Picture This: Domestic Violence – What Would You Do?

Supervisor Response

How would you respond if one of your employees came to work with these bruises or other injuries? Does your organization have a policy and process in place for dealing with suspected and confirmed cases of domestic abuse?

The injuries taken on their own might be from an accident and have nothing to do with domestic violence – it can be hard to determine sometimes so it's important to look for a pattern of signs and symptoms in addition to obvious physical injuries.

Arriving to work late or very early	Avoiding windows, main entrance of office
Unplanned or increased use of Paid Time Off	Repeated discussion of marital or relationship problems
Decreased productivity	Flowers or gifts sent to employee for no apparent reason
Tension around receiving repeated personal phone calls	Bruises, chronic headaches, abdominal pains, muscle aches
Wearing long sleeves on a hot day or sunglasses inside	Vague, non-specific medical complaints
Difficulty in making decisions alone	Sleeping or eating disorders
Difficulty concentrating on tasks	Signs of fear, anxiety, depression, fatigue
Intense startle reactions	Suicidal or homicidal thoughts

If an employee is in imminent danger or is requesting immediate assistance, call 911 and company security (if available) immediately. If an employee tells you that she (or he) is in an

abusive relationship:

1. Communicate your concerns for the employee's safety. Communicate that you are concerned for the safety of the employee's children, if there are any.
2. Tell the employee that you believe her (or him) and that what is happening is wrong. No one deserves to be hurt. (The abuser may be blaming the victim by saying, "You made me do it, it's your fault.")
3. Tell the employee that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can help with counseling and safety planning, based on the wishes and needs of the employee. These services are free and confidential. If the employee chooses not to use the EAP, tell the employee that you are concerned for her (or his) safety and refer her (or him) to other community resources.
4. Be clear that your role is to try to help and not to judge. The employee needs to know that someone cares, will listen, and can help her (or him) find the right resources.
5. Managers can consult with the EAP, whose staff has expertise in counseling people who are living with domestic violence and can refer them to services.
6. Managers who are feeling confused or overwhelmed can discuss their concerns about the employee's situation confidentially with the EAP. They can also consult with security staff if there is a concern about workplace safety, and with Human Resources regarding Earned Time or Paid Time Off, leaves, or performance issues. Do not discuss the employee's situation with anyone else without permission from the employee.

Employee Response

Show this photo during a safety meeting or training on workplace violence/domestic violence in the workplace. Ask attendees:

- What would you do if this woman was a co-worker and she came to work with these bruises?
- What would you say to her?
    - If she insisted she was okay, just clumsy, and she tripped and fell last night would you stop there?

- Would you be able to notice other warning signs of domestic abuse?

Use this image and the suggested questions as a training tool to open discussion about domestic violence in the workplace, available resources, policies and procedures, and support. Be sensitive to the fact that some members of the meeting may be dealing with an abusive partner or family member.

Share with employees the process for reporting their concerns if they suspect a co-worker is experiencing domestic violence and share what services are available to employees who are in an abusive relationship.

Talk with employees about what to say and what not to say to a co-worker who might be in an abusive situation.

Say…

- I believe you.
- You are not alone.
- I care about you, and I know hard it is to talk about this.
- You don’t deserve to be hurt, you’ve done nothing wrong, this is not your fault.
- What is happening is wrong.
- You know best what your partner may do.
- It’s always best to have a plan in place. I can give you a number to call for help and advice.
- How can I help you?

Avoid Saying…

- Why don’t you just leave?
- Why did you return to your partner? What did you do to provoke your partner?
- Why did you wait so long to tell someone?
- .. Don’t use labels (“You’re crazy to stay with your partner.”).
- Don’t tell the person what to do. Don’t discuss the person’s information with anyone else without her (or his) permission.


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