

COVID-19



DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE AT WORK

Safely managing domestic violence risk in the
workplace during COVID - 19 isolation

For many employees, including survivors of domestic and family violence, home is not always a safe place.

In many cases, our homes are our new workplaces. This means employers are now required to manage domestic and family violence risk for employees working from home, just like they would for any other workplace hazard.



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OUR EXPERT



JANINE LEE

Janine Lee, Director of Domestic Violence Business Solutions, says: “traditionally, home has not been our predominant workplace. COVID-19 has rapidly changed that overnight. Now we have a significant proportion of the country working from home alone. This makes it extremely difficult for business leaders to keep connected with their people, recognise and mitigate occupational violence risk.”

The objective is for business leaders and employees to comply with new employer duty of care obligations and WHS standards for domestic violence while building on supportive, caring cultures. This means consulting with teams, providing employees with safe options and knowing how individuals can get help when they are experiencing domestic violence or abuse at home.

According to Janine, “Domestic violence is much more common than we realise, and reported rates are about to skyrocket. Abuse can affect anyone. It is essential to realise that many forms of violence are not physical.”



ACTION

“If there’s one thing I would recommend to leaders, it’s this: domestic violence at home is now your business. If you don’t have these difficult conversations with your teams now, it may end up costing thousands in workers’ compensation claims in months and years to come.”

OFFER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INFORMATION TO YOUR TEAMS TO WORK SAFELY FROM HOME

Safe Work Australia has provided significant updates and advice for employers in the wake of Coronavirus (COVID-19). Amid the many directions for employers, it is crucial to understand new domestic and family violence duty of care and WHS obligations.

Safe Work Australia

Working from home may change, increase or create work health or safety risks. To understand these risks, you must consult with workers.

Possible new risks include:

- *Psychological risks such as isolation, high or low job demands, reduced social support from managers and colleagues, fatigue, online harassment and family and domestic violence.*

You will still need to do what you reasonably can to manage the risks to a worker who works from home.¹

Managing these foreseeable risks can be tricky when business owners are drowning in COVID-19 challenges. “One of the biggest hurdles we faced pre-COVID-19 was getting by-in that domestic violence risk at home flowed into the workplace. Working from home has really changed this landscape,” says Janine Lee.

With DV specialist help to manage working from home risk, employers will avoid expensive reputational damage and workers’ compensation claims. Health and wellbeing of affected people and families will improve because they will be safer and feel safer, both at home and at work.

For more information, go to
<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/leave/family-and-domestic-violence-leave>



✓ HIGH-RISK

Domestic Violence Business Solutions provides insight here about what our Director, Janine Lee, believes are some of the most significant **high-risk factors** employers should know. If you believe any of these exist, contact us today to discuss the safest way to respond.

For further information on key risk factors of domestic and family violence go to <https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/CrisisAndEmergency/FDV/Documents/2015/FactSheet5Keyriskfactors.pdf>

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SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Employees could potentially become victims of sexual violence (sex without consent) while working from home by an abusive partner.

STALKING MONITORING

Employees in lock-down can become isolated very quickly, much like imprisonment, and every interaction may be monitored. Stalkers are more likely to be violent if they have had an intimate relationship with the employee.

SEPARATION CHILD CUSTODY

High-risk periods are before leaving, during and for at least 12 months after separation. COVID-19 is already being used as a control tactic of child custody by withholding children from a protected parent, e.g. not allowing children to visit or failing to return them after visits.

STRANGULATION

A precursor to death. We are learning more about strangulation, realising this is common. Strangulation causes brain injuries often with no external marks. Unconsciousness can happen within seconds, death within minutes or over time. Brain damage, dissection of the carotid arteries may result; causing stroke and early onset dementia.² *Serious assaults at work are costly.*

PREGNANCY

Employees who are in an abusive relationship while pregnant are at higher risk of ongoing violence and abuse

COERCIVE CONTROL

These are violent, intimidating or abusive behaviours used to control and dominate another through fear tactics. Acts of violence are patterns of behaviours designed to threaten, isolate and intimidate a person. It is always more than one incident.
For more information, search online for the Duluth Power and Control Wheel.



RESPONSE

“Clear direction and guidance will give employees the confidence to know what to do and how to help to be safer and feel safer. Your employees will never forget the way you left them feeling. When this is done safely, helping families in crises will reduce domestic violence and improve lives. This is the ultimate gift of human kindness and care.”

Janine Lee, Director
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With the right guidance, clear direction and communication from leadership teams during COVID-19 and beyond, everyone in your organisation will know how to safely respond to help a colleague who they suspect may be impacted by domestic violence and abuse.

Utilising the help of Domestic Violence Business Solutions and their DvSAFER™ and DvWORK™ safety accelerator programs, Janine Lee reports your teams will implement effective safety solutions frameworks and support for your business and employees. Janine suggests the following are some vital factors you must know how to apply:

- Recognise, assess and mitigate domestic violence workplace risks and hazards at any workplace location.
- Develop and implement individual and workplace safety plans.
- Take domestic and family violence special leave. Inform your employees of how this is activated and who to advise.
- Be prepared to know how to have difficult conversations.
- Understand your privacy obligations to your employees. Personal information should only be used or disclosed on a ‘need-to-know’ basis with consent from the affected employee.
- Ensure employees are informed of how their records will be kept, i.e. where their personal information will be held and how it will be kept secure when working remotely.
- Recognise how to support team members who are supporting affected employees. Self-care of others is vital, and the ripple flow-on effects may impact the psychological safety or wellbeing of others, e.g. colleagues, clients, contractors and family/home occupiers (in the case of working from home).
- Managers should know which domestic violence advisors or specialists they can contact for immediate support and guidance.



✓ TIPS

PROVIDING SAFETY SOLUTIONS TO OVER
11,000 FAMILIES FOR THE PAST 24 YEARS

OUR DIRECTOR, JANINE LEE, SHARES SOME VITAL TIPS...

Domestic Violence Business Solution's experience proves the right domestic violence safety and wellbeing responses are critical during COVID-19 to avoid reputational damage and harm to employees.

If you want to connect the dots and transform your business, please contact **Janine Lee on 0448 744 874** for more information.

Please know this

There are always, always options even when your employees say, *'there is nothing anyone can do.'*

Janine Lee, Director

Safety plans and employer duty of care responses are essential

Employer Tips to Assist Employees

1. Employees should never be fearful in their own homes.
2. Believe your employee. Domestic violence and abuse is not the fault of an employee – they have not created this situation and certainly are not doing anything to cause it to continue.
3. What happens at home will impact every aspect of an employee's life and the lives of their family and children. It will eat away at their health, their self-worth, quality of education, work, relationships, and confidence. It may change an employee's behaviour and decision-making, both at work and at home.



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