

VIOLENCE/ZERO TOLERANCE

To **Work**  
in  
**Dignity**

COUNTERACT VIOLENCE  
IN THE WORKPLACE



FÉDÉRATION  
INTERPROFESSIONNELLE  
DE LA SANTÉ DU QUÉBEC



# VIOLENCE – what is it exactly?

Violence is exercised as an act of power and is linked to the concept of domination and constraint. Violence exists “in all cases where a person tries to impose his/her will on another person, whether by physical force, verbal threats, humiliation, etc.”

Violence can be expressed between individuals in a power situation, one against the other, but it can also be expressed collectively by a group of individuals in a position of power over other groups.

Violence towards women is the expression of unequal relationships between men and women aimed at keeping women in a position of subordination. **This is gender-based violence.**

Violence towards people belonging to racialized groups reflects unequal relationships and the domination of one group over another. This can take the form of racial discrimination, among others. **This is racial violence.**

Violence towards homosexual people is also an expression of unequal relationships between people with different sexual orientations. **This is homophobic violence.**

# VIOLENCE AT WORK

can take different forms.

**PHYSICAL:** use of physical force or means likely to affect the physical integrity of a person.

Ex.: assaults, aggressions and attempted murders.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL:** vexatious behaviour in the form of conduct, verbal comments, repeated undesired or hostile actions or gestures, which affect an employee's dignity or psychological or physical integrity and that result in a harmful work environment for the employee.

Ex.: being the victim of isolation or threats, being discredited, humiliated, threatened or rejected, being slandered.

**SEXUAL:** all the gestures, comments or advances of a sexual nature towards a person, implying a notion of coercion or implicit refusal, whatever the context and the nature of the relationship between the people involved.

Ex.: advances, erotic insinuations, obscene language or gestures, lustful or suggestive looks, inappropriate or insistent propositions, pornographic or obscene images, sexual touching.

Violence can be direct, indirect or systemic, but whatever the nature it takes, violence is unacceptable!

FOR THESE REASONS THE FIQ  
ADVOCATES ***ZERO TOLERANCE***  
**TOWARDS VIOLENCE.**



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“ Gender-based violence is possibly the most common violation of human rights and the most tolerated by society. ... [It] represents a significant obstacle in the reduction of poverty, in the equality of the sexes [...] It reflects, and at the same time, reinforces the inequalities between men and women and compromises the health, dignity, safety and independence of its victims.”

Source : United Nations Population Fund-UNFPA,  
State of World Population 2005, Chapter 7,  
“Gender-based violence : A Price Too High”, 2005,  
web site <[www.unfpa.org](http://www.unfpa.org)>

# VIOLENCE HURTS!

The consequences of violence can be serious and take many forms.

**There can be considerable consequences for the victim:**

- loss of self-esteem and the confidence in her abilities
- increase in stress
- anxiety
- loss of satisfaction and motivation at work
- injuries and physical problems
- depression, alcoholism, drug addiction or post-traumatic stress

**The consequences of not intervening in a situation of violence can also be significant for the work environment:**

- an increase in absenteeism
- an increase in the turnover rate
- recruitment difficulties
- tension among members of the team
- deterioration of the climate
- increase in the risk of errors.

**IT IS IN THE EMPLOYERS' BEST  
INTERESTS TO TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO  
STOP VIOLENCE IN  
THE WORKPLACE.**



It is important to make the distinction between conflicts and violence in order to be able to identify situations of violence.

In a case of violence, the aggressor is looking to establish his power through violence and to dominate the other person. The violence causes the victim to be afraid and to have a feeling of powerlessness.

Furthermore, in a conflict situation, each party is looking to convince the other that she is right. There can be aggressive behaviour during the argument, but essentially, there is a disagreement and not a desire to control or to exercise power over the other person. Serious conflicts require particular attention, without which they can degenerate into hyper-conflicts, become difficult to resolve and lead to violent behaviours.



In most cases, the care professional who believes that she has been adversely affected by virtue of the collective agreement does not hesitate to submit a grievance. It is quite another story for the one who is a victim of violence. Violence affects self-esteem, the person questions her judgment, she is engulfed with feelings of shame and guilt. It is therefore difficult for her to talk about and denounce the situation. Consequently, measures must be taken to help those people experiencing situations of violence to break their silence.

For these reasons the Federation promotes feminist principles which must guide any intervention in violence at work:

**A favourable bias:** From the start, it is imperative to listen to and believe the victim, without blaming her, judging her or making her feel guilty, in order to establish trust.

**Respecting confidentiality:** The employee who is a victim of violence, must first be assured that her account of the incident will remain confidential, that she is in control of the complaint and that she can stop the process at any time if she so desires.

Violence must not be tolerated nor trivialized!

If you are a witness or a victim of violence, do not hesitate! Talk to your union representatives.

**THE STATUS OF WOMEN REPRESENTATIVE AND  
YOUR UNION TEAM – THEY ARE ALLIES!**

The position of the FIQ on the question of violence is clear. In its declaration of principles, the Federation committed to the promotion and defence of the rights of women, to publicly denounce the inequalities and prejudices that they suffer, as well as to pursue the fight against poverty and violence.

“Our Federation committed many years ago to fight against all forms of violence. Even if progress has been made in the fight against violence towards women, we must remain vigilant and stand together to break the wall of silence that surrounds it in order to prevent and control it. To better support you in this battle, your Federation has updated its reference framework to counteract violence in the workplace and has published a new edition of the brochure entitled, **To Work in Dignity**. I sincerely hope that this tool helps you in the fight for a workplace free of violence. Trivialization of violence must stop so that care professionals can finally work in an environment that is respectful of people.”

Michèle Boisclair, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President

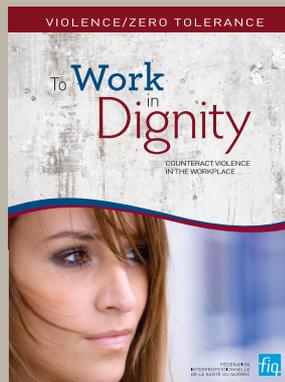
If you are concerned about violence in the workplace, get a copy of the new brochure **To Work in Dignity** which is available at your local union office.



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