By the Numbers: Warning Signs and Risk Factors for Domestic Violence in the Workplace

Domestic violence often doesn't stay confined to the home. Whether directly or indirectly, domestic violence effects the victim, co-workers, and the organization. Learn these warning signs and risk factors for domestic violence in the workplace and share the information with your managers and employees during workplace violence training.

Risk Factors

The Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, which is a multi-disciplinary advisory committee of experts established in Ontario in 2003 to assist the Office of the Chief Coroner with the investigation and review of deaths involving domestic violence, has identified the following as the top risk factors for domestic homicide cases. In 80% of cases they reviewed seven or more risk factors were identified.

1. 74% History of domestic violence
2. 72% Actual or pending separation
3. 56% Obsessive behavior displayed by perpetrator
4. 56% Perpetrator depressed
5. 51% Prior threats/attempts to commit suicide
6. 47% Escalation of violence
7. 45% Victim had intuitive sense of fear
8. 43% Prior threats to kill victim
9. 40% Perpetrator unemployed
10. 40% Prior attempts to isolate victim

Warning Signs

Recognize that a colleague may be involved in an abusive relationship. See the indications of abuse. Here are some warning signs to look for:

- Change in job performance: poor concentration, errors, slowness, inconsistent work quality.
- An unusual number of phone calls/text messages, strong reactions to those calls/text messages, and/or a reluctance to converse or respond to phone/text messages.
- Co-workers receive insensitive or insulting messages intended for the colleague experiencing abuse.
- Disruptive personal visits to workplace by present or former partner or spouse.
- Questions about whereabouts, company, and activities from a spouse or former spouse.
- Absenteeism or lateness for work.
- Requests for special accommodations such as requests to leave early or to change schedules.
- Reluctance to leave work.
- Obvious injuries such as bruises, black eyes, broken bones, hearing loss – these are often attributed to "falls," "being clumsy," or "accidents."
- Clothing that is inappropriate for the season, such as long sleeves and turtlenecks – also wearing sunglasses and unusually heavy makeup.
- Minimization or denial of harassment or injuries.
- Isolation; unusually quiet and keeping away from others.
- Emotional distress or flatness, tearfulness, depression, or suicidal thoughts.
- Signs of anxiety and fear.
- Sensitivity about home life or hints of trouble at home – comments may include references to bad moods, anger, temper, and alcohol or drug abuse.
- Fear of job loss.
- Lack of access to money.

Warning Signs of Abusive Behavior

Someone who is behaving abusively at home may be "invisible" as an abuser at work. Perhaps they are an excellent worker, manager, professional and do not reveal overtly violent behavior in the work environment. Or they may display signs of an abusive temperament:

- [x] Is absent or late related to conflict at home.
- [x] Calls or contacts their partner repeatedly during work.
- [x] Bullies others at work.
- [x] Blames others for problems, especially their partner.
- [x] Denies problems.
- [x] Can’t take criticism and often acts defensively when challenged.
- [x] Acts like they are superior and of more value than others in their home.
- [x] Controls their partner or ex-partner’s activities.