain an Emergency Protection Order (EPO) if needed. A person can access Victim Services whether the police have been called or not.

Outreach Coordinators

Family Violence Prevention Services Inc.
 West Prince: (902) 859-8849 • East Prince: (902) 436-0517, (902) 888- 3310
 Eastern PEI: (902) 838-0795 • Queens: (902) 566-1480 ext. 224
 Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
www.fvps.ca/outreach-services/

Outreach Coordinators provide support to women, men and children who have been victimized by violent relationships. Outreach Coordinators are available throughout the Island, generally Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. These hours are often flexible and Outreach Coordinators can meet in a safe place of your choosing; whether that is your home, their office or perhaps a local coffee shop. Outreach service is free, confidential and only Outreach Coordinators listen to their voicemail messages.

Catholic Family Services Bureau

(902) 894-3515 Charlottetown
 Monday to Friday 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
admin@catholicfamilyservice.ca • www.catholicfamilyservicesbureau.com

Catholic Family Services Bureau is a confidential, nondenominational counselling service that works to meet therapeutic needs by providing the highest level of individual, couple, and family counselling services for men, women and children. They use both traditional therapeutic techniques and creative arts counselling interventions (such as music therapy or play therapy). At all times, the team will demonstrate understanding, skills, comfort, tolerance, and sensitivity toward cultural differences such as ethnicity, culture, age, gender, sexual orientation, abilities, economic status, and religious/spiritual affiliation. The fee for service is based on income, except in the case of domestic violence, in which case the service is free under certain circumstances. Please call for more information.

Community Legal Information Association (CLIA)

1-800-240-9798 (toll free) • (902) 892-0853 (Charlottetown)
 40 Enman Cres., Suite 111, Charlottetown
 Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (Inquiry line answered Monday to Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. only)
www.cliapei.ca

CLIA provides an anonymous, free, confidential legal information service – but not legal advice. CLIA has many pamphlets that are freely available to the public and can be mailed or downloaded from their website. CLIA will not share your information and, if you are asking questions about legal issues, you do not have to use your name.

Community Mental Health Services

Charlottetown: (902) 368-4430 • Bilingual services available:

Summerside: (902) 888-8180 • Montague: (902) 838-0960 • Souris: (902) 687-7110

O'Leary: (902) 859-8781 • Alberton: (902) 853-8670

Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Visiting clinician services are also provided in family physician offices and health centres in Tyne Valley, O'Leary, Rustico, Hunter River, Cornwall and Montague.

Community Mental Health Services provides a broad range of therapeutic mental health services to men, women, children and adolescents. Services include individual counselling, family counselling, group therapy, among many others. Referrals can be made by your doctor or you can call and request service. When you make the initial call, the receptionist will take your name and phone number. An Intake Worker will call you back as soon as possible for an assessment to determine the best service for you. You can make a request for either a male or female counselor; however this may result in a longer wait time for service. Those interested in marriage counselling are often referred to Catholic Family Services Bureau. There are no fees for service with Community Mental Health Services.

Family Service PEI

Charlottetown: (902) 892-2441 • Summerside: (902) 436-9171

Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

www.familyservice.pe.ca

Family Service PEI provides both Therapeutic (individual/couple/family) and Financial Counselling for women and men. Services are provided for all family members and referrals can be made to other specialist services, as needed. Family Service PEI keeps the need for the safety of all clients at a high level of priority. Prior to providing couples counseling or anger management services, clients must be assessed to ensure those services will be safe and helpful. Family Service PEI can also provide Employee Assistance Program services, when requests for counseling have been made through your work or personal health insurance plan.

Anger Management Program

(902) 569-7613

www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/justice-and-public-safety/anger-management-program

The target population for the Anger Management program is high risk adults involved in the justice system. Referrals for assessment are also accepted from other agencies. Adult Islanders may make direct self-referrals for assessment.

Turning Point for Men

Turning Point Coordinator

(902) 368-6392 or (902) 569-7613

www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/justice-and-public-safety/turning-point-program

The Turning Point Program is an intimate partner violence (IPV) intervention /counseling program for men who want to stop their abusive/controlling behaviours in their intimate relationships with female partners. Turning Point is primarily a group program consisting of 14 to 16 weekly, three hour sessions. Groups are generally held in the evenings at no cost.

Program components include:

- *what is abuse*
- *various forms of abuse*
- *power imbalances*
- *patterns of partner violence*
- *managing intense emotions*
- *impact of violence on children and female partners*
- *violence and substance use*
- *socialization*
- *respectful communication*
- *problem solving*
- *self care*
- *managing stress and developing an interpersonal/self control plan*

Turning Point is a community based program, therefore self referrals are accepted. Agencies making referrals to Turning Point must complete a referral form. Please contact the Turning Point Coordinator for a copy of the referral form or visit the website listed above. All referrals are assessed by the Turning Point Coordinator prior to program entry in order to determine program readiness and compatibility. Turning Point is offered throughout the Province at varying times throughout the year.

Please note, men who have charges before the court relating to IPV are generally assessed after the court process.



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