

RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

BEST POLICIES AND PRACTICES

[Updated September 2024]



TOOLKIT FOR
EMPLOYERS

cca | DV

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Introduction..... 1

Understanding the Issue..... 2

 What is Domestic Violence?

 Job-Related Impact on Victims

Impact on the Workplace..... 3

 Warning Signs

Taking Action..... 4

 Developing a Workplace Policy

 How Employers Can Respond

Connecticut Laws - Employment & Domestic Violence..... 6

Resources..... 8

 Domestic Violence Services in CT

 Other Resources for Survivors

 Training & Consultation

CT Domestic Violence Service Map & Safe Connect 9

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) leads a statewide network focused on advocacy, outreach, and education. Our work transforms political, economic, and social responses to end domestic violence in Connecticut.

CCADV strives to change the systems that impact the lives of survivors. Whether it's working with government agencies to create flexible policies that meet the needs of survivors, advocating with elected officials to strengthen state and federal laws, or launching training and public awareness initiatives to inform individuals and communities about the help we offer, we're at the center of efforts to improve Connecticut's response to domestic violence. Grounded in our vision and mission, we have a dedicated Board of Directors, dozens of committed staff, and a strong network of 18 member organizations with over 400 advocates devoted to making life better for survivors.

Through innovative solutions grounded in the lived experiences of all survivors, we're rising to the challenges presented during this unique time of monumental shifts across the state and nation. We continue to face the devastating effects of the pandemic, which hit low income and marginalized communities at an alarming rate. And this country is still struggling to address a history of racial injustice and systems that produce inequity, oppression, and division. It is with bold, ambitious action that we will end this public health crisis and move toward our goal of creating a world where no person lives in fear.

Our vision begins with you, employers and employees! Domestic violence can impact the workplace whether the violence actually takes place there or somewhere outside the place of employment. This is especially true with a significant portion of the workforce working in a hybrid and/or remote setting since the pandemic. Economic security is a critical component of safety for victims of violence; the ability to maintain one's employment can greatly enhance a victim's ability to create safety in her or his life and begin psychological/emotional recovery. Studies indicate that one of the best predictors of whether individuals will leave their abusive relationship is their degree of economic independence. However, domestic violence can jeopardize a victim's ability to keep a job. Every workplace is different, and there's no one-size fits all approach.

Understanding the significant impact that domestic violence can have on the workplace and the important role that employers can play in helping their employees to be safe, CCADV has compiled this resource guide. You'll find helpful information to better understand the issue of domestic violence and how it might impact your workplace, as well as the tools you'll need to develop comprehensive programs so that your workplace can both prevent and respond to domestic violence.

With your help, we can shift how we respond to gender-based violence throughout the world of work, we can decide what policies we uphold to increase access to safety and services, and we can choose to empower victims and survivors to speak up when they need help without fear of retaliation. We cannot accomplish any of this without you. Together, we can build a safer Connecticut, where no one lives in fear.

For more information or to schedule a training, please email us at training@ctcadv.org.

Meghan Scanlon
Chief Executive Officer

Lizbeth Padilla
Director of Training and Prevention



Domestic violence affects not just one, but all. In addition to its multiple negative consequences for victims and survivors, domestic violence can spill over to the workplace by compromising the safety of both victims and their co-workers. It results in not only lost productivity but also increased absenteeism, healthcare costs and employee turnover.

As an employer, you have an important role to help ensure your employees' safety, maintain their job security and to be a part of our society's response to domestic violence.

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic violence is a pattern of **coercive, controlling behavior**. These behaviors are intentional with the purpose of gaining and maintaining power and control over another person. Domestic violence is sometimes referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV) when the violence occurs between current or former spouses, current or former dating partners, or individuals who have a child together. Domestic violence can take many forms, such as:



EMOTIONAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL:

- Public or private name calling or put-downs
- Isolating the victim from seeing family or friends
- Exhibiting extreme jealousy
- Threatening



STALKING & HARASSMENT:

- Constantly calling or checking up on the victim
- Sending unwanted gifts
- Showing up to victim's home or place of work uninvited



PHYSICAL:

- Hitting, pushing, slapping, shoving
- Strangling/choking
- Restraining
- Throwing or breaking objects to intimidate



SEXUAL:

- Non-consensual sexual acts or violence
- Transmitting STIs
- Using drugs to intoxicate the victim without consent



FINANCIAL:

- Withholding money or giving an allowance
- Running up debt in the victim's name
- Forbidding the victim to work or sabotaging employment



TECHNOLOGICAL:

- Excessive texting and/or calling
- Monitoring and/or controlling social media
- Following the victim or tracking the victim through GPS



LEGAL:

- Threatening legal action to instill fear
- Appealing orders without a legal basis
- Filing frivolous motions to force the victim to repeatedly appear in court and drain them financially

JOB-RELATED IMPACT ON VICTIMS

If a victim chooses to end their relationship and leave, studies indicate that one of the best predictors of the ability to do so is the victim's degree of economic independence. However, domestic violence can jeopardize a victim's ability to keep a job. Victims of violence sometimes lose jobs because of absences or related job performance matters. Yet to address the abuse and keep themselves and their children safe, they may need time to:

- Attend court appearances;
- Obtain legal assistance, medical assistance, or counseling;
- Find a new place to live; or,
- Arrange transportation or child care, etc.

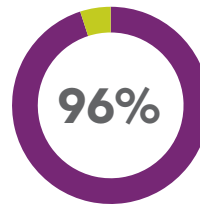
Lack of workplace accommodations for these very real needs can result in the loss of a job and therefore make the victim even more financially dependent on their abuser.

When your employees experience domestic violence, it impacts your workplace. Numerous studies have found that experiencing violence and abuse in the home can result in absenteeism and impaired job performance. The abuse can also sometimes spill over into the workplace. Repeated phone calls or the abuser showing up constantly can disrupt the workplace and even lead to property damage. While more current research on the impact of domestic violence in the workplace is lacking, some historical national statistics about the impact include:

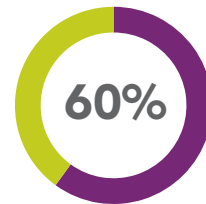
A study published in 2018 found that **1 IN 5 WORKERS** experienced the **IMPACTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AT WORK**. Of those workers, **66%** had this type of violence **PERPETRATED IN THE WORKPLACE**.



According to the CDC, more than **7.9 MILLION PAID WORKDAYS** are lost each year because of domestic violence



A 2005 study found that **96% OF FEMALE VICTIMS** reported that domestic abuse **AFFECTED THEIR ABILITY** to perform their jobs while **60%** reported that they **LOST THEIR JOBS** due to the abuse



- ➔ More than 50% of stalking victims reported being stalked at work.
- ➔ A 2005 study found that 87% of victims received harassing phone calls at work.
- ➔ A 2004 study found that 78% of abusers reported using company resources in connection with their abuse.
- ➔ In 2008, 94% of corporate security and safety directors ranked domestic violence as a high security concern.
- ➔ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that the annual cost of lost productivity due to domestic violence is approximately \$727.8 million.

WARNING SIGNS

It is not always easy to know when an employee is experiencing domestic violence. If you think that one of your employees might be in an abusive relationship, take a moment to review this checklist. Domestic violence isn't just about being physically hit, it also involves patterns of coercion and control that may be emotional, sexual, or financial.

WORK PRODUCTIVITY

- Change in the person's working patterns: frequent absence, tardiness or requests to leave work early
- Reduced quality and quantity of work: missing deadlines, a drop in usual performance standards
- Change in the use of the phone/email: excessive personal calls or texts, avoiding calls or a strong reaction to calls/texts/emails
- Spending increased time at work for no apparent reason
- Frequent visits to work by the employee's partner

CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR OR DEMEANOR

- Becoming very quiet, anxious, frightened, tearful, aggressive, distracted, or depressed
- Being isolated from colleagues
- Being obsessed with having to leave work on time
- Being secretive about his/her home life
- Being worried about leaving the children at home



For some victims, the workplace may be the only place where they are able to feel safe. Making a commitment to creating a non-judgmental, safe and inviting work setting for victims of domestic violence is beneficial not only to the victim, but to the organization as a whole. The following are some simple things that you can do as an employer to help victims and survivors of domestic violence working within your organization.

DEVELOP A WORKPLACE POLICY

Any employer can adopt a workplace policy as part of its commitment to a healthy, safe organizational climate and to the prevention and reduction of the incidence and effects of domestic violence. Creating a policy or guidance document will help create a safer culture where employees feel able to disclose issues of domestic violence and feel reassured that appropriate support will be provided. Every organization is different, and your approach should take into account your business activity, size and structure. You can take simple steps or develop a proactive policy or guidance document that defines your organization as a responsive employer.

You can easily develop a Model Workplace Policy using a simple online tool created by Workplaces Respond to Domestic & Sexual Violence – A National Resource Center. Workplaces Respond is a public-private partnership led by Futures Without Violence and funded by the US Department of Justice’s Office on Violence Against Women (OVW).

A model policy establishes guidelines for workplace responses to victims and survivors of violence, as well as perpetrators of violence. A comprehensive model policy will include the following elements:

- Statement of purpose
- Definitions
- Persons covered by the policy
- Statement of confidentiality
- Employer responses to violence
- Reporting by employees who are victims
- Violations of the policy

Visit www.workplacesrespond.org to learn more and to create your workplace policy.



"I was fortunate to have unquestioning and unqualified support at my workplace from my coworkers. That was my anchor; emotional support and financial security so I could focus on keeping my family safe and getting away from the abuse."

- Survivor



HOW EMPLOYERS CAN RESPOND

Start the conversation. Initiating a conversation with an employee can create a supportive environment where they feel more comfortable and encouraged to seek help for any abuse they may be experiencing. The decision to disclose abuse takes time and careful consideration. It is important for employees to feel that their work environment is an ally, offering a supportive, caring, and non-judgmental approach. Individuals dealing with domestic violence may struggle to acknowledge it to themselves, making it even more difficult to disclose it to others.

ASSESS: Speak with the employee that is the victim and gather as much information as possible about the situation to better advise and assist the employee. Some examples of questions and prompts that could be used are:

- How are you doing at the moment?
- Your wellbeing is important to me and I've noticed that you seem distracted and upset – are you ok?
- If there's anything you'd like to talk to me about at any time I'm always here to support you.
- Is everything all right at home?
- You don't have to tell me anything, but please know that I would like to support you if and when you feel ready.
- What support do you think might help? What would you like to happen? How would you like that to happen?

ADVISE: Make sure the employee knows his/her rights. Inform the employee about available resources and accommodations and let the employee know that your office is there to provide support.

ASSIST: Work with the employee to create a workplace safety plan and implement it immediately. Refer the employee to a victim advocate through CT Safe Connect or your local CCADV member organization, who can help the employee find and maintain safety. (Refer to the resources section of this toolkit.)

IF THE EMPLOYEE DOES CONFIDE IN YOU, YOU CAN DISCUSS...

In a confidential space, ask the employee:

- Whether she/he feels safe in the workplace.
- Whether a change in her/his work schedule or work location is necessary to maintain the employee's safety.
- Whether the physical layout of the workplace should be changed to protect her/him.
- Whether she/he has an order of protection against the abusive person. If so, ask her/him if they are comfortable giving you a copy and perhaps a photo of the abusive person to share with security personnel, reception staff or other relevant persons.
- Whether it is necessary to share information with others in the workplace in order to maintain her/his safety.

IF THE EMPLOYEE DOES NOT WISH TO CONFIDE IN YOU, YOU CAN...

- Share helpful information with him/her including the organization's domestic violence policy and statewide and local domestic violence resources, like CT Safe Connect and your local CCADV member organization.
- Let the employee know that you care about his/her safety and are always available to talk.

ALWAYS PROTECT A VICTIM'S INFORMATION...

- Share safety plans with relevant people on a need-to-know basis.
- Remove employee's information from employer's website.
- Develop protocols for responding to abuse at work via phone, fax, or email.

DOs & DON'Ts

DO:

- Express concern and let the employee know that you are there to listen.
- Listen to and believe the employee without judgment.
- Offer your help and support and refer the employee to human resources or to a victim advocate (see resources section) for more assistance.

DO NOT:

- Ignore the situation or push the employee to talk.
- Blame the employee or make assumptions about the situation
- Tell the employee what to do or place conditions on your help or support.

Connecticut has several laws directly addressing survivors in the workplace. CCADV does not have lawyers on staff and recommends consulting with a human resources or employment attorney regarding all relevant workplace laws.

CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES § 46a-60

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS A PROTECTED CLASS & REASONABLE LEAVE

An employer cannot treat an employee differently or take actions against them based on their status as a victim of domestic violence, nor can they deny an employee who is a victim of domestic violence reasonable leave of absence for certain issues related to the abuse of the employee or the employee's dependent children, including:

- Seeking attention for injuries caused by domestic violence, including for a child;
- Obtaining services including safety planning from a domestic violence or rape crisis center;
- Obtaining psychological counseling related to domestic violence, including for a child;
- Taking other actions to increase safety from future incidents of domestic violence, including temporary or permanent relocation; or
- Obtaining legal services, assisting in the prosecution of the offense, or otherwise participating in legal proceedings in relation to domestic violence.

Visit www.cga.ct.gov to view the full statute.

CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES § 31-51ss

LEAVE FROM EMPLOYMENT FOR VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

If an employee is a victim of family violence, an employer shall permit the employee to take paid or unpaid leave during any calendar year in which such leave is reasonably necessary:

- To seek medical care or psychological or other counseling for physical or psychological injury or disability for the victim
- To obtain services from victim services organization on behalf of the victim
- To relocate due to such family violence, or
- To participate in any civil or criminal proceeding related to or resulting from such family violence.

An employer may limit unpaid leave under this law to twelve days during any calendar year. Leave under this section shall not affect any other leave provided under state or federal law.

This law defines "employer" as a "person engaged in business who has three or more employees." Upon an employer's request, an employee who takes leave pursuant to this section shall provide the employer a signed written statement certifying that the leave is for a purpose authorized under this section.

Visit www.cga.ct.gov to view the full statute.



CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES § 46a-54

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES POWERS

The Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) requires any employer having three or more employees to post in a prominent and accessible location information concerning domestic violence and the resources available to victims of domestic violence in Connecticut.

The poster can be accessed in English and Spanish on the CHRO website (ct.gov/chro) publications page, under "posters."

Visit www.cga.ct.gov to view the full statute.

CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES § 31-51I**FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE**

Eligible workers can take up to 12 weeks of leave during a twelve-month period, plus up to an extra two weeks if experiencing pregnancy complications. Workers can take family and medical leave to, among other things, recover from a serious health condition.

A “serious health condition” is defined as “an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves (A) inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, nursing home or residential medical care facility; or (B) continuing treatment, including outpatient treatment, by a health care provider.”

CT Paid Leave may also cover family violence leave taken under Connecticut General Statutes § 31-51ss (see previous page).

Visit www.cga.ct.gov to view the full statute. Visit www.ctpaidleave.org for additional information about the program.

CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES § 31-57t**PERMITTED USE FOR PAID SICK LEAVE**

Public Act 24-8 expanded Connecticut’s existing paid sick days law to include private sector employees and employers regardless of sector (with the exception of seasonal employees working 120 days or fewer).

One of the permitted uses for sick leave includes where “an employee or an employee’s family member is a victim of family violence or sexual assault, provided such employee is not the perpetrator or alleged perpetrator of such family violence or sexual assault, for (A) medical care or psychological or other counseling for physical or psychological injury or disability, (B) obtaining services from a victim services organization, (C) relocating due to such family violence or sexual assault, or (D) participating in any civil or criminal proceedings related to or resulting from such family violence or sexual assault.”

See [Public Act 24-8](#), An Act Expanding Paid Sick Days in the State, for the most current statutory language. All relevant statutes will be updated on www.cga.ct.gov in 2025.

OTHER RELEVANT LAWS FOR VICTIMS:

Connecticut has several other laws that may help keep a victim safe. Some of these laws include:

- Civil restraining order
- Early lease termination
- Address confidentiality
- Firearm protections
- Various arrest statutes

Connect your employee to a domestic violence advocate through CT Safe Connect or your local CCADV member organization to learn more about these options and to discuss which might work best for them.

Financial insecurity is often cited by survivors as a primary reason to remain in or return to an abusive relationship. Employers that create supportive workplace policies can have a significant positive impact on the life of an employee experiencing abuse at home.



Developing workplaces policies to address domestic violence and creating a supportive workplace culture for survivors does not mean that you need to become an expert in domestic violence. CCADV and our 18 member organizations offer a number of valuable, comprehensive resources to meet the needs of survivors and professionals.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT

In Connecticut, there is a network of 18 domestic violence organizations (see map on next page) that offer comprehensive services including, but not limited to:

- Safety Planning
- Counseling
- Risk assessment
- Emergency shelter, transitional living, and rental assistance/rapid re-housing
- Legal advocacy including assistance with obtaining a restraining order
- Information & referrals
- Support for children

All services are **CONFIDENTIAL**, **SAFE** and **FREE OF CHARGE**. Services are available to all individuals regardless of age, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, physical and/or intellectual ability, or immigration status. Their privacy will be respected and protected.

Your employee can be connected with a domestic violence organization in your area **24 HOURS PER DAY, 7 DAYS PER WEEK** by contacting CT Safe Connect, Connecticut’s statewide domestic violence information and resource line. Call or text **888.774.2900** or visit www.CTSafeConnect.org to live chat or email with an advocate.

➔ Visit ctcadv.org/resources/publications to download easily printable posters in English & Spanish for your workplace that will let your employees know where to get help.



OTHER RESOURCES

Some additional resources for survivors may include:

- ➔ **211/United Way of CT**
2-1-1 is a one-stop connection to a variety of local human services and basic needs, such as utility assistance, food, housing, child care, and more.
Dial 211 or visit www.211ct.org
- ➔ **Statewide Legal Services**
Statewide Legal Services is the entry point for low-income individuals in need of legal assistance in Connecticut. Call 800.453.3320 or visit www.slscct.org to apply online.
- ➔ **CTLawHelp**
CTLawHelp was created by several nonprofit legal services organizations in Connecticut and provides information and self-help materials on a variety of legal issues.
Visit www.ctlawhelp.org

TRAINING & CONSULTATION

CCADV is available to provide training and consultation for your workplace. This may include assisting with the development of workplace policy and practice, or training employees on what domestic violence is and how to respond. To schedule a training or consultation, please email us at training@ctcadv.org.

Below is a map of CCADV's 18 member organizations. These organizations provide comprehensive, life-saving services to survivors 24 hours per day, 7 days per week (see list of services on previous page). All services are confidential, safe, and free. To learn more about their available services or to connect with them, please visit www.ctcadv.org.

cca | DV MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Susan B. Anthony Project
SAFETY • HEALING • GROWTH

PRUDENCE CRANDALL CENTER
Empowering Healing & Hope since 1973

the network
reaching out for a violence free society

PROJECT SAGE
to end relationship violence

SAFE HAVEN
SHELTER • WATERBURY, CT

The Center for Empowerment and Education
formerly The Women's Center of Greater Danbury

DVCC
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CENTER
SINCE 1986

HARMONY PROJECT
YWCA GREENWICH
SERVICES & SUPPORT FOR SAFE RELATIONSHIPS
867 RIVERVIEW • 203.422.6900

The Center for Family Justice
Hope Starts Here

United Services, Inc.
Creating healthy communities

INTERVAL HOUSE
working to end domestic violence

Safe Futures

The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services
A program of BHcare

CHRYSALIS
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

NEW HORIZONS
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES
A PROGRAM OF Connecticut Health Care, Inc.

CALL • TEXT • CHAT • EMAIL • 24/7

888.774.2900 | CTSafeConnect.org

CONFIDENTIAL, SAFE, FREE, VOLUNTARY

CTSafeConnect

Safe Connect is Connecticut's domestic violence information and resource line, providing a coordinated response to the needs of survivors. As the entry point for domestic violence services in Connecticut, one of Safe Connect's primary goals is to enhance the ways in which people can get help. Our Safe Connect Advocacy Coordinators are available 24/7/365 by phone, text, chat, or email, so survivors can talk in the way that feels most comfortable to them. And we'll always offer survivors a connection to one of CCADV's 18 member organizations for ongoing support.

Safe Connect is also designed to increase accessibility of domestic violence services for communities of color and non-English speaking survivors who often face the greatest barriers to accessing help. We have built a team of highly compassionate, bilingual, and multicultural individuals who are reflective of the communities we serve.

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Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

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860.282.7899 | www.ctcadv.org



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888.774.2900 | CTSafeConnect.org

CONFIDENTIAL, SAFE, FREE, VOLUNTARY