

Domestic Violence in Times of Stress

In many ways we are in unprecedented times, and with this can bring many challenges from financial restraints, shifts in routine, to isolation from social networks and support services. These conditions can accelerate or exacerbate domestic violence situations and may lead to increased rates of domestic violence. To ensure supports are in place, the City of Edmonton is enhancing services. Employees who are experiencing domestic violence, **will be provided a paid leave up to 10 days to seek assistance and support from a domestic violence situation. Should additional time be required, Disability Management will review options, including putting additional support and care in place.** This leave can be arranged through your supervisor and/or Disability Management team (all private information will be held in strict confidence). For those with questions regarding how to support an employee experiencing domestic violence or who would like support personally, they can access a City of Edmonton Social Worker, experienced in the area of domestic violence, by calling 780-496-4777.

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence describes a pattern of abusive behaviours within a relationship where there is trust or dependency. The purpose of abusive behaviours is to gain power, control and induce fear. (Adapted from [Community Initiatives Against Family Violence](#), October 9, 2001) The terms family violence, domestic violence and spousal abuse are often used interchangeably to describe a deliberate, recurring, pattern of behaviours. These behaviours can take any or all of the following forms, and often increase in frequency and severity over the course of the relationship.

The pattern of abuse may include:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Stalking
- Spiritual abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial abuse
- Physical or emotional harm to children, other family members, harm to pets and or property

Domestic violence affects anyone, regardless of job, social or economic status, gender, religion, race or culture. It is not always observable through physical injury. Changes in behaviour, demeanour, and social relationships can also be signs of issues within a relationship.

Are you in an unhealthy relationship?

MY PARTNER:

- Checks my cell phone without permission
- Wants constant updates on where I am and who I'm with
- Is dominating or controlling
- Tries to keep me away from friends and family
- Threatens to harm me, my family or my pets
- Shouts and gets violent when angry
- Uses the silent treatment
- Is jealous and possessive
- Uses scare tactics
- Calls me names
- Uses physical violence
- Pressures or forces me to have sex
- Threatens to blackmail me
- Manipulates my feelings

What supports are available for those impacted by Domestic Violence?

Often it is difficult to reach out for support. It takes a lot of courage. It is important to know you are not alone. In cases of immediate danger call 911.

External Community Supports

- 24/7 [Family Violence Information Line](#): 310-1818
- [211](#) for information and referral to a wide range of community, social health and government services.
- [The Today Family Violence Help Centre](#): 780-455-6880

Internal Supports for City of Edmonton Employees

- LifeWorks by Morneau Shepell - Employee and Family Assistance: 1-855-789-7289
- Lead City Chaplain - John Dowds: 780-496-7863
- Disability Management - For paid leave of absences: 780-496-8835
- City of Edmonton Social Worker: 780-496-4777

What to do if an employee experiencing family violence discloses this information to you?

With a greater need for physical distancing in our workplaces, and more employees working from home, processes and supports continue to be reviewed and updated.

It is important to stay connected. Continue to practice physical distancing and social connection by reaching out to and checking in with colleagues and employees via email, chats, social networking or phone. Let them

know you are available. If an employee who is experiencing domestic violence connects with you for support, let them know there are resources available if they need (see above).

- Follow the lead of the person who is reaching out or that you are concerned is in a domestic violence situation. **Often, they are the best judge of what they need in the moment.**
- Be discreet. You could unknowingly put that person at risk or increase their isolation by initiating a conversation about their safety over the phone, by text message, email or on a teleconference.
- You can call 780-496-4777 to consult with a professional City of Edmonton Social Worker experienced in working in the area of domestic violence:
 - if you have more questions, or
 - if you need internal support or guidance, or
 - if it is unsafe to work from home for you or an employee.

Five steps to follow:

STEP 1 Keep conversations confidential* and private. Actions are led by your colleague contacting you.

STEP 2 Let them know they are not alone. Respond empathetically and without judgement. Let your colleague know you are happy they reached out.

STEP 3 Encourage your colleague to talk to their supervisor if they feel comfortable, or use the following resources:

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- Lead City Chaplain - John Dowds: 780-496-7863
- 24/7 [Family Violence Information Line](#): 310-1818
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STEP 4 If you feel comfortable, ask how you can safely stay connected with you and follow **their** direction.

STEP 5 Do you have more questions, or need internal support and guidance? Is an employee unsafe to work from home due to a domestic violence situation? You can call 780-496-4777 to consult with a professional City of Edmonton Social Worker.

***IF SOMEONE IS AT RISK TO THEMSELVES OR OTHERS OR WHERE A CHILD IS AT RISK CALL 911 OR INTAKE NORTHERN ALBERTA AFTER HOURS CHILD INTERVENTION SERVICES (NACIS) AT 780-422-2001**