

Definition

“Intimate partner violence is characterized by a series of repetitive acts that generally follow a rising curve. Specialists call this the ‘escalation of violence’. For the perpetrator, it is a cycle defined by successive phases: tension, assault, denial of responsibility, remission, and reconciliation. For the victim, these phases are associated with fear, anger, a sense of being responsible for the violence, and finally, hope that the situation will improve. These phases may not all be present, nor they do not always follow the same order.

Intimate partner violence includes psychological, verbal, physical and sexual violence as well as acts of economic domination. It does not arise from loss of control – on the contrary, it is chosen as a way of dominating another person and asserting power over them. Intimate partner violence may be experienced at any age within a marriage, an affair, or a love relationship.”⁴

⁴ <http://www.violenceconjugaleautravail.com/trousse-daccompagnement/8--modele-de-politique-de-travail-en-matiere-de-violence-conjugale> (our translation).

Specialized resources

<https://sosviolenceconjugale.ca/en/tools>

<https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/en/prevention-securite/identifieur-corriger-les-risques/liste-informations-prevention/spousal-family-and-sexual-violence>

<https://milieudetravailallies.com/agir/liste-des-ressources-en-violence-conjugale/> (in French)

<http://www.violenceconjugaleautravail.com/trousse-daccompagnement/9--repertoire-des-ressources-externes-specialisees-en-violence-conjugale> (in French)

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Show your solidarity

Intimate partner violence and the workplace



Intimate partner violence and the workplace

When an employer knows, or ought reasonably to know, that an employee is exposed to physical or psychological violence in the workplace (this includes spousal, family or sexual violence), the employer is required to take measures to protect the employee.

This obligation is spelled out in the *Act respecting occupational health and safety*, which means your employer can't argue there's nothing they can do about it or that intimate partner violence is a private matter.

In solidarity, and because intimate partner violence has such a profound impact on victims and their families and loved ones, we need to act collectively and make sure victims are provided with the support they need. We can do this for our coworkers in our workplaces. Don't hesitate – act!

¹Act respecting occupational health and safety, section 51, 2022. When an employee is doing telework, the place where they're working is viewed as a workplace under the Act (section 5.1).

Intimate partner violence can affect the workplace in many different ways. Here are some.

- 81.9% of victims of domestic violence say that it negatively affects their work performance (they have trouble concentrating, they're late, they're absent for long periods, there's tension in the workplace).
- 8.5% say they've lost a job due to domestic violence.
- 37.1% say that domestic violence has had a negative impact on their co-workers.²
- For every femicide in Québec in 2021, it's estimated that 3,000 women experienced physical abuse and more than 16,000 were subject to intimate partner violence.

Intimate partner violence affects people regardless of sex or gender identity, age, socio-economic condition, social status, or cultural, social or religious practices. It can take place between opposite- or same-sex partners. Men can be victims – but such cases are much less frequent and intense.

In any case, violence is always unacceptable and the person who behaves violently, whatever their gender, bears sole responsibility for their actions.

Employer's role

- To identify and analyze risks through a prevention program and other means.
- To adopt a policy, tell employees about it, and provide them with training on the issue.
- To act respectfully, diligently, with due regard for confidentiality, and without forcing disclosure.
- To make the workplace safe (through adjustments to the person's work station, work schedule, and other working conditions).

² According to a study carried out by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and the University of Western Ontario.

Union's role

Your union is there to make sure the employer's responsibilities are fully shouldered and that no disciplinary or administrative measures are imposed on an employee who has absenteeism or performance issues because of their domestic situation.

The APTS is committed to:

- Paying attention to signs of intimate partner violence in its members' lives
- Supporting members and referring them to specialized outside resources
- Cooperating with the program designed to raise awareness of violence
- Providing members with information about intimate partner violence to make sure it's not downplayed or trivialized

Your role

Here's what you can do when a coworker is subject to intimate partner violence:³

- Make sure the information communicated by the victim remains confidential
- Don't interpret the facts
- Believe the person
- Provide reassurance
- Let them make their own decisions – don't act without their consent
- Refer them to specialized resources
- Refer them to their union counsellor for help in dealing with the employer

Be careful to respect your own limits and ask for help if you need it.

³ Presentation by the *Regroupement de maisons d'hébergement pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale*, Intersyndicale des femmes, June 2, 2022.