

CARE FOR U PLUS

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Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is violence between adult intimate partners (people who are married, living together, dating or who have broken off a relationship). Domestic violence is more than loud arguments and frequent fights. It is the chronic abuse of power by one partner over the other. Sometimes, the actual physical violence comes only after months or years of threats, intimidation and manipulation.

A Common Problem:

Domestic violence has been identified as an epidemic throughout America and the world. Most victims of domestic violence are women. Across the United States alone, one out of every four women will be a victim of domestic abuse at some point during her life. It doesn't matter if a woman is black or white, rich or poor, young or old – domestic violence affects people of all racial and social backgrounds and education levels. So, chances are at least one of your coworkers has experienced domestic abuse.

Who is at Risk:

Studies have uncovered one common denominator between most victims: they are in a relationship where their partner has all the power.

Women are most vulnerable to violence when separated from their intimate partner. The second most vulnerable time is right after a divorce. In addition, people may be at risk for domestic violence if they:

Are planning to leave or have recently left an abusive relationship.

Struggle with poverty or a poor living situation.

Are unemployed.

Have a physical or mental disability.

Are younger than 30 years old.

Are isolated socially from family and friends.

Have been stalked by a partner.

Domestic Violence and the Workplace:

You've probably heard the news recently about the terrible tragedy that occurred in a nursing home in North Carolina. A gunman shot and killed seven elderly residents, along with one of the nurses. It appears that the gunman's estranged wife works at the facility -- making this awful situation a case of domestic violence.

Did you know that three out of four battered women who work are harassed by their partners while on the job? In addition:

- 96% report that they experience problems at work because of their domestic situation.
- More than half of them are late for work at least 60 times in a year-and at least a third leave early at least once a week.
- The majority of women who are being battered miss at least 18 days of work every year and one out of five lose their jobs altogether.

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There is no way to know for sure that someone is being abused -- unless you actually witness it happening. However, you can watch out for these warning signs:

- *Injuries and Excuses:* People who are being abused may have frequent bruises or other injuries. Because they feel afraid or embarrassed, they may make up excuses about how the injuries happened.
- *Problems at Work:* Victims of domestic abuse may be deprived of sleep and/or food-and you may, notice that they can't seem to concentrate on their job. When the violence at home reaches the severe level, people who are being battered may have to take time off from work.
- *Low Self-Esteem:* Many battered women have low self-esteem -- at least when it comes to their intimate relationships. You may hear victims talk about how they can't make it on their own and that they are so lucky to have partners to take charge of their lives.
- *Self-blame:* Victims of domestic violence may take responsibility for anything that goes wrong - at work and at home.

Keeping your Workplace Safe:

The administrators of your workplace can help protect an employee who is dealing with domestic violence by:

- Making sure that security staff (and/or key coworkers) have the information they need to best protect the employee at work (copies of court orders, a photograph of the abuser, etc.)
- Seeing that the employee's parking spot is safe.
- Transferring the employee to another work location, if possible (and necessary).
- Guarding the employee's home address -- especially if it is a shelter or some other confidential location.
- Educating all staff members about the signs of domestic violence -- and how to report their suspicions.

Hotline:

If you actually witness on assault -- whether the victim is a coworker or a client - call 911 and/or the security for your facility. If you feel threatened leave the scene.

Assistance of the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233) is available in English and Spanish with access to more than 140 languages through interpreters.