

# OCTOBER IS Domestic Violence Awareness Month

WORKPLACES RESPOND  
TO DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE  
A NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

Dear Workplaces Respond Partners:

Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) is a national campaign dedicated to raising awareness about domestic violence. It evolved from the "Day of Unity" held in October 1981, intending to connect advocates across the nation who were working to end violence against women and their children.<sup>1</sup> Every October, organizations and individuals across the country unite for a national effort to uplift the needs, voices, and experiences of survivors.<sup>2</sup>



**The National Resource Center: Workplaces Respond to Domestic & Sexual Violence (Workplaces Respond)** is pleased to share with you this 2024 DVAM Toolkit, which includes resources to enhance your organizations capacity to prevent, respond to, and support workers affected by domestic violence. Whether you are just beginning this work or building on existing programs, our goal is to provide you with practical tools and resources that are easy to implement. There is no need to reserve these strategies for the month of October. This toolkit offers quick tips to guide you toward sustainable change and, for those looking to go deeper, links to more comprehensive materials.

**Workplaces Respond** is available to provide **free technical assistance** for all workplaces to support the improvement, creation, and implementation of programs and policies that prevent and address domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sexual harassment (DVSASSH) in the workplace. Please [use this link](#) to submit requests for assistance.

With gratitude,

Workplaces Respond

email: [workplacesrespond@futureswithoutviolence.org](mailto:workplacesrespond@futureswithoutviolence.org)

website: [workplacesrespond.org](http://workplacesrespond.org)



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# Toolkit Summary

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This year's DVAM theme is [Heal, Hold & Center](#), which calls on us to embrace those healing from violence and discrimination, hold space for survivors, and center the voices of those most impacted in our efforts. This toolkit offers comprehensive strategies and resources for actualizing this theme. Below are actionable strategies for workplace violence prevention and response:

- **Promote Services:** Remind employees of available support services, such as your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or victim advocacy programs. Make sure these resources are available in accessible formats and specifically reference support for survivors of domestic violence.
- **Acknowledge the Impact:** Understand that **healing** from domestic violence and trauma can be lifelong and may affect both work and personal life. Offer accommodations and support as employees navigate their healing journey.
- **Conduct a Climate Survey:** Conduct climate surveys to assess how effective your workplace policies are in supporting survivors and **holding** space for survivorship.
- **Create an Advisory Committee:** Establish an advisory group or council focused on reducing domestic violence in the workplace. This team can help implement sustainable practices that provide long-term support for employees.
- **Review Policies Through an Intersectional Lens:** Review existing policies or create new ones that specifically address the unique challenges faced by underserved individuals who are survivors of domestic violence.
- **Provide Intersectional Training:** Educate supervisors and employees on how domestic violence impacts workers differently based on their identities, including ethnicity, sex, disability, national origin, and socioeconomic status. **Center** the lived experiences of those who hold these identities in the development and implementation of the training

# Defining the Terms

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## What is Domestic Violence?

**Domestic violence** is a pattern of abusive behavior used by someone to maintain power and control over their current or former intimate partner.

Domestic violence often intersects with or manifests as sexual assault, stalking, and sexual harassment, which can all be referred to as DVSASSH. DVSASSH includes a range of behaviors that aim to, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual, or economic harm directed at persons because of their sex or affecting persons of a particular sex disproportionately.

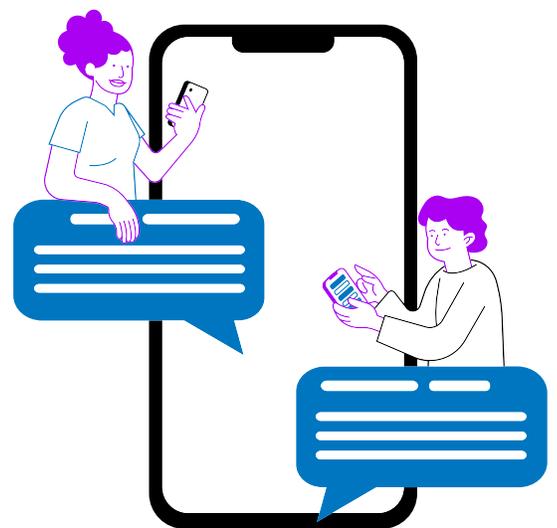
While some individuals and populations are more commonly targeted for DVSASSH than others, anyone and everyone in the workplace can be negatively impacted by the existence of DVSASSH.

Employees are not only impacted by violence that happens in the physical workplace. DVSASSH that happens at home, online, or elsewhere away from work has a ripple effect, impacting the individual survivor and their community(ies). It can affect an employee's ability to perform work-related activities or to even feel safe while at work.

## How Does DVSASSH Impact the World of Work?

The **world of work** refers to any location in which employees, paid and unpaid interns, contractors, volunteers, board members, consultants, and temporary workers perform their job duties. This includes:

- public and private spaces in the employer's office building;
- places where a worker takes a break, eats a meal, or uses washing and changing facilities;
- a temporary offsite work location;
- a person's home while remote working;
- a hotel or restaurant used by an employee on work travel;
- a conference center or training site;
- a work-related social gathering; or
- online or virtual work communications.



# Defining the Terms, cont.

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DVSASSH could happen in any of these spaces in the world of work and could be committed by another worker or a visitor to the work site.

Below are examples of DVSASSH that occur in the world of work. Violence in the workplace is at the center of this spiral. Violence that can occur in the workplace or in other areas of the world of work are displayed on the outer edges of the spiral. Each of these forms of violence, no matter where or when they occur, can have an impact on the safety and wellbeing of employees, employers, and the workplace at large.

## The World of Work



Learn more about DVSASSH and the world of work [on our website](#).

# Prevalence

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In one study, 1 in 5 workers experienced the impacts of domestic violence at work.<sup>3</sup>



Of these workers, 66% had this type of violence perpetrated in the workplace or on their workplace premises.<sup>4</sup>

66%

Women are much more likely than men to be victims of on-the-job intimate partner homicide. Spouses, boyfriends/girlfriends/partners and ex-boyfriends/girlfriends/partners were responsible for the on-the-job deaths of 321 women and 38 men from 1997-2009.<sup>5</sup>



25-85%

In the U.S., anywhere from 25% to 85% of women report having experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.<sup>6</sup>

A 2019 Bureau of Justice Statistics survey found that 9.4% of stalking survivors knew their stalker as a professional acquaintance.<sup>7</sup>

9.4%



According to a 2023 study, 1 in 8 survivors of stalking lost time from work due to safety concerns and/or to deal with the stalking.<sup>8</sup>

Workplaces are common targets for active shooters. Almost 60% of mass shootings in a six year period were linked either directly or indirectly to domestic violence.<sup>9</sup>

60%



We are all affected by DVSASSH within and away from the world of work. DVAM reminds us that we can each do our part to educate ourselves and others, cultivate violence-free work environments, and support our colleagues who are survivors. Learn more about [Addressing the Impacts of Violence and Trauma in the Workplace](#).

# Heal from Violence

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Healing from a traumatic experience of DVSASSH can be a difficult, lifelong process. Healing happens when intentional supports are in place at home, at work, and in other spaces survivors exist in.

**Trauma** is a normal response to an abnormal situation. Everyone reacts differently to a traumatic event and someone who experiences multiple traumatic events may respond differently to each.

Trauma can manifest itself in various ways:<sup>10</sup>

## Emotionally

- fear
- anxiety
- rage
- paranoia
- irritability
- numbness

## Cognitively

- difficulty making decisions
- memory problems
- shortened attention span

## Behaviorally

- withdrawal
- overwork
- emotional outbursts
- increased alcohol/drug use

## Physically

- chest pain
- high blood pressure
- headaches
- easily startled
- fatigue

## Spiritually

- emptiness
- loss of meaning
- apathy
- mistrust
- needing to “prove” self

## Societal Effects

- Isolation
- lack of empathy
- low productivity
- intergenerational transmission of pain



If you are a survivor of DVSASSH or other forms of trauma that impact you in the workplace and beyond, you can find resources for support at the [coalition against domestic violence in your state or territory](#).

# Hold Space for Survivors

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Survivors of DVSASSH may display trauma behaviors in the workplace, especially if the work environment mimics the behaviors or recreates the feelings they had when they were victimized.

A data analysis found that 35.3% of women who were victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) were stalked and on average lost 10.1 days from paid work as a result of the trauma.<sup>11</sup>

Employers can cultivate workplaces that mitigate the effects of trauma and that support the healing of survivors by developing an organizational trauma-informed approach. Trauma-informed environments also by design can prevent violence. Below are examples of workplace strategies using the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) key principles of a trauma-informed approach from [SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#)



**Safety:** Conduct a workplace climate survey to determine the psychological and physical wellbeing of employees.



**Trustworthiness and Transparency:** Keep employees abreast of operational decisions and remain transparent about decision making to build trust within the workplace.



**Peer Support:** Provide groups for staff with shared backgrounds, peer mentoring opportunities, and information sharing spaces so employees can discover how they can contribute to workplace safety and respect.



**Collaboration and Mutuality:** Where possible, practice power-sharing in meetings or pole employees prior to decision making to achieve a collaborative and mutually respectful workplace.



**Empowerment, Voice, and Choice:** Understand that survivors know what is best for themselves and create a process for consulting with them on policies.



**Cultural & Historical Issues:** A trauma-informed workplace aims to eliminate barriers and provide access to resources for everyone. One strategy to achieve that is providing continuous education for supervisors and managers on the impacts of discrimination and the diverse backgrounds that survivors may have.

# Center Those Most Impacted

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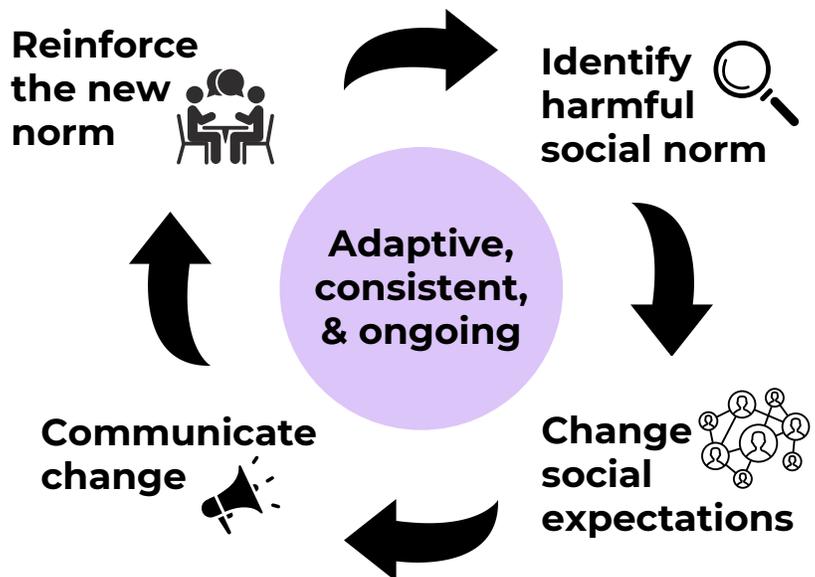
People who commit DVSASSH often target individuals who hold an underserved ethnic or cultural identity, religion, and/or age, and/or are disabled, Deaf or hard of hearing, or pregnant.

These individuals may be less likely to report the violence, experience more barriers to accessing and receiving support, and may be experiencing multiple forms of violence or trauma at one time.

Centering the needs of these populations and removing barriers to care, support, and accountability when developing our violence prevention policies and programs is crucial. Removing barriers for the most impacted removes barriers for everyone.

Employers can center those with diverse backgrounds who are most impacted by including diverse employee voices in organizational change and developing policies that shape workplace culture.

Social norms are the attitudes and behaviors that individuals and communities adhere to based on influence from society and culture. Changing culture - and creating sustainable systems change - requires shifting the conditions, relationships, and mindsets that create and perpetuate the problem; in this case, the ways that domestic violence and other forms of violence impact employees and workplaces.



It must include challenging historic, existing, and often invisible power structures that have influenced our personal beliefs and assumptions, our relationships, access to resources, and who policies and practices benefit and harm.

# Prevention is Possible

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## DVSASSH is preventable. What does prevention mean?

**Primary prevention** aims to address the root causes of violence, decrease risk factors (or the characteristics that could make someone more likely to cause harm or be victimized), and increase protective factors (the characteristics that could make someone less likely to perpetrate or experience harm) at individual, relationship, community, and societal levels. **Primary prevention stops violence before it starts.**

**Response** involves the support systems and structures put in place in the event that a survivor needs assistance and support. Response ensures that we are mitigating immediate harms and minimizing long-term impacts. An effective response is also referred to as secondary and/or tertiary prevention as these **responses can prevent further and future harm to survivors.**



Primary prevention is possible with a comprehensive plan centering survivors and those most impacted by violence.

# Resources for Employers

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## Workplaces Respond Resources

These resources from the National Resource Center, funded by the Office on Violence Against Women, will help you learn more about domestic violence, supporting survivors within your organization or business, and creating policies and structures within your organization or business to prevent and respond to DVSASSH.

- [Employer Guide to Safety Planning](#)
  - Safety plans are an important tool to help reduce a survivor's risk of harm from an abusive individual. This guide provides information on safety planning with a focus on the workplace.
- [Preventing Incidents of DVSASSH in the Workplace](#)
  - This factsheet describes how to mitigate threats and prevent incidents of DVSASSH in the workplace.
- [The Top 10 Things Co-Workers Can Do to Address Sexual Harassment in the Workplace](#)
  - This resource offers coworkers 10 tips they can use to support fellow employees experiencing sexual harassment at work.

## Additional Resources

- [The Spectrum of Prevention](#)
  - The Prevention Institute's Spectrum of Prevention is a systematic tool that promotes a range of activities for effective prevention.
- [Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience \(STAR\) Resources](#)
  - The Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University Strategies offers a variety of resources about the effects of harm and trauma.

# Resources for Survivors

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## Helplines

- [Victim Connect Resource Center:](#)
  - Available M-F, 9:00AM-5:00PM ET via phone, chat, or text:
  - 1-855-4VICTIM (855-484-2846)
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline:](#)
  - Available 24/7 via call, chat, and text.
  - 1-800-799-SAFE (7233); TTY: 1-800-787-3224; Text "START" to 88788
- [National Sexual Assault Hotline:](#)
  - Available 24/7, callers will be connected with a trained sexual assault advocate in their area. Also available via chat on the website.
  - 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
- [The Deaf Hotline:](#)
  - Available 24/7 via phone and email.
  - 1-855-812-1001
- [Strong Hearts Native Helpline:](#)
  - 24/7 safe, confidential and anonymous domestic and sexual violence helpline for Native Americans and Alaska Natives
  - 1-844-7NATIVE (762-8483)
- [Cyber Civil Rights Initiative Helpline](#)
  - Available 24/7 for victims of image-based sexual abuse.
  - 1-844-878-2274

## Other Resources

- [Decision Tree for Sexual Harassment in the Workplace](#)
  - This handout provides items to consider initially after experiencing workplace sexual harassment.
- [Resilience for Advocates through Foundational Training \(RAFT\).](#)
  - RAFT offers training and wellness resources to support anti-violence advocates and organizations navigating compassion fatigue and burnout.

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