

TOWN OF THREE RIVERS

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY & SAFETY PLAN

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Policy Statement

Domestic Violence has been identified as a significant type of workplace violence and as such this policy provides guidelines and procedures to be followed in the event of domestic violence occurring in the workplace.

Scope

This policy applies to The Town of Three Rivers and its employees, without exception.

Definitions

Violence – means the attempted or actual exercise by a person, of any physical force so as to cause injury to a worker and includes any threatening statement or behaviour which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe that he or she is at risk of injury.

Domestic Violence – is as a term that describes a range of actions or behaviours taken by a person to control and dominate another person. Domestic Violence is characterized by abusive, coercive, forceful, or threatening acts or words used by one member of a family, household, or intimate relationship against another.

Physical Abuse – includes the use of physical force and threats of harm of homicide.

Psychological Abuse – may also be referred to as emotional or verbal abuse, includes using insulting language and name-calling, isolating a victim from family and friends, displaying jealous behaviour, and threatening to leave a relationship or commit suicide if a victim refuses to cooperate or tries to end the relationship.

Sexual Abuse – includes unwanted touching or sexual activity, dominating decision-making about contraception, and controlling the victim's choices about pregnancy and sexual health.

Financial Abuse – includes denying a victim access to finances and using money to control someone's freedom or behaviour.

Spiritual Abuse – includes using religion or spiritual beliefs to control a person's behaviour or choices.

General Guidelines

The Town of Three Rivers is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for all and will take every reasonable precaution necessary to protect its workers when it has become aware or ought reasonably to be aware that domestic violence is occurring and would likely expose a worker to physical injury occurring in the workplace.

The Town of Three Rivers will uphold its legal requirement to address domestic violence should its effects be known or ought to be known in the workplace. The Town of Three Rivers shall fulfill its duties by providing sound policy and procedures regarding workplace violence. This policy shall:

- Outline Risk Assessment procedures.
- Provide reporting procedures and requirements.
- Provide information regarding non-discrimination.
- Detail personal safety plans.
- Provide information pertaining to support to be provided.
- Detail employee's rights to confidentiality.

Risk Assessments

The Town of Three Rivers shall conduct a risk assessment of the work environment to identify any issues related to the potential for domestic violence which may impact the organization and its employees and will institute measures to control any identified risks to employee safety.

Reporting Procedures

In the event that an employee is either directly affected by or witness to any domestic violence in the workplace, it is imperative for the safety of all employees that the incident be reported immediately to a Manager and/or Human Resources. All reports shall be kept confidential. All reports shall be investigated discretely with the safety and sensitivity of the employee of the utmost concern.

Employees experiencing or perpetrating domestic violence are encouraged to file a report with The RCMP Detachment located in the former Town of Montague. Any employee who chooses to disclose they are experiencing domestic abuse will be offered support through the Town of Three Rivers. A safety plan will also be discussed and created in order to ensure the employee's safety. Employees who disclose they are perpetrating domestic violence will be linked with the appropriate community supports to address the issue.

Reported incidents of any employee utilizing Town time and/or resources in order to perpetrate abuse will be fully investigated by the Town with the employee being subject to disciplinary action according to the Town's Corrective Discipline Policy should the report be confirmed.

Risk of Violence

Following the risk assessment, The Town shall inform necessary staff of any hazard that has been identified pertaining to domestic violence. In order to balance the employee's right to confidentiality with the worker's right to a safe workplace only those individuals who may reasonably be expected to come into contact with the identified individual in the course of their employment will have the risk communicated to them.

The following information will be communicated to those employees who may encounter the individual:

- The perpetrator's identity.
- The nature and extent of the risk.
- Any necessary controls associated with the risk.

The Town will ensure to instruct all workers on the following:

- How to recognize the potential for violence.
- Policies and procedures that have been developed to address domestic violence.
- Appropriate responses.
- How to obtain assistance.
- How to report incidents of domestic violence.

Non-Discrimination

The Town of Three Rivers understands individuals experiencing domestic violence may exhibit various forms of performance problems such as absenteeism or lowered productivity and will not discriminate against such employees. When addressing performance issues the Town will ensure to consider all aspects of the employee's current personal situation.

Employee Safety Plans

The Town of Three Rivers will make every effort to assist and provide support to employees who disclose they are experiencing domestic violence. Management shall work with the employee in order to develop and implement a safety plan that takes into account the employee's safety needs and concerns. Options for individualized safety plans may include the following elements:

- Relocation: The Town of Three Rivers will look at relocating the employee to another office should the option be viable.

- Flexible work schedules: Where possible the Town will look at creating a flexible work schedule for the employee or amend their start and finish time for the day.
- Short-term absences: Situations may arise where the employee may need to be absent from work due to domestic violence. In such instances, situations will be reviewed individually and where possible a length of absence will be determined collaboratively between the employee and the organization and may be facilitated through the use of up to three (3) weeks of paid leave and additional days of unpaid leave.

Support for Employees

Employees who disclose they are experiencing domestic violence will be fully supported by the Town. Support will be provided to employees through the management whose role will be to:

- Be available and approachable to employees who are experiencing domestic violence.
- Listen, reassure, and support employees responding in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner.
- Keep all information received in complete confidence (subject to any superseding legal requirements).
- Develop in conjunction with the employee a personalized workplace safety plan.
- Ensure the employee is aware of their options and provide access and referral to community resources as required or requested.

Confidentiality

The Town of Three Rivers fully respects each employee's right to privacy and will keep confidential all matters discussed unless otherwise obligated by existing legislation. While the Town encourages employee disclosure of domestic violence in order to ensure employee and workplace safety the privacy rights of those individuals who wish not to disclose situations of domestic violence will be respected.

Safety Plan

Intent

Domestic violence can have serious and even lethal consequences. Behaviours such as emotional and psychological intimidation and harassment can be disruptive and harmful to the victim and can quickly turn into physical violence.

Stalking has been identified as one of the primary risk factors for attempted and actual murder of female partners in intimate relationships. Recent separation is also an important red flag as deaths related to domestic violence in PEI occurred when the relationship was ending or following separation.

Setting-Up the Plan

It is important to deal with each situation on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the needs of the individuals involved.

The plan outlines increased safety measures and should be created with the individual involved.

NAME: DATE:

LOCATION:

AGGRESSOR'S (FULL NAME):

ADDRESS:

CURRENT RELATIONSHIP STATUS:

DESCRIPTION & PHOTO:

AGGRESSOR'S PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR AND HIGH-RISK TIMES (E.G. FREE HOURS):

CURRENT PROGRAM(S) or WORKING DAYS & HOURS:

Would switching programs or changing your work schedule help?

If yes, please indicate new program or schedule:

YES

NO

How do you normally arrive?
If you drive, where do you park?

Would finding a new method to work help (including a new parking spot)?
If yes, please indicate new method and/or parking spot:

YES NO

Would having someone escort you to your car help?
If yes, please indicate plan:

YES NO

If the aggressor shows up, how would you suggest handling the situation?

- Call the police
- Say that I am unavailable or not here
- Ask him/her to leave the building
- Other:

If it's possible, would you like to have his/her phone number and e-mail blocked?
If yes, please include information:

YES NO

Do you believe that he/she would be violent to others or cause a scene in order to see you?

If yes, please describe some of his/her behaviour and/or concerns you have:

YES NO

Would you like to attach any records to keep as evidence? (emails, voicemails)
If yes, please indicate and attach:

YES NO

Additional Safety

Who can we contact in case of emergency? (name & phone number)

If you are in danger, what code word can you use to ask for help?

Additional Support

Safety plans look at the steps that can be taken at different points in time or in various situations (when at work, while living with the aggressor, getting ready to leave, leaving, afterwards, protecting children and family pets). Creating a safety plan requires experience in risk and threat assessments, so you may want to connect with services in your community to get additional expert help.

- Local Outreach worker
- Anderson House's Crisis Helpline 1-800-240-9894. They offer anonymous and confidential crisis support for abused women
- Chief Mary Bernard Women's Shelter 902-831-2332 (Lennox Island)
- Creating a Safety Plan www.fvps.ca

Privacy

- The Town of Three Rivers has the duty to take every reasonable precaution to protect employees and that responsibility might outweigh the need for complete privacy.
- We can ensure that all communication will happen on a "need to know" basis and that it will be done with the highest level of respect and confidentiality.
- If it is determined that some information needs to be shared, we will make every effort to first discuss with you:
 - Who needs to be informed and why
 - What information will be communicated
 - The expectations for confidentiality
 - Consequences if confidentiality is breached

Changes

If at any time you would like to update or change the safety plan, please see the Chief Administrative Officer for the Town of Three Rivers.