REMOTE WORK AND DOMESTIC/INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE
Additional tools for New Brunswick employers

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Abbreviations

CBDC	**Community Business Development Corporation**
DIPV	**Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence**
RFS	**Restigouche Family Services**

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CANADIAN WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

Women and Gender Equality Canada | Femmes et Égalité des genres Canada

Canada

The team would also like to acknowledge the contribution of CBDC Restigouche as a key partner in this project. We also gratefully acknowledge the materials developed by the New Brunswick D/IPV in the Workplace Committee and the Canadian Women's Foundation since much of the information in this document was inspired by them.

CBDC RESTIGOUCHE

IT'S YOUR BUSINESS
A Domestic & Intimate Partner Violence Workplace Toolkit

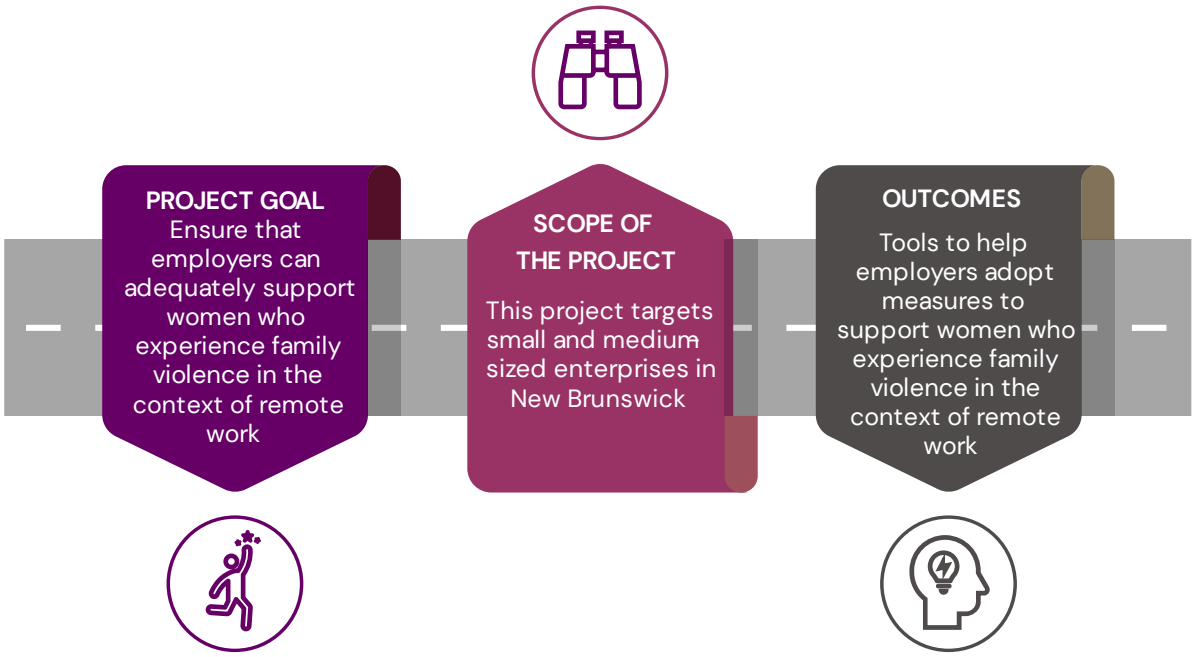
RFS also recognizes the Advisory Committee members who provided valuable feedback on these additional tools:

- New Brunswick D/IPV in the Workplace Committee.
- Courage Centre/Beausejour Family Crisis Resource Centre.
- Kent Violence Prevention Centre.
- Maison Notre-Dame House.
- Women's Equality.
- WorkSafeNB.
- Department of Social Development – Provincial Consultant for Transition Houses.

Finally, RFS wishes to thank all of the employers who participated in an online survey conducted during this project, as well as all those who will use this tool to improve working conditions for people experiencing DIPV.

Introduction

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, emerging data shows that violence against women, especially domestic and intimate partner violence (DIPV), has intensified. For example, killings of women and girls involving males accused increased by 27% in 2022, compared to 2019 in Canada. (1) Many people had to work from home due to lockdowns, which, in some cases, resulted in greater tensions in family relationships and exacerbated violence. This shift to remote work suggests that many employers are allowing or encouraging remote work. This merits special attention, especially for people experiencing DIPV who may have limited or no access to an out-of-home work environment.



This project was developed in collaboration with CBDC Restigouche and is managed by Restigouche Family Services (RFS), a charitable organization in operation since 1989 whose mission is to improve the mental health, well-being and functioning of individuals, organizations and communities. RFS offers a range of services to people experiencing gender-based violence and their children, including support, counselling and other services.

Several specific tools already exist across Canada to support employers in understanding signs of DIPV, impacts of DIPV on women and how DIPV is linked to the workplace.

The tools in this document are meant to complement the existing **NB Toolkit** below. Therefore, employers are strongly advised to explore it to gain essential knowledge on DIPV in the workplace:

IT'S YOUR BUSINESS
A Domestic & Intimate Partner Violence Workplace Toolkit

DIPV: It's Your Business Workplace Toolkit

Toolkit developed by the New Brunswick D/IPV in the Workplace Committee

This toolkit is intended to provide New Brunswick employers, unions and employees with information and resources to recognize and respond to situations in which DIPV enters the workplace. It is geared towards unionized and non-unionized workplaces, business owners, management and employees. It can be used in large and small businesses, in rural and urban workplaces and across all economic sectors. A training program should be available soon on the Committee's website.

Additional resources are available in the Breaking Workplace Silence package:

Breaking Workplace Silence

"Breaking Workplace Silence"

Regional package developed by Restigouche CBDC

This website contains packaged information based on the DIPV: It's Your Business Workplace Toolkit, as well as Restigouche-based resources to help employers understand and support employees who may be experiencing violence.

Did you know?

In 2019, 29% of New Brunswick women surveyed said that violence was one of the three most significant problems they'd faced in their own lives within the previous year(2)

New Brunswick

- New Brunswick has the highest rate of police-reported intimate partner violence in the Atlantic provinces. (3)
- More people are killed by their partners in New Brunswick than in the other Atlantic provinces. (3)
- More family-related murder-suicides occur in New Brunswick than anywhere else in Canada. (3)
- More than 85% of police-reported spousal homicide victims in New Brunswick are women. (3)
- Two-thirds of all New Brunswick women killed were living with the accused. (3)

Canada

- Every six days, a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. (3)
- 70% of these deaths occur in small towns and rural areas. (3)
- About six in ten Indigenous women have experienced some form of intimate partner violence during their lifetime. (4)
- Indigenous women are killed at nearly seven times the rate of non-Indigenous women. (5)
- Women living with a disability are three times more likely to experience violent victimization than women living without a disability. (6)
- Immigrant women may be more vulnerable to domestic violence due to economic dependence, language barriers and a lack of knowledge about community resources. (7)
- Women who identify as lesbian or bisexual are three to four times more likely than heterosexual women to report experiencing spousal violence. (8)
- Transgender people are more likely to have experienced violence since age 15 and more likely to experience inappropriate behaviours in public, online and at work than cisgender people. (9)
- Three in five transgender women have experienced intimate partner violence since the age of 16. (10)

What will you get out of these tools?

The information in these additional tools will help you better understand the effects of DIPV in a remote work context and shed light on how employers can better support their employees to prevent or help someone when signs are identified.

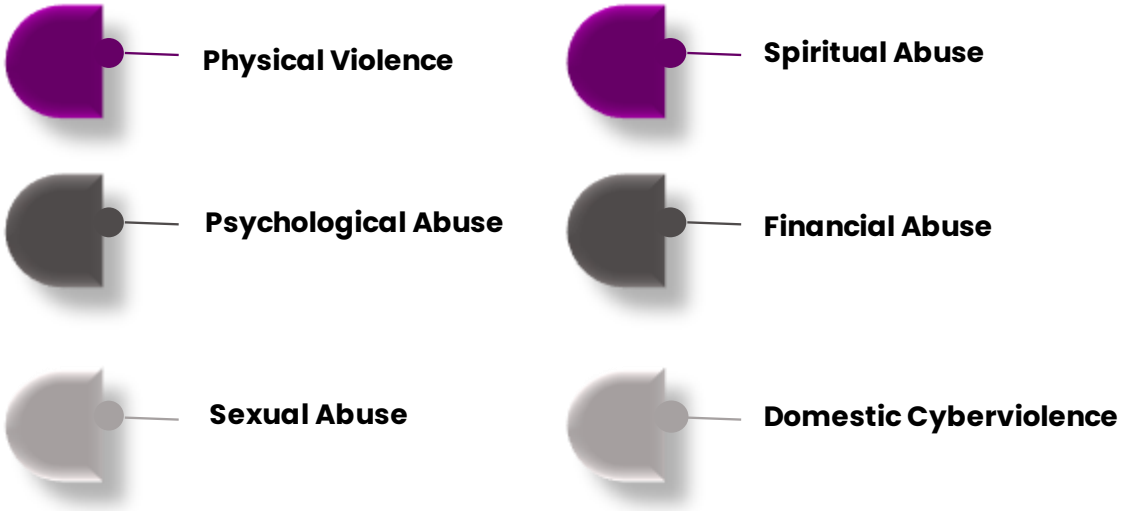
These additional tools promote inclusive management practices aimed at creating a structure that allows employers to consider DIPV when developing and implementing workplace and remote work policies and practices. Inclusive management practices are meant to raise awareness about remote work and DIPV and to assist employers in managing proactively by integrating DIPV-related information and practices into their day-to-day operational policies and procedures.

Domestic/intimate partner violence: what is it?

Terms describing violence experienced in relationships

Various terms are used to describe violence experienced in relationships. Based on the recommendations of the advisory committee for this project, we have chosen to use the term "domestic/intimate partner violence" (DIPV). While this is the primary type of violence we will focus on, we acknowledge that there are many other types of violence that affect the workplace and/or intersect with DIPV.

DIPV includes any form of abuse, mistreatment or neglect that an individual is subjected to from a family member or from a current or former intimate partner. It usually leads to violent, threatening, dominant, coercive or controlling behaviour patterns. DIPV, which may also be referred to as intimate partner violence, domestic violence, wife abuse, spousal abuse, dating violence, etc., can take many forms, such as: (11)



For additional information, definitions and examples of types of violence, please visit: "It's Your Business: DIPV Toolkit for the Workplace".

As an employer, why should I be concerned?

DIPV at work

DIPV at work refers to the effects of violence inflicted by a family member or intimate partner in the workplace. DIPV poses a safety risk to employees in the form of violent incidents, as well as other short-term effects (e.g. lack of concentration at work, lack of sleep) and long-term effects (e.g. PTSD or other mental health impacts) of violence. (11)

For more information on how DIPV can affect your business, please consult the "DIPV: It's Your Business Workplace Toolkit".

We often think of the effects of violence in the workplace in terms of physical security threats due to harassment while at work or impacts on individuals that affect their concentration and productivity while at work. We also need to consider the impacts of violence on employees while working from home or working remotely (i.e. away from their workplace). This is a growing concern, yet very little literature exists on the issue. These tools seek to fill a few of the gaps and to spark critical conversations about DIPV and remote work.

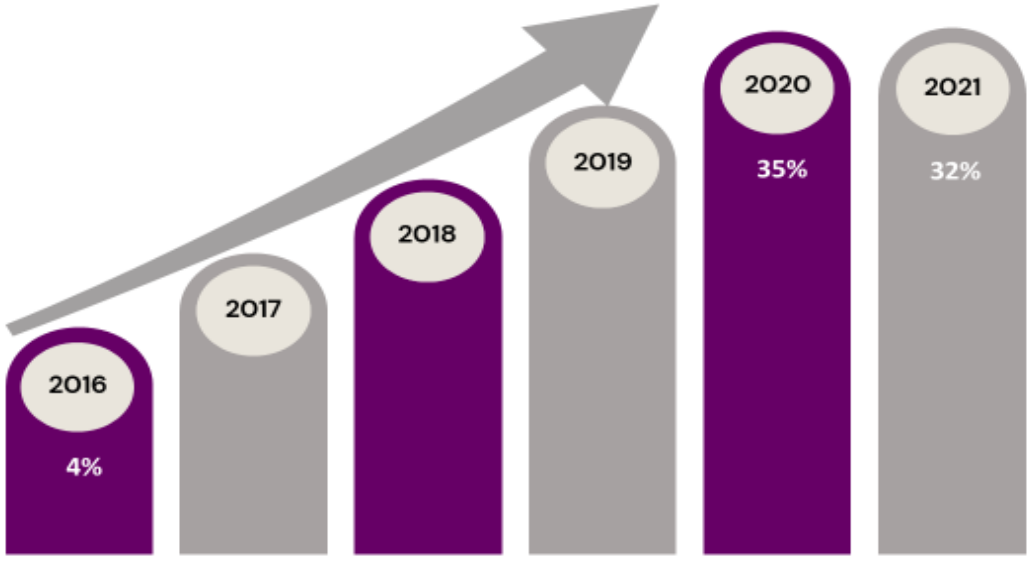
Remote work: a new reality

Remote work (also known as working from home or telecommuting) is defined as "a type of flexible working arrangement that allows employees to work from remote locations outside of corporate offices". (12) Although technology makes it possible to perform a job almost anywhere, the emphasis on remote work for the purpose of these tools is on work performed outside the office, primarily in the employee's home.

Remote work was already on the rise before the practice grew rapidly following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, in part due to quarantine measures aimed at preventing the spread of the virus. This reality, coupled with a nationwide increase in domestic violence rates in Canada since March 2020, poses new challenges when considering DIPV's impacts on the workplace.

Between 2016 and 2020, the percentage of workers who work from home increased from 4% to almost 35% in Canada (Mehdi & Morissette, 2021a).

In January 2021, this trend continued with 32% of Canadian employees aged 15 to 69 doing most of their work at home (Mehdi & Morissette, 2021b).



Mehdi & Morissette (2021a) (13)
Mehdi & Morissette (2021b) (14)

Remote work offers a variety of benefits for employers and employees, including increased productivity and potential cost savings for employers and no commuting and better work-life balance for employees. However, for individuals experiencing DIPV in their personal lives while working from home, remote work can have serious consequences. This may include but is not limited to increased exposure to their abuser's violent behaviour, reduced access to a social support network and reduced access to support services during work hours.

Although many employees are returning to the office, employers need to be prepared in case employees ever have to go back to working remotely, e.g. in the event of other major events such as another pandemic, natural disasters, etc. Did you know that climate emergencies have a disproportionate impact on women and gender-diverse people? Gender and DIPV issues should not be an afterthought in emergency preparedness. (15)

Currently, New Brunswick laws that govern health and safety in the workplace are not adapted to the growing trend towards remote work. This is of particularly concern to women who experience DIPV because remote work may expose them to an ongoing risk of violence. (16)

Occupational Health & Safety Act and remote work

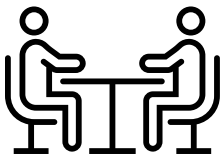
In New Brunswick, the *Occupational Health & Safety Act* defines a place of employment as any building, structure, premises, water or land where work is carried on by one or more employees. This includes a project site, a mine, a ferry, a train and any vehicle used or likely to be used by an employee.

Section 3(1) of the Act states: "This Act does not apply to a place of employment that is a private home unless the work that is carried on has been contracted to the employer of one or more persons employed at that private home."

Additionally, WorkSafeNB provides the following interpretation of a place of employment that is a private home:

"The **Act does not apply to a private home in these circumstances**. As such, the employer is not responsible for establishing an inspection procedure or an ergonomically designed workstation for its employees. While the Act excludes private homes and their premises from being considered a place of employment under these circumstances, an employee who works from home remains the employer's employee and if an injury occurs during the working hours at their home, it may be compensable. As a result, helping employees establish good ergonomic practices and other health and safety measures would minimize the risk of injuries." (17)

We invite employers to visit the WorkSafeNB website for updated versions of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.



Though numerous considerations are involved when addressing DIPV in the remote workplace, this issue is not going away. Therefore, it is something that employers should prioritize. By placing a premium on providing support and guidance to employees affected by DIPV, employers have an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to their people while exhibiting strong leadership. (18)

Employer's social responsibility

When employees work from home, employers still have a social responsibility to ensure that they have a fair, healthy and safe environment. (19)

Part of exercising social responsibility is when employers question their policies, procedures and management practices prior to implementing them. This generates and ensures employee well-being. (20)

Various specific tools and resources are available to support employers in implementing organizational practices aimed at fostering a safe and healthy workplace and exercising social responsibility. The additional tools in this document are meant to contribute new knowledge while building on the previous work of the existing NB Toolkit (*see page 3*). Employers are strongly advised to explore that provincial toolkit to gain essential knowledge on DIPV in the workplace.

To build on existing tools and to address new challenges in the workplace since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, these additional tools will specifically address remote or home-based work. They are presented from the perspective of employers' social responsibility and aim to help employers consider the impacts of remote work on people experiencing DIPV and integrate DIPV into their policies, procedures and decision-making processes.

These tools offer insights into how to develop comprehensive and inclusive policies and procedures that will support employers in managing DIPV-related situations in a remote work context and individuals experiencing DIPV.

Tool #1: Staying Informed and Alert: This is a first easy actionable step employers can take to create a safer environment for employees experiencing DIPV and working from home. As a result, employees will know how to communicate if they ever feel threatened at home.

Tool #2: Organizational Components and Support for Employees Experiencing DIPV and Working Remotely: Look at the organizational components that you, as the employer, can act on and determine whether certain components may support or hinder people who experience DIPV while working remotely.

Tool #3: Unconscious Biases and their Impacts on Management Practices: Explore unconscious biases, individually and collectively, and how they affect workplace culture and management practices.

Tool #4: Proactive Management Practices: Learn about proactive management practices and how they can be useful for managing staff working remotely.

Tool #5: Writing a Remote Work Policy: Learn about what it means to develop a remote work policy that considers procedures aimed at preventing and addressing DIPV in a remote work environment.

TOOL #1 – Staying Informed and Alert

APPLYING THIS TOOL WILL ONLY TAKE A COUPLE OF MINUTES:
IT IS COST-EFFECTIVE AND COULD SAVE SOMEONE'S LIFE!

While addressing DIPV in the remote workplace is a complex topic, there are small actionable steps and concepts that can be integrated into any workplace. One of these is the "Signal for Help" developed by the Canadian Women's Foundation to raise awareness about domestic and intimate partner violence and to provide your employees with a useful resource so they can signal for help or recognize a signal from someone asking for help while working remotely.

This is a simple one-handed gesture anyone can use without leaving a digital trace. It indicates that they need someone to safely check in and support them.

Four easy steps you can take as an employer

1. Visit https://canadianwomen.org/signal-for-help/ and learn how to perform the signal for help and find out why it is important.

2. You can then get ready to promote the "Signal for Help" in your workplace by completing the mini-course and consulting the additional resources available.

3. Send the "Signal for Help" link to all your employees and raise awareness about how to help someone in distress, whether you have employees working remotely or not. In today's world, businesses all interact with individuals through online platforms at some point.

4. Employers can take an extra step in case the "Signal for Help" cannot be used for some reason. The employer and staff members may agree on a code word or phrase for reporting distressing or urgent situations in confidence. For example: the employee could say "I need to call my grandmother".

Although using the Signal for Help is important, **you should be aware of other signs of abuse as well**: (21)

- Abusers may seek to exert control over employees by interfering with their work.
- Employees may be wearing seasonally inappropriate clothing to cover signs of physical abuse.
- Employees may be avoiding video conference meetings, shutting off the camera when online, making last-minute excuses or cancelling altogether.
- Employees may seem nervous or may always be peering over the screen or looking over their shoulders.
- Employees may be performing at a lower level than usual.
- Employees' morale may seem lower than usual.
- Employees may be having trouble focusing on tasks or may be disengaged from their work.

What to do if you see the "Signal for Help" or other signs

1. Reach out to the person safely.
2. Be supportive: acknowledge their experience, listen to them and let them tell you what they need.
3. Refer them to services or offer resources, as needed. If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911 or your local emergency services (police, fire, ambulance).

Employers who notice those signs should be proactive about communicating, checking in regularly and making a reasonable effort to work with the employees involved. Employers should aim to take on a supportive instead of a counseling role.

Help for employees experiencing DIPV (22)

1. Call 911 in emergency situations.
2. Contact your Employee Assistance Program, as applicable.

3. Access Shelter Safe, which helps women and their children seeking safety from violence and abuse and offer to the employee to connect them with the nearest shelter.
4. Learn more about stopping family violence and find support and services in your area.

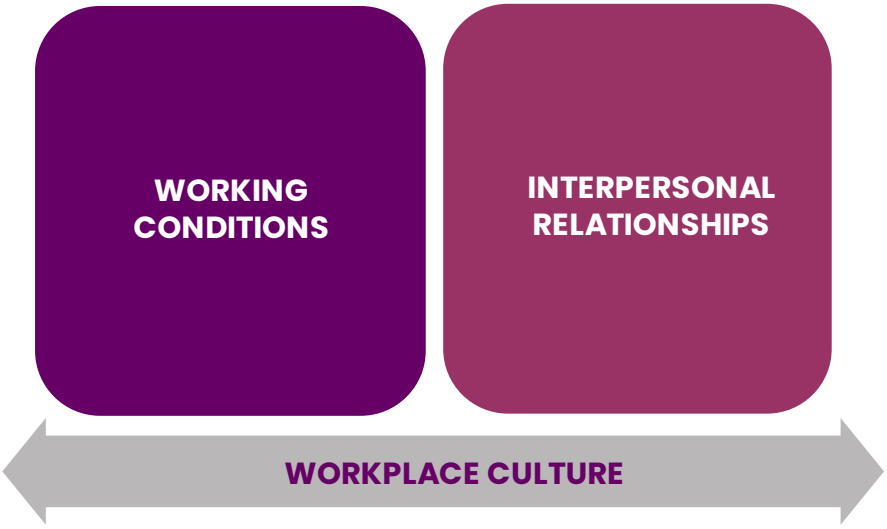
NOTES

TOOL #2 – Organizational Components and Support for Employees Experiencing DIPV and Working Remotely

For most people, work is seen as a positive part of life; the workplace is a place where they can bond with others while contributing their skills and talents. Although individuals experiencing DIPV may also derive benefits from working, working remotely from home could add to their stress level.

Workplace culture is directly correlated to employee well-being. To ensure a psychologically safe workplace, employers may wish to consider various organizational components. (23)

We have identified two organizational components that may help employers to better understand and address DIPV in the workplace for employees working remotely:



Working conditions

The employer is responsible for employees' working conditions. Working conditions include the physical environment (ergonomics, exposure to noise and pollution, health hazards, etc.), job structure (working alone, working in a team, travel, etc.), work/life balance measures (flexible scheduling for personal appointments, childcare responsibilities, paid vacation time, health benefits, etc.), work schedules (shift work, regular hours) and work predictability (regular or irregular duties, predictable or unpredictable schedules).

Working conditions may impact employee's personal lives and well-being. Employers are encouraged to reflect on the effects that remote working conditions may have on employees who are experiencing DIPV. For example:

Do unpredictable and inflexible schedules have the potential of adding tension to the family situation of a person experiencing DIPV?

By working from home, is the employee experiencing DIPV more likely to be monitored by their abuser?

Could working from the office provide increased opportunities for an individual experiencing DIPV to access services confidentially?

Is working from home isolating employees experiencing DIPV by limiting access to direct exchanges with colleagues and clients?

Interpersonal relationships at work

Interpersonal relationships at work include the relationships people have in the workplace with each other, as well as with internal and external customers. Forming interpersonal relationships at work may depend on the employer's management style and the emotional, informational and instrumental support provided to staff.

When working remotely, employees mostly interact via online platforms. Although these platforms provide some level of connection, they are not conducive to building strong interpersonal relationships with colleagues. In fact, teleworkers tend to use tools such as instant messaging or email to communicate or convey information. This in turn impacts the informal communication channels in the workplace where trusting relationships can emerge. (24)

Women experiencing DIPV and working remotely may face increased isolation. Ultimately, this may create a barrier to sharing their experience and receiving support.

To increase their level of social responsibility, employers may decide to focus on the components of their business or organization over which they have direct control. To do so, employers should reflect on their practices with the intention of being fully inclusive of everyone in the workplace, including those working from home.

It is a good idea to involve staff members in the process. For example, employers can ensure that a diversified committee is in place to grasp the reality of all employees. The following questions are meant to help you reflect on potential best practices and improvements.

Reflection activity

The answers to these questions will serve to guide you as an employer in establishing organizational components that support all people in the workplace, including people working from home and experiencing DIPV.

Many resources are also available online to help employers learn about management best practices and how to implement them. Please see the "Other resources" section of this document for more information.

Working conditions
How can I offer my employees the flexibility of working in the workplace or from home?
If my employees work from home, how can I be sure that their environment is safe and healthy? Although anyone may face DIPV, are any of my staff in a high-risk group?
How can I ensure that I am paying my staff a fair wage?
Would this wage enable someone to be financially independent? For example, an employee may need to leave their abusive partner and live on their own.
How can I ensure that my staff can access services (care, counseling, etc.) during work hours? Be sure to familiarize yourself with domestic violence, intimate partner violence or sexual violence leave.

Organizational structure
How can I ensure that I have regular contact with my staff even if people are at home and working independently?
How can I ensure that workloads do not create additional tensions in the home environment (flexible scheduling, predictable tasks and schedules, etc.)?
How can I create opportunities for each staff member to have regular contact with other co-workers? How might this impact their family environment?

Interpersonal relationships
How can I create the right conditions for staff to forge positive relationships with co-workers?
How can I create opportunities for staff to connect with each other even if they work from home?
How can I ensure that each staff member develops a relationship with management and receives personalized support? How can I support these management practices?
How can I ensure that I have or that managers have a trusting and respectful relationship with each staff member?
What can I do to ensure that all staff members have the information and tools they need to deal with workplace crisis situations or to know what to do if a colleague is experiencing DIPV?
What actions can I take to make staff aware of the different situations in which someone may be experiencing DIPV and the signs that may indicate that someone is at risk of or is experiencing DIPV? Be sure to familiarize yourself with this resource: Red Flags and Risk Factors | ToolkitNB.

NOTES

TOOL #3 – Unconscious Biases and Their Impacts on Managing People in the Workplace

Looking at unconscious biases is especially important in remote work settings as informal communication networks where co-workers learn more about each other may be compromised. (25) Depending on personal biases towards DIPV, this may make a difference in how someone will behave if a colleague seeks help.

Unconscious biases may be defined as shortcuts that our brain takes to help with decision-making. They may lead to automatic and unintentional thoughts that often influence our behaviours, perceptions and decisions. They may lead us to categorize people (judging them) and remain involuntary unless we take the time to consciously reflect on them. Unconscious biases, whether positive or negative, may be a source of workplace discrimination towards certain individuals or groups. (25) In fact, it is important to realize that while violence and discrimination may affect everyone, some groups are more at risk, including "women, young women and girls, Indigenous Peoples, 2SLGBTQIA+ and gender-diverse people, women living in Northern, rural and remote communities, and women living with disabilities". (26) Unconscious biases may exist towards people who are experiencing DIPV or other groups. They may include the prejudices shown in the examples below of things we may hear other people say or may even think ourselves:

''I wouldn't have let it happen to me. If she stays, it's because she chooses to."

"Professional working women do not usually experience DIPV."

"DIPV would never happen in a lesbian couple."

"She must be acting unpleasantly to receive such treatment."

The best way to reduce or eliminate the impact of unconscious biases on our decisions and behaviours is **to consciously reflect on them**. As an employer, you can explore unconscious biases within your team by encouraging open discussions at staff meetings (e.g. inviting an expert to offer training, ensuring job postings reflect an equitable, diverse and inclusive workplace culture, etc.).

Most typical unconscious biases (27)

Type	Description	Type	Description
HALO EFFECT	Forming an idea of someone or something based on the first impression.	**ESSENTIALISM**	Assigning characteristics to a group of people as if everyone in that group were identical.
CONFIRMATION	Retaining information that supports our idea without considering information that contradicts it.	**NEGATIVITY**	Retaining negative experiences more easily and carrying their weight.
ANCHORING	Maintaining a position or idea and sticking to it, despite changing circumstances and information.	**GROUP ATTRIBUTION**	Believing that someone's decisions represent the decisions of the group to which they belong.
ATTRIBUTION	Jumping to conclusions based on partial information or without considering the context.	**CONFORMITY**	Acting and thinking like others.
AUTHORITY	Refraining from contradicting someone because of their position.	**FRAMING**	Making decisions based on how data is presented.

One way to overcome an unconscious bias is to form new relationships with people who are different from us or are going through different experiences. This gives us a better understanding of different perspectives and helps us to overcome our involuntary reflex of attributing false values to someone's situation or state. This in turn will influence how we behave.

Reflection activity

It is important to note that certain groups are more at risk of being viewed through a lens of unconscious bias. For example, people may assume that DIPV is acceptable in certain religions or cultures. These types of perceptions, even if false, can impact someone's behaviour. In that case, unconscious biases could prevent an individual, colleague or employer from providing a helping hand. Here is a simple and cost-efficient approach you can take to uncover unconscious biases held by yourself and your employees.

Steps for facilitating this activity

1. Send the link:
    - Send the link below and invite your staff to take the free Implicit Association Test (https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/langchoice/canada.html)
    - In the invitation, explain why you are inviting them to take this test. Reassure them that they will not be required to share their results. This is an opportunity to reflect on our own unconscious biases and to learn more about whether or how they impact our decision making.
    - Include key questions to help employees reflect on their results:
        - Do the results surprise me? If yes, why? If not, why not?
        - How can I explain my results? Where might my unconscious biases come from?
        - How might my unconscious biases influence my decisions and behaviours in the workplace?
        - Do I have unconscious biases towards people experiencing DIPV? If so, what are they?
        - How can I change my unconscious biases? What actions can I take?

2. Staff meeting and discussion:
    - At a staff meeting, the employer can facilitate a discussion during which employees are invited to share their thoughts and their new understanding of unconscious bias.
    - Remember to never force someone to disclose their results. This activity depends on voluntary participation.
    - During the staff meeting, take notes of how employees are reacting and what they are saying. Try to identify tangible steps that can be taken to avoid the influence of unconscious biases (e.g. inviting an expert to offer training, ensuring that job postings reflect an equitable, diverse and inclusive workplace culture, etc.).

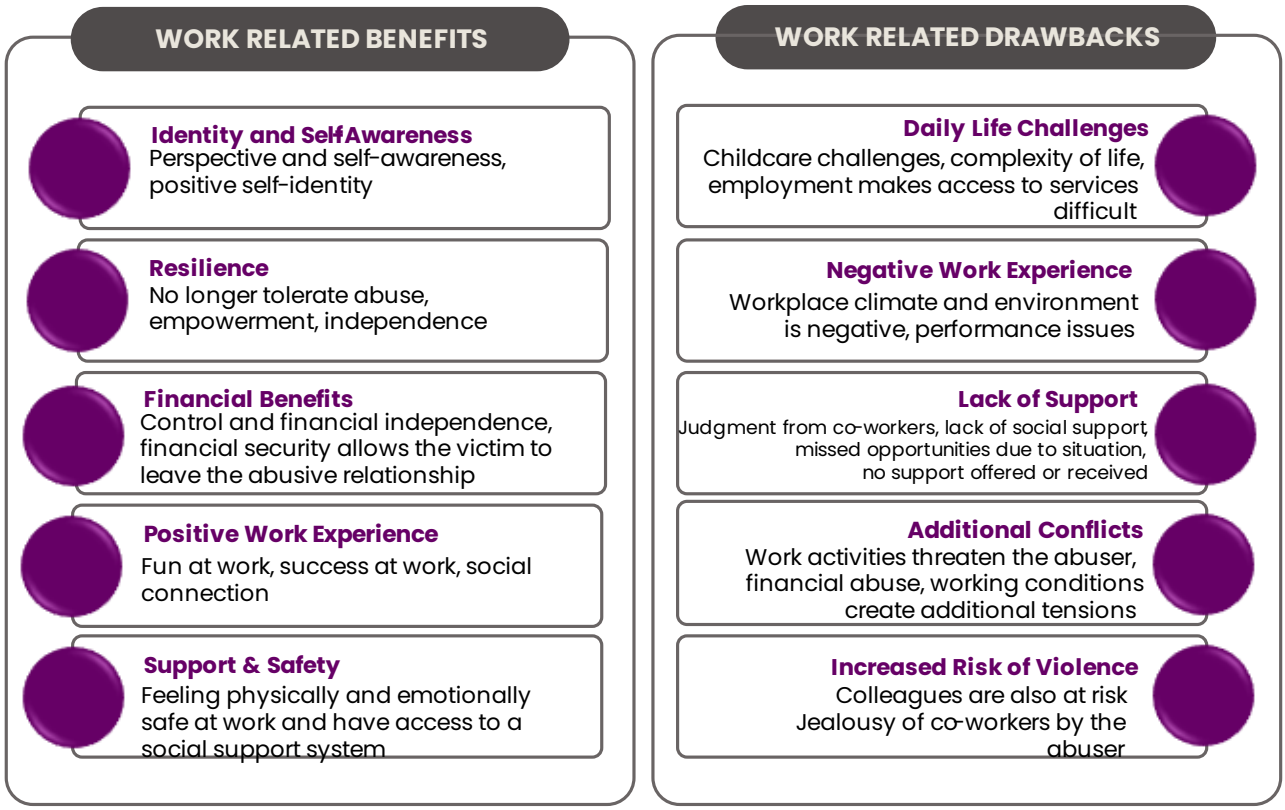
NOTES

TOOL #4 – Proactive Management Practices

Since staff experiences may vary considerably from person to person, it is essential that employers implement management practices that allow for proactive and context-specific interventions. There are two general practices associated with proactive management: 1) identifying potential sources of discrimination against certain individuals and groups at an early stage; and 2) meeting individuals' needs based on their reality.

It is important for employers and managers to realize that for a person experiencing DIPV, the workplace may have positive and negative aspects whether they're working from home or at the office.

Below are some examples that women experiencing DIPV described as work-related benefits and drawbacks as part of a study conducted in 2020: (28)



Establishing a policy and following up with employees if there are signs of domestic violence is an important and critical part of an employer's social responsibility and provides an opportunity to positively impact psycho-social risks in the workplace. (29) Some practical suggestions on how employers can immediately take steps to address this issue include the following:

- Communicate and build trust with employees through regular online team and one-on-one meetings.
- Review and update workplace violence policies to include employees working at home. Assess any safety plans as they relate to domestic violence and communicate the availability of assistance and resources.
- Confirm that employees understand that, if they reach out for support, their request will be treated as confidential and will not impact their employment.
- Highlight with supervisors and managers the increased risk of domestic violence due to work-at-home "confinement" and help them to recognize the warning signs.
- Be prepared to act swiftly with the assistance of authorities, if necessary. Become familiar with local resources and police contact information to ensure a quick response.

Reflection activity

Below are some examples of proactive management practices that will help to create an organizational environment that is supportive of individuals experiencing DIPV in a remote work setting. (30) Many resources are available online to help employers learn about best practices in management and how to implement them. Please see the "Other resources" section of this document for more information. Take a moment to ask yourself if you are already implementing these practices and whether there is room for improvement.

Examples of proactive management practices	Going well	Improvement needed
Educate and train all staff on the signs of DIPV (Training | ToolkitNB and Red Flags and Risk Factors | ToolkitNB).		
Develop a remote work policy that includes procedures for dealing with a DIPV situation in the workplace and in a remote setting. Ensure that staff members are trained on the policy and procedures *(Please consult Tool #5: Developing a Remote Work Policy and Appendix A: Writing a Remote Work Policy).*		
Personalize the support offered to each staff member by setting aside time for regular, one-on-one meetings.		
Offer employees the choice of working in the office, at home or in a hybrid setting.		
Educate and train staff on a confidential and safe way to communicate with you and their colleagues in the event of a DIPV situation in a remote work setting, e.g. using the "Signal for Help" and other safety planning, such as www.toolkitnb.ca/resources/safety-plan/		
Inform staff that the work environment is expected to be fully respectful of differences, diversity and situations that staff may experience.		
Analyze working conditions and interpersonal relationships to ensure that policies and procedures create a structure, environment and culture that supports employees experiencing DIPV.		
Educate and train staff members on unconscious biases so they can discover their perceptions of DIPV and people experiencing DIPV and thus foster interpersonal relationships, collaboration and a respectful		

Examples of proactive management practices	Going well	Improvement needed
work environment. (*Please consult Tool #3: Unconscious Biases and Their Impacts on Managing People in the Workplace.*)		
Take into consideration the realities of employees experiencing DIPV if their performance seems to be suffering.		
Ensure that the work environment is such that employees experiencing DIPV feel confident that disclosing their situation will not have a negative impact on how they are valued at work.		
Provide information to all staff members about existing resources in their community to support employees experiencing DIPV.		

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TOOL #5 – Developing a Remote Work Policy

Whenever an employer wants to develop workplace management policies, it is a good idea to consider people's diversity and the impacts that implementing the policy might have on them. This takes time and energy. Ideally, policies are developed with a diverse group that represents all staff members and diverse situations. As a best practice, employers may also choose to review existing policies using a diversity lens with this working group to make appropriate changes.

Writing a policy and related procedures may appear to be a complex task, especially with all the information involved. Some employers might think it advisable to have a separate policy to specifically address DIPV in a remote work context. Considering the potential impacts of DIPV in a remote work context, reflecting on how to address this situation in advance and integrating the information into the policy itself all provide an opportunity to act preventively and to develop a comprehensive and inclusive policy. (31) This also provides a tool to raise awareness and to educate all employees on DIPV in the workplace and in a remote work setting as part of regular procedures. (32) Before getting down to work, employers can prepare by reflecting on key questions and issues.

Workplace assessment

Several templates are available to assist employers wishing to develop a remote work policy (see "Other resources"). However, a few key issues need to be explored to ensure an equitable and inclusive policy, especially as regards DIPV: (33)

Assessment of impacts on employees

There are times when information can be gathered to inform employers about the potential impacts of existing or future policies. In the case of remote work, this information can be gathered when a new employee is hired. If remote work is already standard practice or represents a new option following the pandemic, employers can still create opportunities to meet with staff members individually and face-to-face to assess the impacts of this new way of working. This information can be used to integrate measures that take individual and specific situations into consideration.

Remote work policy

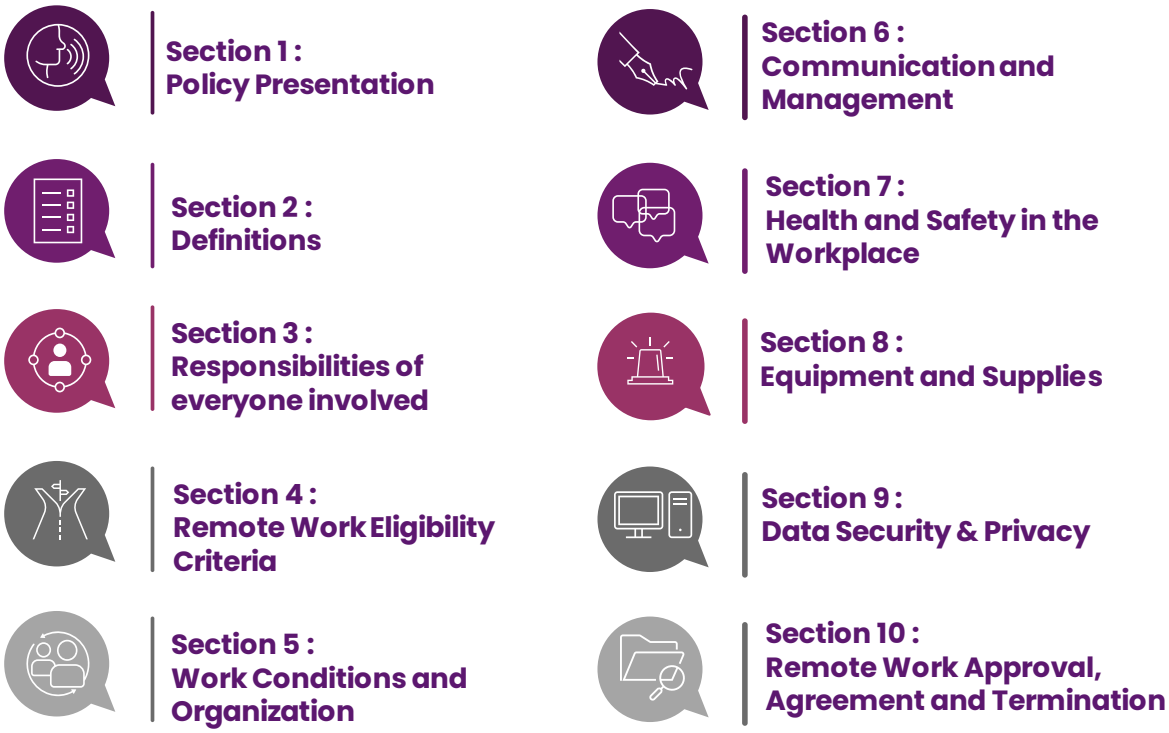
The pandemic accelerated the remote working trend and some employers expect to maintain this option over the long term. While many employers are seeing the benefits of this arrangement, this new option is often undertaken without any formal guidance for employees. Drafting/reinforcing a remote work policy has various important benefits for employers: (34)

- ✓ Prevents staff members from feeling they are being treated unfairly or inequitably if some employees work at home while others work in the office.
- ✓ Allows the employer to make decisions consistently based on an assessment of each situation using an established and shared process within the organization.
- ✓ Demonstrates to staff what is expected of them while indicating how check-ins will be done while staff are working remotely.
- ✓ Protects the employer and staff from potentially contentious situations.
- ✓ Clearly informs staff of their rights and the conditions surrounding remote work and options when available (voluntary or mandatory).

In Appendix A: Writing a Remote Work Policy, you will find all the information you need to develop each section of the policy.

Any workplace policy must be specific enough to understand its purpose, as well as flexible enough to include the diverse realities of people in the workplace, e.g. those at higher risk of experiencing DIPV.

Below are the basic sections that may be included in your remote work policy. Please note that certain sections might not apply to your workplace: therefore, your Remote Work Policy does not need to have all ten sections included. The information provided in Appendix A: Writing a Remote Work Policy is meant to be comprehensive and can be tailored to your needs. (35).



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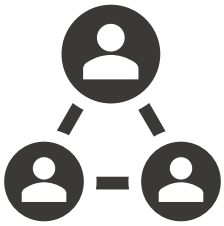
Appendix A: Writing a Remote Work Policy

Writing a remote work policy requires thinking through all the components of tasks, positions that can be performed remotely, employee skills and the unique situations of employees in the workplace. Please note that this document may evolve over time. Therefore, its contents can be adapted to the needs of employers and the realities of the workplace.

The information presented in this tool does not constitute legal advice. It summarizes best practices gathered from various sources. You can consult these sources in the "Other resources" section of this document.

This additional information on writing a remote work policy is inspired by primary-level interventions in the workplace. These interventions are meant to consider the realities of different groups and the situations of individual employees prior to developing policies and operational procedures or while reviewing them. These interventions are also meant to prevent psychosocial risks in the workplace that could impact a person's health. This is designed to ensure that day-to-day policies and procedures are inclusive and address diversity. (36)



A key principle to recognize and respect is that employers should act **fairly** with respect to the working conditions of employees working on-site and those working remotely. The following sections are all dependent on applicability to each workplace.

**** The lists below are provided as examples. Employers may choose from these lists and delete or add to them depending on workplace realities.***

Section 1: Policy presentation	
Policy presentation	✓ Policy objectives ✓ "Voluntary" or "mandatory" nature of remote work. ✓ Legal obligations related to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and employment standards (consult WorkSafeNB and Working NB).
Example	
Policy name: Remote Work Policy Policy number: Policy 001	**Remote work policy objectives** • The overall objectives of the remote work policy are to ensure consistency in (insert company name)'s decision-making regarding remote work, to provide all required information to staff members regarding remote work and to ensure that measures are taken to ensure the health and safety of all staff. **Status of remote work at (insert company name)** • Remote work is mandatory for all staff members. **OR** • Remote work is restricted to positions assessed as suitable for remote work and based on an assessment of staff skills. **OR** • Remote work is voluntary and all requests must be approved in advance in accordance with the Remote Work Policy. **(Insert company name) continues to comply with all current workplace legal obligations: Consult** WorkSafeNB and Working NB

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Section 2: Definitions	
Definitions	✓ Definition of "remote work/working remotely". ✓ Definition of what the employer means by "on-site work". ✓ Definition of continuous remote work vs. accommodation of special situations. ✓ Definition of the type of remote work covered under the policy (full-time, part-time, etc.).
Example	
Definitions	**Remote work/working remotely:** Remote work is defined as a work arrangement in which employees perform some or all their duties **from home rather than working at the employer's workplace** using information technology. **On-site work: On-site work** is defined as the **physical environment provided by an employer** for staff to perform some or all of their duties. **Remote work and accommodations:** Remote work may involve a response to an accommodation request to meet an individual's specific needs in the workplace. However, remote work is not an automatic accommodation. **Manager:** A generic term that refers to the person who provides coaching and supervision to staff. **Types of work covered under the Remote Work Policy:** ☐ Permanent full-time ☐ Permanent part-time ☐ Full-time casual ☐ Part-time casual

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Section 3: Responsibilities of everyone involved	
Responsibilities of everyone involved	✓ Responsibilities of the employer/manager ✓ Responsibilities of staff members
Example	
Responsibilities of the employer/manager	• Provide staff with the equipment and supplies they need to work productively. • Establish an inclusive and appropriate work plan with clear expectations for productivity and performance. • Maintain constant communication with staff. • Adopt effective management practices (performance, attendance, communication) to ensure that staff who work remotely receive the coaching and mentoring they need to perform their duties. • Treat all members of the work team fairly and equitably, whether they work from home or not. • Provide computer or technical support as needed. • Notifying staff of electronic monitoring measures they may be subject to. • Provide face-to-face meetings in the workplace on a consistent and regular basis with staff. • Carry out other responsibilities arising from the application of the Remote Work Policy. • Provide information to all staff concerning health and safety at work. • Gain knowledge and raise awareness in the workplace of signs that a person may be experiencing DIPV. Read and promote the document: Signal For Help | Use Signal to Ask for Help | Canadian Women's Foundation and watch and promote: The secret hand signal that shows someone is a victim of domestic violence - please share - YouTube, (37)
Responsibilities of staff members	• Deliver a level of performance that meets the employer's requirements. • Respect the work schedule and make themselves available according to the terms of the established agreement. • Report to work (insert employer's physical address) when requested by the manager.

Section 3: Responsibilities of everyone involved	
	• Collaborate with co-workers to achieve the desired results. • Provide regular reports to the manager. • Use employer-owned equipment and supplies only to perform work required by the employer, unless specifically authorized. • At any point, employees may request to return to the office if they feel it is better for them, with no questions asked, e.g. feeling unsafe at home, difficult environment, mental health reasons, etc. • Notify the employer immediately if computer or telecommunications equipment is damaged or malfunctions or if computer or telecommunications equipment cannot be used. • Cover any costs associated with remote work that are not reimbursed by the employer. • Ensure that remote work complies with municipal and provincial regulations, as applicable. • Comply with the terms and conditions of employment, the collective agreement, applicable legislation and the employer's policies. • Read the document: Signal For Help | Use Signal to Ask for Help | Canadian Women's Foundation and watch The secret hand signal that shows someone is a victim of domestic violence - please share - YouTube (37) • If staff members see another staff member's signal for help sign, they must immediately contact the employer so appropriate action can be taken. • Inform the employer as soon as possible if additional needs for accommodations occur (e.g. modifying the work schedule).

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Section 4: Remote work eligibility criteria	
Remote work eligibility criteria	✓ Indicate the positions for which remote work is an option. ✓ Indicate the requirements for staff to be eligible to work remotely.
Example	
Remote work eligibility criteria	Positions that may be eligible for remote work include: - (Insert job title) - (Insert job title) To be authorized, remote work must meet the following criteria: • The nature of the work is such that it can be done remotely. • The quantity and quality of work must be maintained. • Results must be measurable. • Working remotely must not interfere with the efficiency of the employee, the department or the other team members. • Remote work must not impose additional costs on the employer. To be eligible to work remotely, staff members must: • Have successfully completed their probationary period. • Have demonstrated autonomy and professional responsibility. • Have an adequate and compliant workplace with respect to occupational health and safety. • Have reviewed the data privacy policy and signed an attestation to that effect. • Agree to cover the costs associated with the position. • Pledge to actively participate in all face-to-face meetings required by the employer. • Actively participate in virtual meetings with colleagues, clients, partners and the employer. • Commit to the remote work agreement.

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Section 5: Work conditions and arrangements	
Work conditions and arrangements	✓ Indicate staff obligations regarding work schedules. ✓ Indicate that approval is required for overtime work. ✓ Indicate whether staff must notify the employer when leaving home during work hours. ✓ Indicate how to proceed with leave requests. ✓ Indicate that staff are expected to be able to perform their work without undue interruptions during working hours.
Example	
Work conditions and arrangements	• The employee's status, salary, benefits, leave and other working conditions under existing HR policies remain unchanged. • The employee's duties and responsibilities will remain the same unless business needs change. • Remote work shall be on the employee's regular work schedule. • As with the employer's workplace, hours of work must be based on operational needs. • If the employer's worksite is closed due to inclement weather or an emergency, staff must continue to work at the remote work location until directed otherwise by their employer. • In the case of time-share remote work, the time and days of the week to be spent by staff at the employer's work location shall be determined by the employer and agreed upon as part of the remote work arrangement. • Any overtime must be authorized in advance by the employer. • Any leave requests (annual leave, sick leave, etc.) will be handled in the same manner as if the staff member were at the employer's worksite.

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Section 6: Communication and management	
Communication and management	✓ Indicate how remote workers are managed (frequency of meetings, results-based management, requirement for face-to-face follow-up meetings, etc.). ✓ Indicate communication protocols: o Availability of managers o Staff availability o Participation in virtual meetings ✓ Requirement for staff to stay informed of general communications. ✓ Indicate line of communication (who staff should report to).
Example	
Communication and management	**Communication** • Communication is the foundation of successful remote working. • During work hours, staff are expected to be available to their employer (via email, videoconference or telephone) or to their colleagues within a reasonable timeframe. • During working hours, the employer will respond to a request to meet (by email, video conference or telephone) within a reasonable timeframe. • The employer is responsible for creating opportunities for face-to-face discussions with staff who work remotely. **Management** • The objectives, deliverables and timelines are the same as if staff were working at the employer's workplace. • Performance appraisals of staff working under a remote arrangement are carried out in accordance with existing policies. • If staff members' work does not meet requirements, the authorization to remote work may be revoked.

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Section 7: Health and safety in the workplace	
Health and safety in the workplace	✓ Outline the employer's expectations for the workplace. ✓ Indicate the requirement for all staff to read the Canadian Women's Foundation's Signal For Help | Use Signal to Ask for Help | Canadian Women's Foundation (37) and watch The secret hand signal that shows someone is a victim of domestic violence.
Example	
Health and safety in the workplace	The *Occupational Health & Safety Act* states as follows: "This Act does not apply to a place of employment that is a private home unless the work that is carried on has been contracted to the employer of one or more persons employed at that private home." **Worker's Compensation Benefits** WorkSafeNB may accept a work-related injury or work-related illness claim for worker's compensation benefits if: • The injured worker meets the definition of a worker (as per the Workers' Compensation Act). • The employer is insured with WorkSafeNB. AND • The injury meets the conditions for compensation entitlement. To begin the claim process, workers must complete and submit an application form for workers' compensation benefits. **Health and safety** If a company supports flexible work arrangements, it must develop a clear policy and procedures for all employees who work remotely. A health and safety section must be included in these documents. Example of the health and safety portion of a Remote Work Policy 1. Employees • Only meet with clients in a public place (e.g. on company property), not at employees' homes or a clients' home. • Allow supervisors access to your home to investigate work-related injuries and/or illnesses. • Allow supervisors access to your home to assess it for work-related hazards.

Section 7: Health and safety in the workplace	
	• Consider supervisors' recommendations for control measures to minimize work-related hazards. • Report work-related hazards to your supervisor immediately. • Report injuries and illnesses to your supervisor immediately. • Allow supervisors access to daily/weekly schedules/calendars and notify a supervisor of any significant changes to your daily/weekly schedule. • Notify your supervisor when you are working at the office and not working from home. 2. Supervisors • Maintain contact with employees daily (via email, text, social media, etc.) • Confirm employees' personal contact information each year (as a minimum). • Confirm that employees have access to an employee assistant program (EAP). (Insert name of employer) considers the personal safety of its employees and the protection of its assets to be important. For this reason, guidelines are issued as part of the Remote Work Policy and are applied if staff members perform their duties from home. Therefore, each person performing duties from home (remote work) is expected to implement and enforce the following guidelines: (*add list of guidelines – employers can consult the following resources to write applicable guidelines: Computer Workstation Ergonomics and Working Safely from Home*). **Emergency procedures** • A basic first aid kit should be well stocked and located in or near the at-home office. • If staff feel a threat within their home during work hours, they should immediately notify the employer or another person within the organization. If calling for help puts them at risk, the person can use the "call for help sign" in a

Section 7: Health and safety in the workplace	
	confidential manner during a virtual meeting. See Signal for Help Canadian Women's Foundation's and watch The secret hand signal that shows someone is a victim of domestic violence (37) • If staff members see a co-worker signal for help, they must immediately contact the employer so appropriate action can be taken. • The employer and staff members may agree on a code word or phrase for reporting distress or urgent situations in confidence when it is not possible to use the signal for help. **Individualized workplace domestic and intimate partner violence safety plan** If an employee discloses domestic and intimate partner violence, the employer will consult the Individualized Workplace DIPV Safety Plan to seek guidance on how to address the employee's needs and to explore options and work arrangements. Other requirements depend on the employer, the type of work and the type of tasks.

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Section 8: Equipment and supplies	
Equipment and supplies	✓ Indicate what office equipment and supplies the employer provides. ✓ Indicate what the staff is responsible for.
Example	
Equipment and supplies	The employer must provide staff working remotely with all the tools and work equipment necessary to perform their duties efficiently and productively. This may include, but is not limited to, the following tools and equipment: • Desktop or laptop computer with a built-in camera. • Secondary monitor (depending on the nature of the work). • If two monitors are needed, a docking station must be included. • If staff are already using a secondary monitor at the employer's workplace, they can use a similar setup at home. • Privacy filter for the monitor. • Keyboard. • Mouse. • Headset. • Web camera. • Laptop power cord. • Laptop carrying bag. • Lockable case or briefcase for transporting confidential information. • Software. • Virtual private network (VPN) connection. • Office supplies (paper, pens, etc.). • Cell phone (if applicable). • No printers or scanners are provided at home. OR Employer will provide a printer and scanner on a case-by-case basis. Equipment remains the property of the employer and may only be used by staff in the course of their work duties. The employer may request the return of the equipment at any time and staff must return it to the employer in a timely manner.

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Section 9: Data security and privacy	
Data security and privacy	✓ Indicate what types of records can be kept in the home. ✓ State expectations for document or data storage. ✓ State the guidelines for printing documents at home. ✓ State the guidelines for moving confidential documents. ✓ State the expectations for confidentiality when exchanging data.
Example	
Data security and privacy	Staff working remotely are bound by the same confidentiality rules as those working at the employer's workplace. Staff are expected to: • Take steps to protect their user IDs and passwords. • Avoid leaving files or emails in plain view at the remote work location and lock their computer when they leave their workstation. • Take all necessary precautions to ensure the confidentiality of personal information (e.g. not disposing of paper including names, phone numbers, addresses or any other identifying information in the garbage at home). • Ensure that all telephone and online calls are made from a private setting to respect confidentiality and protect sensitive information. • Ensures that all confidential documents are locked in a dedicated filing cabinet. Other policies and procedures depend on the type of work or types of tasks.

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Section 10: Remote work approval, agreement and termination	
Remote work approval, agreement and termination	Approval ✓ Indicate who approves a request to work remotely. Agreement (document) ✓ Indicate what is included in the remote work arrangement: o Working conditions? o Probationary period? o Duration of the agreement? o Who must sign the agreement? o Revision of the agreement? o Termination of the agreement? o Mandatory attendance at occasional face-to-face meetings? o Expectations of staff? o Employer commitments? Termination ✓ Indicate who can terminate or end remote work and for what reasons.
Example:	
Remote work approval, agreement and termination	Approval • Remote work must be approved on a case-by-case basis. It is not a given; it is a privilege to be approved at the employer's discretion. OR • All employees of (insert employer's name) are on a remote work arrangement.
	Agreement The remote work agreement is defined as a separate document that outlines the requirements and commitments of both the employer and the employee. It is recommended that the following sections be included in the agreement: • Trial date period. • Duration of the agreement. • Expected performance and productivity requirements. • Employer's commitments regarding work supervision methods.

Section 10: Remote work approval, agreement and termination	
	• Date when the agreement will need to be reviewed. • Information that indicates under what conditions the agreement can be terminated. • Other parties as appropriate to the employer's circumstances. • Space for employer and staff signature. The agreement will not be considered complete until the employer reviews each section with the staff involved and ensures that it is fully understood and signed by both parties.
	Termination • The employer reserves the right to suspend or terminate the remote work authorization to ensure adequate service delivery or to support a staff member who may be in administrative, performance or disciplinary difficulty.

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Other resources

According to a survey of New Brunswick employers conducted by Restigouche Family Services in connection with this project, employers are looking for additional information on certain related topics.

It is important to note that not all resources are from New Brunswick. Legislation and information may vary from province to province. The following resources are presented as supplementary information. Therefore, professionals in the field should be consulted for advice on specific cases.

Understanding DIPV in the workplace and its signs

It's Your Business – A Domestic & Intimate Partner Violence Workplace Toolkit (NB) Home – It's Your Business – ToolkitNB

Trousse employeurs du Restigouche -Breaking Workplace Silence (NB): Breaking Workplace Silence (breaking-workplace-silence.ca)

Support for writing a remote work policy

Commission des normes de l'équité de la santé et de la sécurité au travail (available in French only) (QC):
Aide à la rédaction d'une politique sur le télétravail | Commission des normes de l'équité de la santé et de la sécurité du travail - CNESST (gouv.qc.ca)

Wonder.Legal Canada
Remote Work Policy - Sample, Template - Word & PDF (wonder.legal)

Ordre des conseillers en ressources humaines agréés (2020, septembre) (available in French only). (QC) Guide d'encadrement du télétravail pour l'employeur et l'employé.
http://www.portailrh.org/communique/2020-2021/pdf/guide-teletravail/CRHA_Guide_Teletravail-NM.pdf

Discussing your concerns with someone who is potentially experiencing DIPV

It's Your Business Toolkit on "Talking about Domestic Violence with an Employee":
https://www.toolkitnb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2019-065-Talking-About-Domestic-Violence-FR-Youtube-S.mp4

La VC/VPI, une responsabilité dans mon milieu de travail (QC) (available in French only):
SECTION 6 : Quoi faire quand une employée vient se confier à moi? - Violence conjugale au travail

Safety Plan – A Domestic & Intimate Partner Violence Workplace Toolkit (NB)
Safety Plan | ToolkitNB - TrousseNB
Videos | ToolkitNB - TrousseNB

Safer Families… Safer Communities – You Can Help Prevent and Respond to Abuse in Your Community
https://www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca/en/uploads/file/pdfs/Safer_Families_Prevention_Fact_Sheet_EN.pdf

Voisin-es, ami-es et familles (ON) (available in French only):
https://voisinsamisetfamilles.ca/comment-soutenir-une-collegue-ou-une-employee-aux-prises-avec-la-violence-conjugale/

Helping someone experiencing DIPV (community resources)

Love Shouldn't Hurt Campaign
www.gnb.ca/violence

Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick
PLEIS-NB • Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick: Abuse and Violence (legal-info-legale.nb.ca)

Women's Equality
Support Services for Victims of Abuse (gnb.ca)

WorkSafeNB
WorkSafeNB | Acts and Regulations

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35. Multiple references were used to suggest sections to be included in a Telework Policy. The references used are all detailed in the Reference section. Lessard, S. et Lafrance, M. (2020,

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37. This resource, which was developed by the Canadian Women's Foundation, represents a simple and cost-effective practice that employers can implement systematically in the workplace. Employers are strongly advised to ask their staff members to read the contents of this site Signal For Help | Use Signal to Ask for Help | Canadian Women's Foundation and watch The secret hand signal that shows someone is a victim of domestic violence.