

## **Fact Sheet: Safe Days Executive Directive**

*Domestic violence has devastating impacts on North Carolina residents, families, and workplaces. According to [a recent report](#), more than one in three North Carolina women have experienced at least one type of intimate partner or sexual violence. Nationally, [one in four women and one in ten men](#) have experienced physical violence, rape, or stalking by an intimate partner. While Governor Cooper's administration has [served tens of thousands of survivors](#) by providing support, information and counseling, more work needs to be done. Survivors of domestic violence often need time off work to escape an unsafe situation, recover physically and emotionally, and rebuild their lives. "Safe days"—paid leave for necessary absences from work due to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking—give survivors the job security and support they need to recover.*

### **What does the Executive Directive on safe days do?**

Governor Cooper's Safe Days Executive Directive allows eligible state employees to use earned leave for "safe days," which are necessary absences from work due to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Employees may use earned sick and vacation leave to seek counsel from an attorney or social services provider, participate in legal proceedings such as filing a restraining order, relocate to a safe location, or take other steps necessary to secure and restore their health and safety.

Currently, eligible state employees can use sick leave to deal with the medical effects of domestic or sexual violence or stalking, such as to seek psychological counseling or medical attention. However, state employees must use their earned vacation leave for the non-medical effects of domestic or sexual violence or stalking, such as to meet with a lawyer, attend court proceedings, or relocate and enroll children in a new school. Allowing employees use either type of earned leave ensures they have more flexibility to take necessary absences without jeopardizing their financial security.

### **Who is an eligible state employee?**

Employees of North Carolina departments, agencies, boards and commissions under the Governor's oversight are eligible to use earned leave for "safe days." State agencies not subject to the Governor's oversight are encouraged but not required to comply.

### **Why is this Executive Directive necessary?**

According to the [2019 Status of Women in North Carolina: Health and Wellness report](#), 35% of women in North Carolina have experienced at least one type of intimate partner or sexual violence. In 2018, the North Carolina Department of Public Safety [reported](#) 103 domestic violence-related homicides in North Carolina. [To date, forty-seven](#) domestic violence homicides have been committed in North Carolina this year.

Survivors may need time off work to seek legal counsel, secure a restraining order, relocate to a safe place, or take other actions to secure their safety and their families. Taking the necessary time to recover emotionally, physically, and financially from domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking should not jeopardize a survivor's ability to remain in the workforce.

### **Do other states provide safe days?**

Yes. Eleven states—Arizona, California, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington—have enacted laws ensuring employees have the right to use earned paid time off for safe days purposes related to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Seven states—Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, and Nevada—have laws requiring employers to provide unpaid time off for similar purposes.