

Safety Tip of the week

02/04/2021

Domestic Violence in the Workplace

WHAT SHOULD EMPLOYERS DO

By assisting people subjected to domestic violence (predominantly women), employers can reduce workplace violence risks, increase productivity, and protect themselves from liability by ensuring that a domestic violence response is part of all workplace safety plans.

BEST PRACTICES FOR EMPLOYERS

A safe and supportive work environment can provide a person affected by domestic violence with a safe haven. It can also provide information about services they can access to enable them to remain safely in their relationship or options available if they choose to leave. Supporting your employee who is experiencing domestic violence provides you with the opportunity to build loyalty and trust and can improve the value your employee adds to your workplace.

ENSURE A SAFE AND SECURE WORKPLACE

Employers have a duty of care to their employees and responsibility for providing a safe and healthy workplace. Providing safety can include:

- Reassignment or modified schedules or transfer to a different position or workstation and work telephone number.
- Providing a personal alarm.
- Other adjustments to job structure, workplace facility or work environment in response to actual or threatened domestic violence.
- Assistance with an employee safety plan and working with your security and/or local law enforcement to develop an emergency response plan.

Consult your local Domestic Violence Resource Service and/or specialist legal services for assistance on compliance and updating workplace protocols and policies.

BE AWARE - Be aware of legislation, statutory protections, enterprise agreements and clauses to practise corporate social responsibility to protect victims of domestic violence in the workplace and review worksite security measures to protect all employees.

ADOPT PROTOCOLS - Adopt a protocol and add a domestic violence policy to your employee handbook addressing domestic violence in the workplace.

TRAIN AND EDUCATE - Provide training and information to employees about how to recognise and respond to domestic violence, their rights and where they can find help. Training and education raises awareness and sensitivity and makes the workplace safer and more productive.



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WHEN A COLLEAGUE IS A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

Recognising signs that a colleague is being abused gives you the opportunity to support and encourage them to talk about their situation and enables them to explore their options.

A place of work should be safe for an individual and their co-workers, so it is in everyone's best interest to look for the signs and take steps to be supportive.

Co-workers and employers should always be supportive, respectful and encouraging, and communicate to the victim that they are willing to help if and when their colleague chooses to discuss their situation.

If you know or believe that a colleague is a victim of domestic violence, communicate your concerns for their safety.

If your colleague chooses to disclose about their abusive relationship to you consider the following responses:

- *"It is not your fault. You do not deserve to be treated this way."*
- *"You are not alone and I am glad you told me about what you are going through."*
- *"I am here for you and you know you also have support within this organisation."*
- *"What can I do to help you?"*

Your colleague needs support and validation not judgement. Leaving is only possible when they believe it is safe to do so.

- Be clear that your role is to support and help, not to judge. Maintain confidentiality of your colleague's domestic violence circumstance. Encourage them to seek help from a domestic violence service and offer to attend with them

if they need your support.

- Report any threats of violence you experience or witness to your manager/supervisor, site security personnel, the police, or human resources.
- Tell your colleague that seeking help may seem confronting, but help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year from confidential telephone counsellors who understand their situation.

Warning signs that a colleague is being abused at home can include:

- Social withdrawal from co-workers
- Visible bruises
- Emotional outbursts on the phone
- Frequent calls which leave them upset
- Lateness or frequent absences
- Poor job performance
- Depression or anxiety
- Eating disorder (under or over eating)
- Low self-esteem or confidence
- Abuse of drugs or alcohol

