

Domestic Violence: A Workplace Issue

Impacts on Your Business

Loss of productivity or work time, absenteeism, employee turnover and creating an actual or perceived unsafe or hostile work environment are common workplace impacts of domestic violence.

In a recent Vermont study of domestic violence offenders:

- The 193 offenders surveyed reported a total of 52,731 days taken from work for domestic violence related circumstances-equivalent to 27 years of full time employment and \$5.4 million in estimated lost wages.
- 80 % felt their job performance was negatively affected.
- 75% said they had a hard time concentrating at work because of relationship issues.
- 55% used a cell phone to threaten, control, or abuse their partner during the work day.
- 29% of respondents contacted their partner while at work to say something that might have scared or intimidated her; 40% of supervisors were aware this type of contact occurred at work.



Domestic Violence Doesn't Stay at Home When Victims Go to Work

Domestic violence occurs between people of all racial, economic, education and religious backgrounds; in heterosexual and same sex relationships; while living together or separately, married or unmarried; and in short or long-term relationships.

- In Vermont, at least 4 domestic violence related homicides have occurred in connection with the victim's employment.
- Nationally, 1 in 5 employed adults is the victim of domestic violence.
- 1 in 4 employees reports working with a co-worker who has been a

victim of domestic violence.

- 74% of employed battered women say they are harassed by their partner at work.
- Nationally, victims of intimate partner violence lose a total of 8.0 million days of paid work each year.
- 94% of corporate security directors and 78% of human resource professionals consider domestic violence a critical workplace issue.
- 4 out of 5 employees believe workplaces can make a difference by addressing domestic violence in the workplace.

Workplace Response Makes a Difference

- 83% of supervisors were aware of why respondents took time off work due to their domestic violence offense; however, only 32% of supervisors gave any response to the employee about his domestic violence incident, his behavior, or his relationship in general.
- 93% of respondents suggested it would be helpful for supervisors to confront an employee whom they suspect is abusive toward their intimate partner. Confronting the abuser includes: offering counseling, resources, help and support, and warning about the consequences of domestic violence.
- 77% of respondents felt that the a written company policy that sets a workplace culture against domestic violence would be an effective prevention measure.

A Safe and Secure Workplace

Security measures can play a critical role in protecting all employees at work. Consider these changes to your workplace:

- Provide front desk or security staff copies of court orders and abuser's identifying information, including photographs and description of car, if available.
- Relocate employee to safer workplace or work station.
- Install buzzer system, panic button or other security devices.
- Limit access to building and if feasible, use one entrance.

- Provide escorts to employee's parked car.
- Install lighting in parking lots, additional fencing and cameras.
- Arrange priority parking spaces.
- Adopt phone security measures.
- Document harassing or abusive behavior.
- Assist in developing a safety plan course of action for employee. Call local domestic violence program for more information.
- Work with your staff and/or local law enforcement to develop a response plan.

Recommendations for All Vermont Employers

Employers can play an important role in providing clear guidelines and a supportive and productive workplace by implementing model practices and policies that respond to domestic and sexual violence:

Educate staff through brown bag lunches, workshops and newsletters. Post and distribute resource and referral information in areas of high visibility and on web pages. 72% of offenders in a Vermont survey said that posters and brochures in the workplace would help prevent abuse from impacting the business.

Refer employee survivors to internal resources (employee assistance programs and human resources) and to external resources. Contact the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence to locate the program in your area: visit vtnetwork.org or call 800-228-7395 (VT Domestic Violence Hotline) or 800-489-7273 (VT Sexual Violence Hotline).

Refer employee perpetrators to Domestic Violence Accountability or Sex Offender Treatment Programs.

To find a Domestic Violence Accountability Program in your area, call 802-223-1302 or visit vtnetwork.org. To find a Sex Offender Treatment Program in your area, call 802-247-3132 or 503-643-1023, or visit atsa.com/request-referral.

Support victim-survivors with policy-based responses, including requests for time off, change in schedule, or performance concerns. Work with employees to identify their needs.

Join or donate to an organization working to prevent violence against women.

Evaluate workplace security options when domestic or sexual violence is identified, in order to protect all employees.

Be aware of state laws such as: the *Survivor Transitional Employment Benefit Program* at the Department of Labor at www.labor.vermont.gov; and statutory protections preventing discharge or discipline if an employee or their family are subpoenaed at *13 VSA Section 5313*.

Resources

Local domestic violence programs provide: safety planning, help accessing protection orders, counseling, support groups, shelter, advice and legal assistance:

Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

vtnetwork.org / 802-223-1302

Find model workplace policies, trainings, and educational materials:

Vermont Attorney General's Office

atg.state.vt.us/issues/criminal-law/domestic-violence / 802-828-5520

Workplaces Respond to Domestic and Sexual Violence: A National Resource Center
workplacesrespond.org

Love is Not Abuse

loveisnotabuse.com

Peace at Work

peaceatwork.org

Safe at Work Coalition

safeatworkcoalition.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline

800-799-SAFE

Vermont's Safe At Home Program

sec.state.vt.us/safe-at-home

802-828-0586 / 800-439-8683 Vermont only

Vermont Domestic Violence Hotline

800-228-7395

Vermont Sexual Violence Hotline

800-489-7273

United Way Information and Referral

211

Vermont Commission on Women

women.vermont.gov / 800-881-1561

Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services

ccvs.state.vt.us/compensation / 802-241-1250

RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS GOOD BUSINESS

This brochure is a collaborative effort of Vermont's Attorney General's Office, Commission on Women, Council on Domestic Violence, and the Domestic Violence in the Workplace Council Workgroup.



Your local program: