



Strengthening Job Opportunities for Survivors

Futures Without Violence in partnership with Women Employed and Corporation for a Skilled Workforce launched the **Pathways to Opportunity Initiative** focused on helping survivors of domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sexual harassment (DVSASSH) to obtain and maintain employment.

This resource provides information on the prevalence and impact of domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sexual harassment (DVSASSH) in the workplace, the economic consequences for survivors, and how communities can collaborate with the Pathways Initiative to strengthen employment pathways for survivors.

Key Term Definitions

- **Domestic Violence:** A pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another.
- **Dating Violence:** Violence committed by a person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim.
- **Sexual Assault:** Any nonconsensual sexual act proscribed by federal, tribal, or state law, including when the victim lacks capacity to consent.
- **Stalking:** A course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their or others' safety or suffer substantial emotional distress.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature.

(Source: Term Definitions from the CDC, VAWA and ILO)

■ The Impact of DVSASSH on the Workplace

DVSASSH it frequently manifests within work environments.
Research reveals concerning patterns.

Workplace Stalking

42% of people who experience stalking are stalked by someone they know but have never dated. Of them, 1 in 4 have met their stalker through work.
([SPARC/FUTURES](#))

Workplace Sexual Assault

In a 2019 study, 23% of women and 9% of men experienced workplace sexual assault.
([SA and the Workplace](#))

Escalating Harassment

97% of workplace sexual assault survivors reported experiencing escalating incidences of sexual harassment prior to the assault.
([SA and the Workplace](#))

Impact on Job Training and Skill Development

DVSASSH impacts a survivors' ability to access and complete education and training programs. According to research by the [Institute for Women's Policy Research \(2018\)](#), survivors face significant barriers in pursuing the skills and credentials needed for economic advancement. The trauma associated with DVSASSH can disrupt concentration, attendance, and the ability to engage fully in learning environments, creating additional obstacles to career development.

Mental Health, Trauma, and Workplace Productivity

The intersection of trauma and work performance is well-documented. Research from the [Corporation for a Skilled Workforce](#) found that people who have experienced two or more Adverse Childhood Events (ACES) are:

- **1.5** times more likely to have job difficulties.
- **1.4** times more likely to miss work.
- **1.8** times more likely to have financial problems.

([From Crisis to Resilience, 2024](#))

The Economic Toll: Unsupportive Employer Responses

When survivors disclose their experiences of DVSASSH to employers, the response they receive can advance their safety and economic stability or create additional harm. Unfortunately, many survivors encounter unsupportive or actively harmful responses:

Employer Action Following Disclosure	Domestic Violence	Dating Violence	Sexual Assault	Stalking
Created unsafe work environment	22%	17%	44%	32%
Denied promotion or opportunity	15%	21%	24%	19%
Harassment or discrimination	23%	23%	51%	26%

(The intersection of Work and Abuse, 2025)

Long-Term Economic Harms of DVSASSH

The economic impact of workplace harassment and violence can have far-reaching consequences.

Job Loss & Unemployment: Survivors may be forced to leave positions due to safety concerns, employer retaliation, or the inability to maintain performance while experiencing trauma.

Loss of Valuable Benefits: Leaving employment means losing access to pension contributions, health insurance, and other benefits. This can also reduce retirement security.

Credential and Education Costs: Survivors may need to invest in new degrees/credentials to change careers or rebuild opportunities, creating financial burden.

Contribution to the Gender Wage Gap: The disruption to careers and forced job changes contribute to lower lifetime earnings, particularly for women.

Damaged Credit Ratings: Financial instability from job loss or economic abuse can harm credit scores, limiting future housing and employment opportunities.

(Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2021)



Critical Employment Needs of Survivors

There are five areas of support that survivors need to obtain and maintain employment:

1. Access to Education and Skills Training

Survivors need flexible, trauma-informed educational and training opportunities. This includes programs that understand the impact of trauma on learning, provide accommodations for safety concerns, and offer supportive services alongside skill development. Training programs must be accessible, affordable, and designed to lead to fair and living wage jobs.

2. Access to Fair Wage Employment Opportunities

Economic security requires access to jobs that pay fair and living wages and offer opportunities for advancement. Survivors need pathways to careers that provide not just immediate income but long-term economic stability. This includes opportunities in high-demand fields, positions with benefits, and employers committed to supportive workplace practices.

Critical Employment Needs of Survivors cont.

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3. Supportive Services

Employment success requires addressing the full range of challenges survivors face. Wraparound services should include childcare assistance, transportation support, housing stability, legal services, safety planning, and mental health services. According to a [2022 Women Employed report](#), intersecting barriers create complex challenges that require coordinated, comprehensive support systems.

4. Protections Against Discrimination and Retaliation

Survivors need assurance that disclosing their experiences or seeking accommodations will not result in job loss, denied opportunities, or workplace harassment. State and federal legal protections exist, but enforcement and employer awareness remain critical gaps. Workplace policies must clearly prohibit retaliation and provide mechanisms for survivors to seek help safely.

5. Trauma-Informed Workplaces

Employers and workforce development organizations must understand how trauma impacts work performance and create environments that support employee safety and wellness. This includes flexible scheduling, privacy considerations, safety planning, accommodations, and supervisor training on responding to disclosures and safety concerns with empathy.