Checklist of Strategies:

The Impact of Domestic Violence on the Workplace
This Checklist is designed to help businesses develop domestic violence prevention and intervention programs that can help protect both their workers and their bottom line.

The fact is, domestic violence is not a private matter that stays in the home. It follows victims to work, and nearly every organization is likely to be touched by it.

Statistically, one in five employed people in the U.S. experience domestic violence sometime in their life and 96 percent of victims say that the abuse affects their ability to perform their job. And whether victims experience physical injury at home, psychological intimidation, stalking or threatening phone calls, the result is impaired performance, missed work, tardiness and, often, an inability to even hold a job. Co-workers are also affected when they have to “cover” the victim’s work or be concerned about their own safety.¹,²

For businesses, the cost of lost productivity due to domestic violence exceeds $727 million annually. The figure exceeds $4 billion when adding in the direct medical and mental health services.¹,³

The following strategies can help employers develop policies to help reduce—and prevent—the emotional and economic toll on their workers and their organization.
Getting Started

Secure buy-in from the top down. “It’s key to establish a company culture that ensures abuse victims of their safety and job security,” says Kim Wells, executive director of the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence.

Form a domestic violence team. Include employees, managers, supervisors, Human Resources, public relations, security personnel, the legal department, Employee Assistance Program (EAP) professionals, and, if applicable, a union representative.

Offer employees a company-wide anonymous questionnaire. Ask if: they are being spied on; followed or isolated from friends or family; not free to come and go; if their children are being used as leverage against them; if their finances are being restricted, and if they are being verbally attacked, abused, ridiculed or belittled.

Create a specific threat response team. Specialized EAP professionals can help analyze the potential of a threat to the company and develop protocols to respond to the threats.

Enlist community resources. Partner with law enforcement, advocacy organizations, shelters or crisis centers that can help you develop policies and communications.

Provide annual training for all employees. The EAP or local crisis center can help employees identify signs of abuse, review workplace policies and recommend internal and external resources available.

“Installing policies is not enough. Employers must provide harassment training every year so that all employees know how to take all threats seriously and how to respond,” says Bert Alicea, M.A., CEAP, Vice President, EAP+Work/Life Services at Health Advocate. “Training helps protect the safety of everyone and also decreases the organization’s liability.”
Create a Comprehensive Policy

Spell out the details. The policy should clearly state that the organization will: provide a workplace free of threats, fear and violence; respond to threats and potential violence; provide appropriate accommodations and leave options; have disciplinary procedures for employees who commit acts or threats of domestic violence; and support employees when accessing resources for domestic violence. This includes support for victims going to court hearings, seeking medical help, etc. (Sample policies that can be customized to your organization can be found at:
http://www.workplacesrespond.org/learn/the-facts)

Comply with applicable state laws. The following laws provide protections and rights to employees who are victims of domestic violence:

- **Family and Medical Leave Act Laws (FMLA).** The law may require employers to grant leave to employees who are coping with domestic violence situations.

- **Americans with Disabilities Act.** There may be a duty to accommodate domestic violence victims. For example, accommodations may be made if victims need to attend therapy.

- **Occupational Safety and Health Act Laws (OSHA).** Employers must maintain a safe workplace, which may include a violence-free workplace.

- **Victim Assistance Laws.** The law may prohibit employers from taking adverse job actions against abuse victims who disclose their situation or who take time off from their jobs to attend court appearances.

- **Worker’s Compensation.** Organizations may also be required to pay worker’s compensation if a victim is forced to quit because of the abuse.6, 7

Write your own job-protected leave benefits. “Companies can voluntarily establish a policy that offers protection specifically for abuse victims, including paid or unpaid sick time or disability leave” says Robin Runge, Esq., Assistant Professor of Law at the University of North Dakota School of Law. “They should also ensure that their health insurance plans do not discriminate against victims.” 7
Ensure That Employees Know the Policies

Explain the sequence when the employee reveals abuse. Clarify who will be informed if the victim reveals abuse to their supervisor or a co-worker about their situation and seeks help. Employees should also be told who else may be informed on a “need to know” basis (e.g., security, a specific response team, etc.) if someone is making threats to them at the workplace.

Emphasize confidentiality. Inform employees exactly how their revelation about domestic violence will be used with the reassurance that the information will not affect decisions regarding their job.

Distribute and post the policy. This helps encourage employees to come forward and to know that they will be safe at work and have the support and resources they need to continue their employment.

Make Reasonable Accommodations

Install safety measures. The Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence suggests these accommodations, where applicable:

• Arrange for the victim to have priority parking near the building; have escorts to the car.

• Have calls screened; transfer harassing calls to security; have the employee’s name removed from automated phone directories.

• Limit information about employees disclosed by phone. Information that would help locate a victim or indicates a time of return should not be provided.

• Relocate the employee’s workspace to a more secure area or another site or shift.

• If a restraining order is in place, get a photo of the abuser to hang in the front desk or reception area.

Offer flexible schedules. Allow time off for victims to attend court hearings, seek medical attention, relocate to a new home and seek other services they need.

Encourage the use of the EAP. Make sure that the EAP vendor has the capability to specifically address domestic violence abuse.
Install a Broad Communications Campaign

Use print, posters, emails, seminars, and intranet. Be sure hotline numbers are aimed at both victims and abusers and are posted in highly visible locations such as break rooms. Emphasize that all hotlines are confidential and many have multi-lingual staff such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE.

Raise awareness all year-round. For example, collect donated items for local shelters. The more employees are familiar with the issue of domestic violence and support services, the more likely they will remember the services if they need help.⁸
References


7. Runge, Robin, Esq., Assistant Professor of Law, University of North Dakota School of Law. Phone Interview. (2012).

Checklist: The Impact of Domestic Violence on the Workplace

This is a two-part publication, providing a White Paper and a Checklist of Strategies

This “Checklist of Strategies: The Impact of Domestic Violence on the Workplace” is a companion to Health Advocate’s White Paper, titled “The Impact of Domestic Violence on the Workplace.” This Checklist provides steps that employers can take to develop policies to help reduce or prevent domestic violence in their organization.

Additional White Papers

The following previously published Health Advocate White Papers are available for free on our website at: HealthAdvocate.com/webinars_seminars.aspx. There is a companion Checklist that accompanies each White Paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guide to Pandemic Business Planning &amp; Communications</th>
<th>Caregiving: The Impact on the Workplace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learn how you can protect your employees and keep your business viable.</td>
<td>Learn cost-effective strategies to help employees balance work/life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guide to Workplace Wellness: Healthy Employees, Healthy Bottom Line</th>
<th>Sleep Deprivation: A Wake-up Call for Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find out how a wellness program is a cost-effective solution to rising healthcare costs.</td>
<td>Know how you can address sleep deprivation and maintain productivity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obesity in America: Workplace Solutions</th>
<th>The Impact of Domestic Violence on the Workplace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gain insight about incorporating weight management in a wellness program</td>
<td>Learn how prevention strategies protect your workers and your business.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress in the Workplace: Meeting the Challenge</th>
<th>The Impact of Breast Cancer on the Workplace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>See how helping employees better manage stress can help preserve your bottom line.</td>
<td>Discover the value of supporting employees returning to work during/after treatment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About Health Advocate

Health Advocate™, Inc., a subsidiary of West Corporation, is the nation’s leading healthcare advocacy and assistance company. We offer a spectrum of solutions including Health Advocacy, Wellness, EAP, Chronic Care and Pricing Transparency Tools to lower healthcare costs, increase productivity and improve outcomes. Health Advocate is not affiliated with any insurance company or third party provider, and does not provide medical care or recommend treatment. HealthAdvocate.com