

Supporting Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in the Workplace

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A collaboration between:



RESPECT
at Work

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Part 1: A Guide for Service Providers and Allies Supporting Survivors in the Context of Employment

Experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) can affect every part of a survivor's life, including their work. For some survivors, the workplace may be a site of risk, stigma, or violence. For others, it may offer safety, privacy, or moments of connection and support.¹

This two-part Backgrounder supports GBV service providers in deepening their understanding of how IPV can affect survivors at work, and in supporting survivor safety, rights, and survivor-led choices in the context of employment. It offers practical ways to recognize how IPV shows up in the workplace and how to respond with trauma- and violence-informed and survivor-centered strategies.

Understanding How IPV Shows Up at Work

Research shows that IPV and employment are deeply connected. Below are some of the common ways IPV may affect survivors at work:

Prevalence and Patterns

- More than half of survivors experience IPV at or near their workplace.²
- For many, work becomes a predictable place where (ex)partners can easily locate them, especially in public-facing jobs or those with fixed schedules.
- Survivors often rely on work for income, routine, and stability, which is precisely why (ex)partners target it.¹

Impacts on Work

- IPV can affect attendance, concentration, productivity, and financial security.³ Survivors may miss shifts or arrive late due to abuse-related injuries, emotional distress, being prevented from leaving home, or economic sabotage.⁴⁻⁶
- Necessary appointments (e.g., childcare, legal, or medical) may also lead to absences that employers sometimes misinterpret as performance issues.²
- Some survivors may fear losing their job due to how IPV has impacted their work. Research has shown that 5-8% of survivors have lost a job due to IPV.^{2, 6}
- Even after a relationship ends, survivors may face ongoing harassment from an (ex)partner or deal with long-term health impacts of abuse.⁷
- Trauma responses can surface on the job, and strategies that help at home may not always work in workplace settings.⁸



Workplace as a Site of Safety and Disclosure

- The workplace can offer privacy not available at home, allowing survivors to safely contact shelters, lawyers, or other supports without their partner monitoring them.
- 43% of survivors disclose IPV to someone at work — most often a co-worker, supervisor, or manager.²

Economic Dependence

- Economic abuse and financial dependence are major barriers that keep survivors from leaving abusive partners.⁴
- Stable employment can be a vital source of independence, security, and options for survivors.

Barriers to Disclosing IPV at Work

Survivors may hesitate to disclose IPV in the workplace for many reasons. These barriers are shaped by personal, organizational, and systemic factors:

Personal Concerns

- Survivors may believe IPV is a “private” matter or personal issue and not appropriate to bring into the workplace.⁹
- Internalized feelings of shame, blame, or stigma can make disclosure difficult.^{1,9}
- Survivors may fear being viewed as unstable, unreliable, or unfit for their job responsibilities.⁸
- Survivors may fear job loss or negative treatment if their experiences are disclosed.
- Some may worry that disclosure could trigger actions by well-meaning employers that unintentionally undermine survivor autonomy.



Organizational Factors

- Weak or poorly communicated IPV workplace policies may leave survivors unsure of what support (if any) exists.
- Disclosure may feel too risky in precarious or low-security jobs, or in workplaces with limited understanding and accommodation.
- Workplace culture matters: it can either increase isolation or serve as a protective factor.

Systemic Oppression and Bias

- Experiences of racism, ableism, homophobia, or other forms of oppression can make disclosure less likely, especially if survivors anticipate stereotypes or dismissal.⁸
- Survivors who have been criminalized may fear being judged, disbelieved, or seen as a liability at work. While criminalization can affect many survivors, it has distinct and disproportionate impacts on racialized survivors, including reduced access to employment and workplace supports.⁸
- Some racialized survivors specifically worry that disclosing IPV could reinforce harmful stereotypes about their community.⁸

Practical Ways GBV Service Providers Can Support Survivors:

GBV service providers can play a vital role in helping survivors navigate the ways IPV intersects with work. The strategies below highlight ways GBV service providers can strengthen safety planning, clarify rights, and expand options for survivors at work.

Review rights, policies & processes

- Include workplace-specific factors in risk assessments and safety plans (commute, public-facing roles, predictable schedules).
- Go over workplace policies together, including reporting options, confidentiality, and timelines.⁸
- Help clarify what an employer must do after a disclosure.

Support informed choices about sharing

- Support survivors in making informed choices by talking through the difference between disclosure (sharing) and reporting (formal action).¹⁰
- Center survivor autonomy so they can decide if, when, and how to share.

Center survivor choices

- Support survivors in exploring their goals, who they trust, and how (or if) they want to share (in writing, verbally, with support, or anonymously if possible).
- If they decide to involve others (e.g., HR, supervisors, unions, security), help ensure actions follow a coordinated plan that prioritizes the survivor's safety and needs.

Clarify workplace rights & protections

- Explore workplace protections together, like IPV leave, flexible work options, and employers' obligations under occupational health and safety laws (like Ontario's OHS and the federal Canada Labour Code).
- Support survivors in identifying whether their workplace is provincially/territorially or federally regulated, since this shapes what laws apply and what options are available.
- Acknowledge that in some jobs (e.g., informal care work or sex work), these protections may be limited or absent. Explore other supports that could help meet survivors' needs.

Identify practical supports in the workplace

- Explore options that may increase safety and support, such as modified hours, remote work, or safety escorts.
- Talk about available Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), which may offer confidential counselling, referrals, or wellness supports.
- Where legal protections exist (e.g., restraining orders), workplaces can be part of safety planning — with the survivor's consent — by involving security or designated staff.

Support coping strategies at work

- Recognize that trauma symptoms may surface at work, and help survivors explore coping strategies that feel possible and safe in a workplace setting.⁸



When considering new or safer employment

- If they're considering new or safer employment, offer support on their terms: help with resumes, job searches, or safe computer access, keeping in mind unique barriers they might face.⁸
- Explore how trauma may show up during job-seeking and offer support in identifying coping strategies for the workplace and during interviews.⁴
- Focus on empowerment-based approaches that build survivors' financial skills, knowledge, and self-efficacy.⁴
- Take a holistic approach by identifying needs that affect employment, such as housing, childcare, immigration, or food access.⁴

Connect to community & peer support

- Peer groups can help reduce isolation, build skills, and affirm and validate survivor experiences.
- GBV workers can create or connect survivors to peer spaces focused on IPV at work, if this feels supportive to them.⁸

Build cross-sector partnerships

- Collaborate with employers, unions, legal clinics, and employment services.
- These relationships can build stronger, coordinated networks before crises arise.

Always survivor-centered

- Build partnerships and supports so survivors have real choices, and can decide what's right for them, at their own pace.
- Note that even well-meaning employers can unintentionally undermine autonomy by taking control following a disclosure. Survivors should be kept informed about and have input throughout the process.¹¹
- Recognize that survivors are experts in their own lives, and should guide decisions about safety, support, and next steps. Their knowledge and expertise must shape the process.⁴



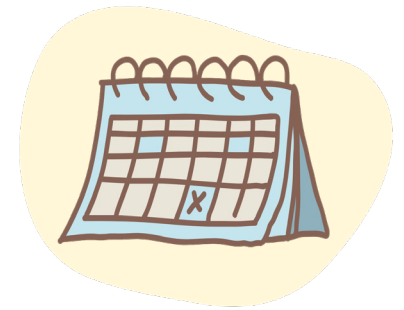
Part 2: Understanding Workplace Rights – Intimate Partner Violence Leave Across Canada

Intimate partner violence is not just a personal issue. It's a workplace issue. It's a health and safety issue.

Survivors may need time away from work to seek support, attend appointments, or secure safety. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Leave is one of the key ways occupational health and safety legislation can protect and support survivors, and it is an important consideration in safety planning. This section offers GBV service providers and allies a clear starting point for understanding how IPV Leave works across Canada.

What is Intimate Partner Violence Leave?

IPV Leave is one of the key ways occupational health and safety legislation can protect and support survivors, and it is an important consideration in safety planning. Across the country, this type of leave is referred to by different names, such as IPV Leave, Family Violence Leave, Interpersonal Violence Leave, or Domestic and Sexualized Violence Leave. In this resource, we refer to it as IPV Leave for clarity and consistency.



Across provinces, territories, and federal jurisdictions, IPV Leave provisions vary. In most jurisdictions, employees are entitled to up to 10 days of leave, which can typically include a combination of paid and unpaid days. This leave can usually be taken either continuously or intermittently. In addition, some provinces and territories offer extended unpaid leave, often several weeks, which must usually be taken as a continuous block.

Employees may take IPV Leave for a range of reasons, including seeking medical attention, accessing counselling, relocating, pursuing legal or law-enforcement assistance, or connecting with services from a victim services organization.

In some provinces and territories, employees are asked to try scheduling appointments outside of work hours. Employers may request reasonable documentation to support the leave, but survivors are not required to disclose personal details about their experiences.

Importantly, workers are legally protected: no employer can terminate an employee for requesting or taking Intimate Partner Violence Leave.



Snapshot: Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Leave Across Canada

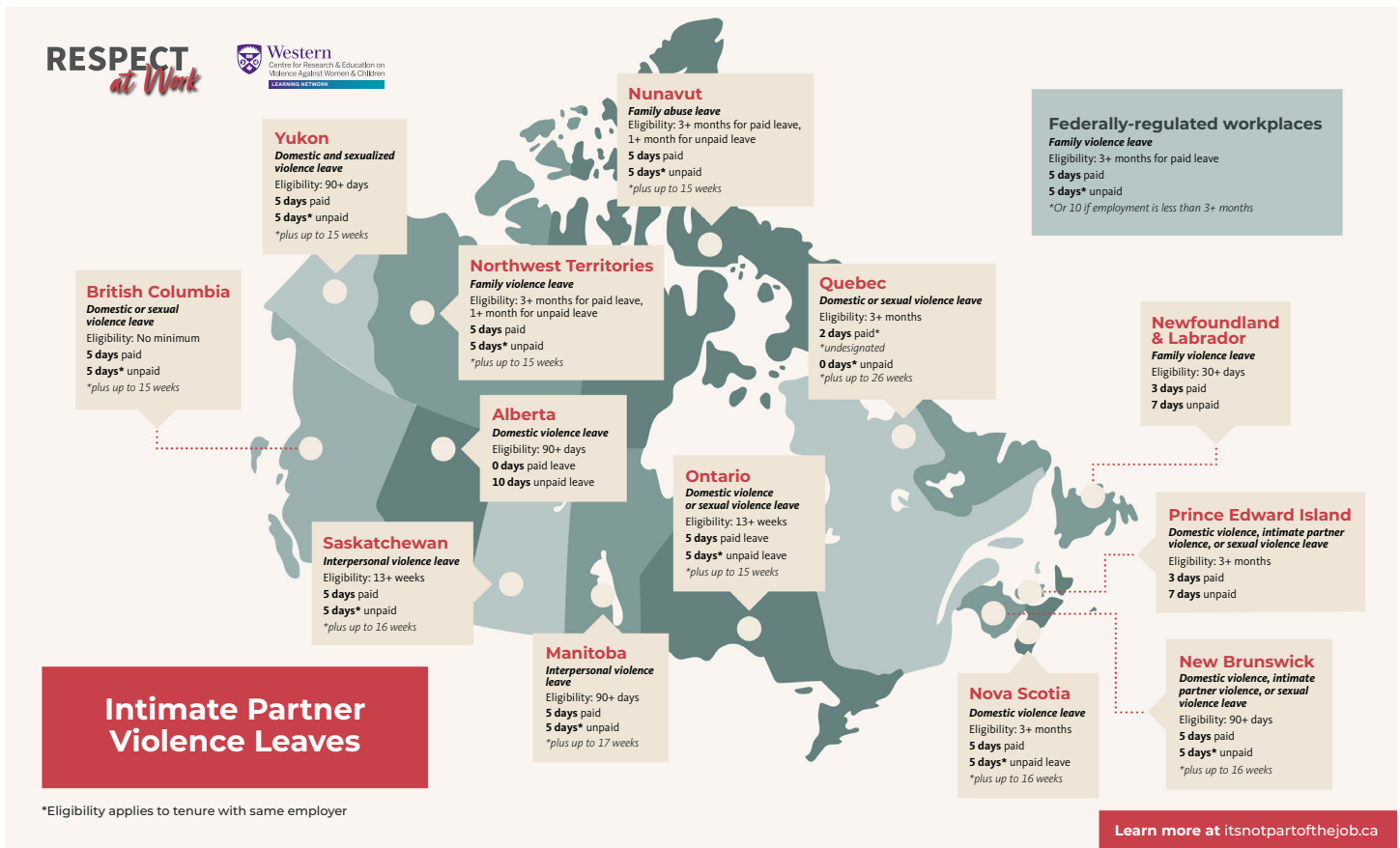
The table and map below provide a quick reference to how IPV Leave is structured in provinces, territories, and federally regulated workplaces. They highlight the number of paid and unpaid days, extended leave options, and basic eligibility requirements for employees navigating IPV-related leave across Canada.

Provinces / Territories or Federal	Number of Paid Days	Number of Unpaid Days	Additional Unpaid Weeks (Continuous blocks)	Eligibility - How long they've worked for their employer
Alberta		10		90 days
British Columbia	5	5	15 weeks	No minimum employment required
Manitoba	5	5	17 weeks	90 days
New Brunswick	5	5	16 weeks	90 days
Newfoundland and Labrador	3	7		30 days
Northwest Territories	5	5	15 weeks	3 months (1 month for unpaid leave)
Nova Scotia	5	5	16 weeks	3 months
Nunavut	5	5	15 weeks	3 months (1 month for unpaid leave)
Prince Edward Island	3	7		3 months
Ontario	5	5	15 weeks	13 weeks
Quebec	2		26 weeks	3 months
Saskatchewan	5	5	16 weeks	13 weeks
Yukon	5	5	15 weeks	90 days
Federally Regulated Workplaces	5	5		3 months

Please consult your provincial, territorial, or federal government for the most up-to-date information.

Explore the Map: Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Leave Across Canada

This visual snapshot highlights how IPV Leave is structured across provinces, territories, and federally regulated workplaces. It provides a quick reference to the number of paid and unpaid days, extended leave options, the name of the leave, and basic eligibility requirements for employees navigating IPV-related leave.



Across Canada, employees are typically entitled to up to 10 days of leave (a mix of paid and unpaid), which can usually be taken all at once or in smaller blocks. Some jurisdictions also offer extended unpaid leave, often several weeks, which generally must be taken continuously. Employees cannot be terminated for requesting or taking this leave.

Additional Related Resources

Supporting survivors of IPV in the context of work requires more than recognizing the signs, it means understanding the systems that shape their experiences, being aware of workplace protections, and responding with survivor-centered approaches.

Below are additional resources that offer information, tools, and policy details to deepen practice, support advocacy, and build stronger cross-sector responses.

Websites with Information, Resources, and Training on IPV in the Workplace

- [Respect at Work](#)
- [DV@Work](#)
- [Make It Our Business](#)



Safety Planning Resources:

- [Make It Our Business Individualize Workplace Domestic Violence Safety Plan](#)
- [Make It Our Business Safety Planning at Work](#)
- [City of Toronto Safety Planning at Work](#)

Risk Assessment Tools:

- [DV at Work - Risk Screening Tool](#)
- [Make It Our Business – Guidelines for Assessing Threats and Managing Risks in the Workplace](#)

Provincial, Territorial and Federal Intimate Partner Leave:

- [Alberta](#)
- [British Columbia](#)
- [Manitoba](#)
- [New Brunswick](#)
- [Newfoundland and Labrador](#)
- [Northwest Territories](#)
- [Nova Scotia](#)
- [Nunavut](#)
- [Prince Edward Island](#)
- [Ontario](#)
- [Quebec](#)
- [Saskatchewan](#)
- [Yukon](#)
- [Federal](#)



Additional resources

- [List of federally regulated industries and workplaces](#)

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