

Domestic Violence: A Workplace Issue

Costs to 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:

- 75% said they had a hard time concentrating at work because of their relationship issues.
- 80% felt their job performance was negatively affected.
- 55% used a cell phone to threaten, control or abuse their partner during the work day.
- the 193 offenders surveyed reported a total of 52,731 days taken from work for domestic violence related circumstances.
- almost half of respondents reported that their partners took time off from work because of the domestic violence. Those partners lost an average of 20 work days per person.
- 19% of respondents reported causing or almost causing an accident at work because they were distracted due to the domestic violence.

Nationally, domestic violence costs businesses nearly \$6 billion in healthcare expenses and lost productivity every year.

Employers have been held liable for failing to adequately address domestic violence in the workplace. Recent jury award to victims, coworkers and their estates ranged from \$25,000 to several million dollars.



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.

■ 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.

■ In a recent study, over 77% of Vermont offenders surveyed felt workplace policies addressing domestic abuse would be an effective deterrent to further violence.

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 violence:

Adopt: Adopt a policy addressing domestic violence in the workplace. Implement leave, benefit and referral initiatives. Samples can be found at the Vermont Attorney General's web site:
<http://ago.vermont.gov/divisions/criminal-division/domestic-and-sexual-violence.php>

Train: Trainings for managers and supervisors raise awareness and sensitivity and make the workplace safer and more productive. In a recent study, 92% of Vermont domestic violence offenders surveyed said that a private discussion with a supervisor would be an effective deterrent.

Educate: 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.

Consider Security: Review worksite security measures to protect all employees.

Connect: Connect with local domestic violence service programs. Contact the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence for more information: 802-223-1302 or vtnetwork.org.

Support: Perpetrators are solely responsible for domestic violence, but everyone can help support and protect survivors: join or donate to an organization working to prevent violence against women.

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
<http://ago.vermont.gov/divisions/criminal-division/domestic-and-sexual-violence.php> / 802-828-5520

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

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 Council's Domestic Violence in the Workplace workgroup.



Your local program: