

# RECOGNIZING AND ADDRESSING UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

## A SUPPORTIVE GUIDE FOR VETERAN FAMILIES

This guide can help Veterans and Veteran Family members recognize signs of an unhealthy or abusive relationship and learn about tips for what to do in such a situation. It is our hope that this knowledge and understanding can help disrupt abuse and create pathways forward.





*This resource was prepared by the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families. The Atlas Institute would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions to this resource. Please note the names listed include only those who have explicitly consented to being acknowledged as a contributor.*

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[atlasveterans.ca/contributorship](https://atlasveterans.ca/contributorship)



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### ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide was co-created with an advisory group of Veterans, Family members, and other subject matter experts. Their expertise and insights shaped its content alongside research findings and other relevant evidence. Check out the References section for the full list of sources used to inform this guide. Small superscript numbers are included throughout to help readers identify the corresponding source in the reference list.

## A NOTE ON LANGUAGE IN THIS GUIDE

- There are different forms of abuse. Abuse can occur in many different types of relationships. The term “intimate partner violence (IPV)” refers specifically to harm done to a person by their current or former spouse or romantic or dating partners. This type of abuse is the focus of this guide.
- Because violence can take many different forms, you will notice “IPV” or “abuse” both used throughout the guide. We use “IPV” when referring generally to the issue and “abuse” when highlighting specific aspects or examples.
- Anyone can experience abuse or engage in abusive behaviours. The guide uses gender-neutral language when referring to those *using* or *experiencing* abuse.
- People who experience abuse may identify with different terms, such as survivor, victim or others. We have opted to use “person experiencing abuse” based on preferences shared by our advisory group members.
- The term “Veteran” refers to both those who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). However, the lived and professional expertise that informed the development of this guide primarily related to CAF Veterans and their Family members. As a result, the unique experiences of RCMP Veteran Families may not be captured.

# WHY IS THIS GUIDE NEEDED?

IPV affects many people around the world, including in Canada. Like other Canadians, Veterans and their Family members may be susceptible to using or experiencing abuse.

There is limited research on experiences of IPV specifically in Canadian Veteran Families. Data from research conducted in other countries with both currently serving and former military members gives us some information about the extent of the issue<sup>1,2</sup>:

- Around one in eight (13%) of those surveyed reported using abuse in their intimate relationships
- Around one in five (21%) reported experiencing abuse in their intimate relationships
- IPV may be more common among military than civilian populations



To learn more about IPV in the military and Veteran community, including how common it is or different types of programs used to address it, check out the Atlas Institute's research-related resources: [atlasveterans.ca/ipv](https://atlasveterans.ca/ipv)

# WHAT IS IPV?

IPV involves any behaviour that is harmful, threatening, controlling or dominating done to a person by their current or former spouse or romantic or dating partners. It can manifest in different ways, take various forms and result in different types of harm<sup>3-9</sup>. In many cases, the abuse occurs over time, though in some cases it can be a single and lethal act.

Here are some types and forms of abuse:

## TYPES

### Coercive control

Abuse is used by one partner to exert power and gain control over the other partner.

### Situational couple violence

Abuse is used spontaneously without a desire for power or control. This type of abuse can be used by one or both partners.

## FORMS



### Physical

Using force against a partner, including weapons or other objects, to inflict pain or injury. Some examples are punching, biting, throwing objects or grabbing a person's face.



### Sexual

Forcing or coercing (i.e. using threats, fear or deception) a partner into sexual actions or activities. Some examples are unwanted kissing or touching or distributing sexually explicit photos without consent.



### Emotional

Using hurtful words to damage a partner's self-esteem, sense of worth or confidence, including damaging their relationships with others. Some examples are name-calling, putting someone down or intentionally embarrassing them.



### Psychological

Using words, actions or behaviours that aim to control or intimidate a partner. Some examples are stalking or threatening harm to oneself, the partner or their loved ones (including pets).

## FORMS *(continued)*



### **Financial**

Restricting access to or intentionally misusing a partner's money or resources (e.g. property). Some examples include preventing a partner from working to keep them financially dependent, preventing access to shared accounts or using their accounts or information without permission (e.g. credit cards).



### **Spiritual**

Not allowing a partner to express their culture. Some examples include preventing a partner from participating in religious ceremonies or rituals, wearing traditional clothing or using their language.



### **Technological**

Using technology, such as mobile devices, cameras, computers or software and programs as a means to abuse a partner. Some examples include sending threatening emails or messages or using location tracking or social media to monitor a partner's activities.



### **Reproductive**

Forcing or coercing a partner into reproductive choices, decisions or actions. Some examples include sabotaging contraception methods, refusing to use contraception, pressuring or preventing abortion, or lying about contraception.

#### **Check out:**



- The Atlas Institute's video on different types and forms of intimate partner violence for more information and examples: [atlasveterans.ca/ipv-video-overview](https://atlasveterans.ca/ipv-video-overview)
- The power and control wheel for more information on these specific abuse tactics, with examples from the military context: [bit.ly/military-power-control-wheel](https://bit.ly/military-power-control-wheel)

# WHAT INCREASES RISK WITHIN VETERAN FAMILIES?

There are certain factors that may increase risk of using or experiencing abuse within military or Veteran Families<sup>2,4,10-22</sup>. In addition, key factors within the military or Veteran context can continue the cycle of abuse or make it difficult for someone to get support when they need it.

**Here are some key factors specific to the military and Veteran Family context that can increase risk:**





Experiencing any of these factors does not mean that abuse will necessarily occur. Rather, it increases the possibility, especially when more than one of these are experienced by a person, couple or Family. Many people who experience these risk factors do not experience or use abuse in their relationships – every path is different.

Certain people may experience additional layers of risk based on aspects of their identity or background. Sometimes these characteristics come together and interact with one another. This is known as **intersectionality**. Someone's risk for or experience of abuse can vary based on a number of factors, including but not limited to<sup>22-25</sup>:

- Age
- Culture
- Education
- Gender identity
- Income
- Marital status
- Mental health
- Nationality
- Physical health
- Race or ethnicity
- Sexual orientation
- Where they live

## WHAT ARE SOME COMMON MYTHS AND THEIR REALITY?



It is important to be aware of false beliefs and stereotypes<sup>22,26-29</sup>. These myths can influence how you and others think about abuse.



### MYTH

People engage in abusive behaviours because they have experienced trauma.



### REALITY

Previous trauma can be a *risk factor* for using violence or experiencing violence in relationships<sup>2,4,16</sup>. However, **trauma is never an excuse for abusive behaviour**.



### MYTH

People who served in the military engage in abusive behaviours because their job made violence, power and control seem normal (e.g. Family members seen as troops).



### REALITY

**Aspects of military culture do not cause abuse**, but they can increase the risk for abuse in relationships<sup>2, 4, 10-22</sup>.



### MYTH

PTSD is responsible for the abuse.



### REALITY

**Having PTSD neither causes abuse nor justifies harming others.** Most people with PTSD have never used abusive behaviour in their relationships. Some symptoms of PTSD may also look similar to signs of abuse. Check out the [PTSD and IPV](#) section for more information.



### MYTH

IPV is not that common.



### REALITY

Available data shows us that **IPV is commonly reported among currently serving and Veteran populations**, though underreporting remains a serious issue<sup>1</sup>.



### MYTH

Only women experience abuse. Only men engage in abusive behaviours.



### REALITY

**Anyone can experience abuse.** That said, IPV tends to have greater effects on women, including in terms of its severity and impacts. Data from the general Canadian population shows that women are more likely to be killed by their intimate partner, with the majority of these homicides being committed by men<sup>30-32</sup>.



### MYTH

The abuse will stop on its own.



### REALITY

**Abuse rarely stops on its own and can escalate quickly. For some, abuse can even end in death.** Data from Statistics Canada shows that between 2009 and 2022, nearly one-fifth of solved homicides were committed by an intimate partner<sup>30</sup>.



### MYTH

Abuse isn't a problem within Veteran Families because aspects of military training (e.g. discipline) help prevent it.



### REALITY

**Military training prepares people for service and to perform activities within the military context.** It does not necessarily prevent abuse. There are many factors of military culture that increase risk of abuse within intimate relationships, some of which are outlined on [page 8](#). Similarly, there are also other factors that lessen risk, such as community or social support<sup>33</sup>.



### MYTH

The abuse only happens in certain situations (e.g. while drinking) so it is not really an issue.



### REALITY

**No one should experience any form of abuse in their relationship.** Abuse is always an issue, regardless of when or how it occurs. Though it is true that use of alcohol and drugs may play a role in violent behaviour<sup>1</sup>, it is only part of the explanation.



### MYTH

Abuse is always provoked. Both people are responsible.



### REALITY

**Abuse is *always* the fault of the person choosing to use it.** In some situations, a person may engage in abusive behaviour to defend themselves from abuse. This is sometimes known as violent resistance and is a form of self-defence.



### MYTH

It is not physical so it is not abuse.



### REALITY

**Abuse can take many forms.** Not all abuse involves physical harm or injury. It also includes psychological and emotional harm. Abusive behaviours can be used to cause harm directly or indirectly. With direct harm, a person uses abuse to cause immediate and personal harm to their partner. With indirect harm, a person is abusive towards others (e.g. children or pets) to harm and gain power and control over their partner.



#### MYTH

Acknowledging abuse means the end of a relationship.



#### REALITY

**You do not necessarily need to end a relationship if there are signs of abuse.** Change is possible in some situations and consideration of safety is of the utmost importance. Every situation and circumstance is different. Your doctor, case manager or other professionals (e.g. staff at Military Family Resource Centres, community clinics or Family advocacy organizations) can go over different options with you and help you figure out what is best for you and your situation.



#### MYTH

If it were really that bad, they'd leave.



#### REALITY

**There are numerous reasons why someone might stay in their relationship after experiencing some form of abuse** (e.g. safety, kids, career or financial implications, stigma related to challenging authority). For more information on barriers in the military or Veteran context, check out the Atlas Institute's video: [atlasveterans.ca/ipv-video-barriers](https://atlasveterans.ca/ipv-video-barriers).

Also, **people may struggle to recognize or accept when they are experiencing abuse.** Leaving an abusive partner – especially for women – is the most dangerous period of time<sup>34</sup>.





## IS THERE A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PTSD AND IPV?

The link between PTSD and IPV is complex<sup>35-43</sup> and it is important not to stigmatize people with mental health conditions. People with PTSD, including Veterans, are not prone to violence. In fact, people with mental health conditions like PTSD are more likely to experience abuse than to use it<sup>17,35-37</sup>.

Research shows that other issues that may co-occur, such as alcohol misuse and problematic anger, as well as exposure to intense and frequent combat stressors, play a stronger role in predicting future violence than PTSD alone<sup>38,41-43</sup>. It is also important to consider what the person's behaviour was before they developed PTSD, as a history of violent behaviour is one of the strongest predictors of future violence<sup>44</sup>.



On the surface, certain behaviours may appear similar<sup>4,39</sup>. Distinguishing between the two is important in understanding what you are experiencing or observing.

PTSD		IPV
People with PTSD may re-experience feelings and sensations related to trauma through flashbacks, nightmares or (more rarely) night terrors. In some cases, a partner may be unintentionally injured (e.g. thrashing during night terrors).		Abuse tactics often involve intentional, repeated and distinct patterns of behaviour. These often occur outside of sleep and in situations where there is no trauma trigger.
People with PTSD often avoid reminders of the trauma. Sometimes, this leads them to withdraw from their usual social circles and activities. Family members may also find themselves inadvertently isolating themselves to support their loved one.		A common abuse tactic is purposefully and deliberately isolating or cutting a partner off from their Family members or friends. This is done in order to control their whereabouts and activities.
People with PTSD may have negative thoughts or feelings about themselves, those around them, or a situation or location. They may have difficult feelings like anger, guilt or fear, find it hard to feel positive or find it difficult to trust others.		Abuse tactics often include the use of negative emotions as a way to control a partner (e.g. acting hot and cold by switching between showing intense affection and being withdrawn or distant, using insults, making threats, bad moods).
People with PTSD often struggle with feeling on-edge and reactive, known as arousal and reactivity. They may become easily irritable and may experience angry outbursts.		Anger is an important emotion and helpful if expressed appropriately. For some, abusive behaviours result from uncontrolled anger and aggression.



Check out our tip sheets developed in partnership with Phoenix Australia to recognize when anger might be a problem and what do when it becomes problematic for your relationships: [atlasveterans.ca/problematic-anger-resources](https://atlasveterans.ca/problematic-anger-resources)



## ARE THERE **SIGNS OF ABUSE** IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP?

There are several different abusive behaviours that can occur in relationships<sup>1,4,21,45</sup>. Sometimes these behaviours may be hard to notice or are not recognized as abuse. Just like every relationship is different, these behaviours may not always look the same. Abusive behaviours can also arise over time and can change in form or intensity.

Some relationships may start off as healthy and then become unhealthy or abusive. Unhealthy relationships often involve a lack of communication, mistrust, dishonesty, disrespect, power imbalances and limited social connectedness (e.g. only spending time with your partner).

The *Intimate Relationships Continuum* highlights how relationships can range from healthy to abusive, with unhealthy being somewhere in between. The Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services website has more information and can help you assess where your relationship may lie on this continuum: [bit.ly/cfmws-intimate-relationship-continuum](https://bit.ly/cfmws-intimate-relationship-continuum)

Unhealthy relationships are not necessarily abusive,  
but **all abusive relationships are unhealthy.**

## DO ANY OF THESE WORDS DESCRIBE YOUR RELATIONSHIP?

### Feelings about your relationship

Unsafe, fearful, insecure, on-edge, tense, shameful, hurtful



### Power dynamics

One-sided, unequal, controlling, restricting, monitoring



### Interactions (including words and actions)

Harmful, hurtful, insulting, intimidating, threatening, demeaning, mocking, guilt-tripping, shaming, forcing, ignoring, absent, controlling, lying, denying, blaming, coercing, possessive, stalking



### How emotions like anger are expressed

Destructive, manipulative, volatile, threatening, explosive, unpredictable, raging, uncontrolled



### Conflict resolution

Ignoring, blaming, antagonizing, escalating, minimizing, retaliating



### Social connections

Jealousy, withdrawing, isolating, surveillance, monitoring, restricting



**Note:** The presence of any of these behaviours does not necessarily mean that your relationship is abusive. **Warning signs mean there is a potential risk for abuse and that the relationship may not be healthy.** It is important to consider your specific situation when reflecting on these signs. If you are unsure about your relationship, there are organizations that you can discuss your situation with. Access a list of provincial/territorial services here: [bit.ly/phac-family-violence-resources](https://bit.ly/phac-family-violence-resources)

# WHAT CAN BE DONE IF YOUR RELATIONSHIP HAS BECOME UNHEALTHY OR ABUSIVE?

If you think you are in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, it is important to know that you are not alone and that you deserve help.

You may be wondering what your options are. Different situations may need different types or levels of support<sup>46,47</sup> — for example, relationships involving elements of coercive control typically need more intensive, formal support. Support can be informal (e.g. from friends or Family members) or formal (e.g. from advocacy organizations, police or health care professionals).

## GETTING SUPPORT CAN BE HELPFUL FOR VARIOUS REASONS<sup>48</sup>:



Receive comfort, reassurance and empathy



Identify healthy versus unhealthy behaviours



Learn about useful tools and strategies for managing challenging situations



Improve confidence in yourself and your abilities



Learn tips and strategies for healthy relationships (e.g. resolving arguments)



Help with access to specialized services (e.g. safety plans, shelter, legal aid)



Obtain information for supporting others (e.g. your children)



Create opportunities for dialogue and connection



The pathway to support is not always linear, though there are typically three key stages<sup>49</sup>:

1. Recognizing the problem
2. Deciding to get help
3. Choosing form(s) of support

It may feel overwhelming at times and you may not know where to start. You may even try to get help multiple times from different places before you decide to actually make some changes. It's important to remember that **support is available** and that **any delayed or failed attempts to get support do not reflect your strength of character or self-worth**.

Note that availability of services and supports will depend on your location. If you live in a rural area or small community, it may be more challenging to find services<sup>50</sup>. There may be other barriers too, such as stigma or privacy concerns. Your province or territory's victim services can help you get more information on local resources: [bit.ly/victim-services-directory](https://bit.ly/victim-services-directory)



# HERE ARE SOME **SUPPORT OPTIONS** TO CONSIDER REGARDLESS OF YOUR NEEDS OR CURRENT SITUATION

**Note:** The Atlas Institute can not make any guarantees about the quality of resources listed.



## TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Your well-being is important. Any emotions you may be feeling (or not feeling) are completely okay. Do things that work for you and for your situation.

### Some ideas to get started:

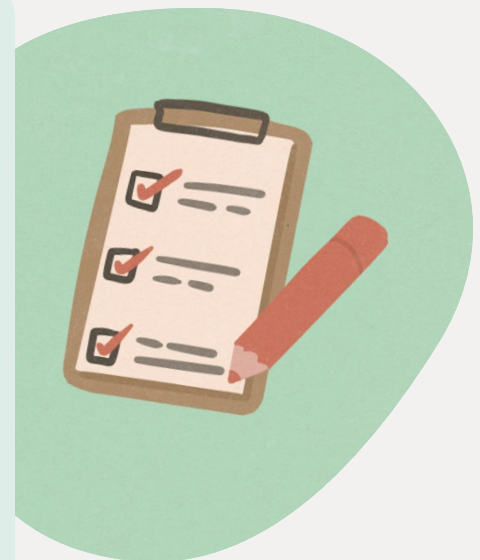
- Try to eat regularly, get rest and maintain your health (e.g. brushing your teeth, drinking water)
- Engage in activities or hobbies that bring you happiness
- Spend some time each day practising mindfulness (e.g. journalling, deep breathing, meditating)
- Surround yourself with supportive and trusted people
- Attend a peer support group or a counselling session
- Practise positive self-talk

## PRIORITIZE SAFETY AND CREATE A PLAN

Safety should always be a priority. Create a plan that outlines strategies you can use for safety when you experience abuse. This can include safety across different situations and contexts (e.g. in public, in your home, when leaving), as well as for your children. Your plan can be created with another trusted person (like a friend or doctor) and should be updated regularly. You should keep your plan hidden.

### Here are some resources to learn more:

- **Creating a safety plan** (Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services)  
A free online resource with different suggestions for maintaining safety: [bit.ly/cfmws-create-a-safety-plan](https://bit.ly/cfmws-create-a-safety-plan)
- **iHeal app** (Public Health Agency of Canada)  
A free mobile app to help find personalized information and options, including safety planning: [ihealapp.ca](https://ihealapp.ca)
- **Risk management plan tool** (iDetermine)  
A free tool to guide personalized safety planning when leaving an abusive relationship: [idetermine.ca/risk-management-plan](https://idetermine.ca/risk-management-plan)





## REACH OUT FOR ADVICE OR SUPPORT

Telling someone else about what is happening can be helpful. In addition to advice and support, talking to others can remind that you are not alone. In some cases, they can also help connect you with specialized services in your area or help you navigate available services and supports.

### Here are some ideas for people you could reach out to:

- Trusted Family members or friends
- Trusted neighbours or members of your spiritual community
- Community welfare organizations (e.g. Military Family Resource Centres)
- Family doctor or other health care providers
- Hospitals or community health clinics
- Crisis lines or other services
  - **Veterans Affairs Canada Assistance Service:** 1-800-268-7708
  - **Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre:** 1-844-750-1648
  - **HOPE for Wellness Helpline:** 1-855-242-3310
  - **Suicide Crisis Line:** 9-8-8
  - **Trans Lifeline:** 1-877-330-6366

If you are in immediate danger, dial 9-1-1 (or contact your local RCMP detachment in Nunavut).

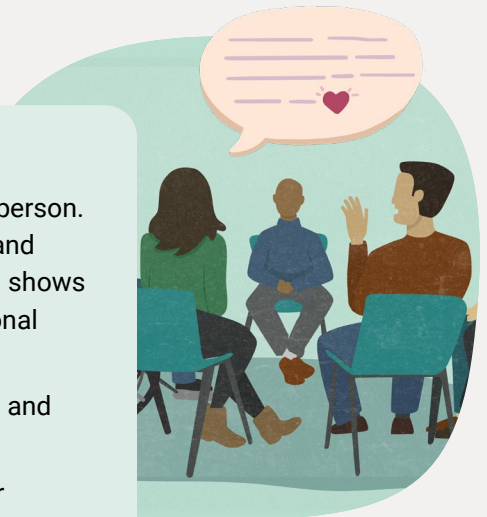
## ACCESS MENTAL HEALTH AND/OR PEER SUPPORT

There are formal mental health services available, both virtually and in person. This could include dedicated help for yourself (e.g. individual therapy) and separate help for you and your partner (e.g. couples therapy). Research shows that couples therapy can be helpful in some situations, such as situational couple violence<sup>51</sup>.

- Visit the Atlas Institute's directory of resources for more counselling and therapy options: [atlasveterans.ca/directory-of-services](https://atlasveterans.ca/directory-of-services)

Another type of support is peer support, which may be a helpful tool for navigating experiences of IPV by offering information, lessening stigma and providing the opportunity to learn from a role model<sup>52</sup>. Peer support may be used alongside therapy or other formal mental health supports.

- Check out the Atlas Institute's webpage to find information on peer supports specific to the Veteran Family community (e.g. Operational Stress Injury Social Support) as well as a directory of programs near you: [atlasveterans.ca/peer-support](https://atlasveterans.ca/peer-support)





## FIND SPECIALIZED SUPPORTS OR SERVICES

There are a number of organizations that offer services and supports specifically to help address the needs of those experiencing abuse. These could include things like finding safe housing, obtaining credit or financial counselling, or receiving legal counselling.

Here are a few options to help you find resources near you and start developing a list of local supports that you could reach out to:

- **Ending Violence Association of Canada** — services and supports available across Canada: [endingviolencecanada.org/getting-help](https://endingviolencecanada.org/getting-help)
- **Public Health Agency of Canada** — Family violence resources and services: [bit.ly/phac-family-violence-resources](https://bit.ly/phac-family-violence-resources)
- **Public Health Agency of Canada** — information and resources for men experiencing abuse: [bit.ly/phac-ipv-men](https://bit.ly/phac-ipv-men)
- **ShelterSafe** — safe houses or shelters nearby, including pet accommodation: [sheltersafe.ca/get-help](https://sheltersafe.ca/get-help)
- **Support Tool for Economic Abuse Recovery (STEAR)** — information and resources related to economic abuse: [ccfwe.org/stear-app](https://ccfwe.org/stear-app)
- **Tech Safety Canada** — information and resources related to technological abuse and staying safe online: [techsafety.ca/for-survivors](https://techsafety.ca/for-survivors)
- **Women and Gender Equality Canada** — resources on gender-based violence: [bit.ly/wage-gender-based-violence-resources](https://bit.ly/wage-gender-based-violence-resources)



## CONSIDER FILING A POLICE REPORT

Filing a police report is never required and there are many reasons why a person may choose not to. For the most part, you are in control of any decisions regarding legal processes, though anyone can report a crime and police may opt to file charges with or without your consent. When children are involved, child welfare services may launch their own investigation at the same time. Check out our conversation guide on supporting children exposed to IPV for more information on myths and their realities associated with these types of investigations: [atlasveterans.ca/ipv-guide-children](https://atlasveterans.ca/ipv-guide-children). There are services available to help you understand your rights and potential outcomes:

- **Victim services** offer information and support to people who have been impacted by crime. A directory is available online: [bit.ly/victim-services-directory](https://bit.ly/victim-services-directory)
- **Legal aid and community clinics** offer advice and assistance for low-income Families. Some specialize specifically in IPV.
  - **Rebâtir (Rebuild)** — a free, confidential legal aid service that specializes in cases of abuse: [rebatir.ca](https://rebatir.ca)
- **Lawyer referral services** are offered by provincial or territorial law societies to help you get connected to a lawyer or paralegal: [bit.ly/lawyer-referral-services](https://bit.ly/lawyer-referral-services)
  - If you are employed and have access to an employee and family assistance program, check to see if it offers options for legal assistance services.
- **Family violence support services** can provide supports when children are involved: [bit.ly/family-violence-support-services](https://bit.ly/family-violence-support-services)



## LEARN MORE ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS AND ABUSE

Here are some resources that you can use to learn more about abuse, relationships and more:

- **Healthy relationships:** A collection of tip sheets on maintaining healthy intimate relationships for military and Veteran Families: [bit.ly/cfmws-healthy-relationships-tip-sheets](https://bit.ly/cfmws-healthy-relationships-tip-sheets)
- **Supporting friends in unhealthy relationships:** An online course for individuals whose friends or Family members may be experiencing abuse: [bit.ly/cfmws-ipv-friends-course](https://bit.ly/cfmws-ipv-friends-course)
- **Abuse is wrong:** Provides an overview of different types of abuse, answers to commonly asked questions and types of service providers and personnel that support those experiencing abuse: [bit.ly/abuse-is-wrong](https://bit.ly/abuse-is-wrong)
- **Tech Safety Canada:** A resource hub with information and strategies to keep yourself safe from technology-facilitated abuse: [techsafety.ca](https://techsafety.ca)



If there are children in your home, they may be affected by the abuse even if they do not hear or witness it<sup>53</sup>. Check out our guide for trauma-informed tips and strategies for supporting and talking to children as well as a curated list of child-specific resources: [atlasveterans.ca/ipv-guide-children](https://atlasveterans.ca/ipv-guide-children)

## WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO THE PERSON ENGAGING IN ABUSIVE BEHAVIOURS?

In addition to potential legal repercussions, there are also health and social programs available<sup>54-58</sup>. Some of these programs focus specifically on remedying abusive behaviours while others focus on developing key skills or addressing underlying behaviours. In some cases, the person may take accountability for their actions and get help on their own. In other cases, programs or treatment may be mandated (i.e. required).

## TREATMENT PROGRAMS

There are also services and supports for people who engage in abusive behaviours. Admitting that these behaviours are unhealthy or wrong and accepting responsibility takes courage and is necessary for change. Getting treatment may feel overwhelming (e.g. feeling shame or not knowing what is available) and exploring different options can be a good first step.

**There are various types of treatment programs available for people who engage in abusive behaviours**<sup>51,53,54</sup>.

- They may enrol in specialized community-based programs focused on stopping or preventing abusive behaviours (known as intervention programs). These are typically group-based and may be free or available for a fee, depending on the program. In some cases, the program may include support for the partner experiencing abuse too.
  - These programs may be specific to military or Veteran Families or offered more broadly within the community (i.e. including civilians).
  - Some examples are **Caring Dads** ([bit.ly/caring-dads](http://bit.ly/caring-dads)), **Stop Taking it Out on your Partner** ([bit.ly/john-howard-society-stop](http://bit.ly/john-howard-society-stop)), **Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program** (PREP, Inc.) – **Get Better Together** ([bit.ly/prep-inc-get-better-together](http://bit.ly/prep-inc-get-better-together)) or **Strength at Home** ([bit.ly/strength-at-home](http://bit.ly/strength-at-home)).
  - Educational or skills-based workshops are not always helpful<sup>56</sup>, but they may be beneficial for certain situations (e.g. situational couple violence).
- They may get mental health support more broadly. This could help address other problems that could be contributing to or perpetuating the abuse (e.g. alcohol or drug abuse). Depending on the situation, this could include individual, couples or Family counselling.
- The counselling approach used should be appropriate for the form of abuse (e.g. couples therapy may not be helpful for relationships involving coercive control, but may be helpful for situational couple violence)<sup>51,56,59</sup>.

## LEGAL REPERCUSSIONS

If a formal police report or complaint is made, they may face criminal and civil legal repercussions<sup>56-58</sup>.

- They may be convicted of a crime if their behaviour falls within the Criminal Code of Canada.
  - Examples of criminal offenses often seen in abuse include: stalking/ harassment, uttering threats, sexual assault, forcible confinement, mischief<sup>57</sup>.
  - They may receive weapons restrictions included as part of their sentencing, depending on the nature of their crime.
  - Being convicted can have a serious impact on one's military career and post-service life, including potential discharge, loss of security clearance and difficulty finding employment.

## LEGAL REPERCUSSIONS *(continued)*

- They may be required to enrol in specialized intervention programs for people who engage in abusive behaviours:
  - These programs are typically paid for by provincial or territorial governments, with referrals made through courts or probation and parole offices.
  - Each province or territory may use different court-mandated programs<sup>56,58</sup>.
  - Specialized intervention programs may be helpful when certain features of abuse are present (e.g. situational couple violence)<sup>60</sup>, though they can sometimes offer few benefits or unintended results<sup>51,59,61</sup>.
- They may be subject to a restraining or protection order, which place restrictions on contact and have legal consequences if they are breached.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- IPV can happen in Veteran Families.
- Certain factors may make Veteran Families more at risk.
- Signs of abuse or help needed can vary. Every situation and relationship is different.
- If you are experiencing abuse, you are not alone — help is available.
- There are supports for those affected by abuse, but what's available may depend on where you live.



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