

It's Your Business: Working to End Domestic Violence

How to protect your employees and your bottom line

By Melissa DeDonder

Editors Note: The U.S. Department of Justice reports that females represent 84 percent of spouse abuse victims and 86 percent of victimization at the hands of a partner. These statistics provide the framework for the following article.

Whether you realize it or not, domestic violence exists in your workplace. Around the world, one in three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused during her lifetime. In Kansas, 10 percent of adult females report domestic violence victimization, and one-third of Kansas women report knowing someone who is a victim. Last year, Kansas' domestic violence programs answered 45,000 crisis calls and 23 shelters provided 62,000 shelter nights. Missouri's programs answered 87,500 crisis calls and 53 shelters provided nearly 306,000 shelter nights to women and children.

These statistics translate into the workplace in many ways. It is important to understand that the cause of domestic violence — an abuser's desire for power and control — is what invites violence into the workplace. The U.S. Department of Labor reports that 74 percent of employed battered women have been harassed by their partner while they were at work.

Productivity loss is not the only cost for a business when violence enters the workplace. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, domestic violence costs nearly \$6 billion each year in aggregate costs, including more than \$4.1 billion in direct medical and mental health services and \$1.8 billion in productivity losses. *Find out how much domestic violence is costing your business at www2.texashealth.org/dv*

What can you do to protect your employees and your bottom line?

1. Create and promote workplace policies on domestic violence — include policies for both victims and abusers.
2. Train ALL employees how to recognize the signs of abuse, how to respond appropriately and how to make referrals for services in your community.
3. Donate time and/or resources to a domestic violence program in your community — do this as a company or consider an incentive for individuals to get involved.

How to Recognize Signs of Abuse:

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviors used to control a partner, former partner or family member. The abuse may be verbal, emotional, economic, sexual and physical. It's not always easy to tell if someone is being abused. Trust your instincts and watch for any of the following signs (not an all-inclusive list):

- Obvious injuries, such as bruises, broken bones or hearing loss
- Jewelry, make-up or clothing that seems uncharacteristic or inappropriate for the weather
- Increase in absences or tardiness
- Poor concentration or inconsistent work
- High anxiety or fearfulness
- Receiving an unusual number of phone calls, faxes, texts or e-mails from partner
- References to her partner's bad moods or temper

How to Start a Conversation with Someone You Suspect is a Victim:

Most victims have been warned not to disclose, and often fear retaliation if they do tell someone. If you suspect abuse, here are some suggested ways to start a conversation:

- Meet with her in private.
- Tell her that you are worried and let her know what you have observed. For example, "I noticed the bruises last week and you seem very upset lately."
- Express concerns that she might be abused. For example, "I thought it was possible that you are being hurt by someone and I am concerned about you."
- Listen without judgment and BELIEVE what she tells you.
- Avoid telling her to leave the relationship.
- Tell her that the abuse is not her fault and that she deserves to be treated better.
- Tell her that services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Provide her with hotline numbers and contact information for domestic violence programs serving your area.
- Be patient and supportive. She may choose not to disclose.

How to Make a Referral: Domestic Violence Programs & Services

The following list of resources should be shared with all employees:

24-HOUR CRISIS HOTLINES:

KCMO Hotline:	816-468-5463
Kansas Crisis Hotline:	888-END-ABUSE (363-2287)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS SERVING THE KC METRO:

Kansas City, Kansas

El Centro, Inc. ¡Si Se Puede!	913-281-1186	www.elcentroinc.com
Friends of Yates Joyce Williams Center	913-321-0951	www.friendsofyates.org

Overland Park

Safehome, Inc.	913-262-2868	www.safehome-ks.org
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Kansas City, Missouri

Kansas City Anti-Violence Project	816-561-0550	www.kcavp.org
KCMO Domestic Violence/ Child Abuse Victims Assistance Program	816-513-3927	www.kcmo.org
Hope House, Inc.	816-461-HOPE	www.hopehouse.net
Mattie Rhodes Center / Nuevo Dia	816-471-2536	www.mattierhodes.org
Newhouse	816-471-5800	www.newhouseshelter.org
Rose Brooks Center, Inc.	816-861-6100	www.rosebrooks.org
Synergy Services, Inc.	816-452-8535	www.synergyservices.org
The LEAD Institute (Leadership through Education & Advocacy for the Deaf)	573-445-5035	www.deaflead.org
MOCSA (sexual assault advocacy)	816-531-0233	www.mocsa.org

How to Create Workplace Policies on Domestic Violence:

The following are resources to guide you in creating your own domestic violence in the workplace policies:

Safe Horizon — SafeWork program

212-577-7712

www.safehorizon.org/safework

Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence

309-664-0667

www.caepv.org

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