

Intimate Partner Violence & the Workplace

A Guide for Supervisors,
Managers, and Human
Resources Professionals

When violence follows
an employee to work,
employers need to know
how to respond.

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Definitions

Intimate Partner Violence

(also called Domestic Violence)

is defined as a **pattern of abusive behaviors** used to maintain **power and control** over another person in a relationship.

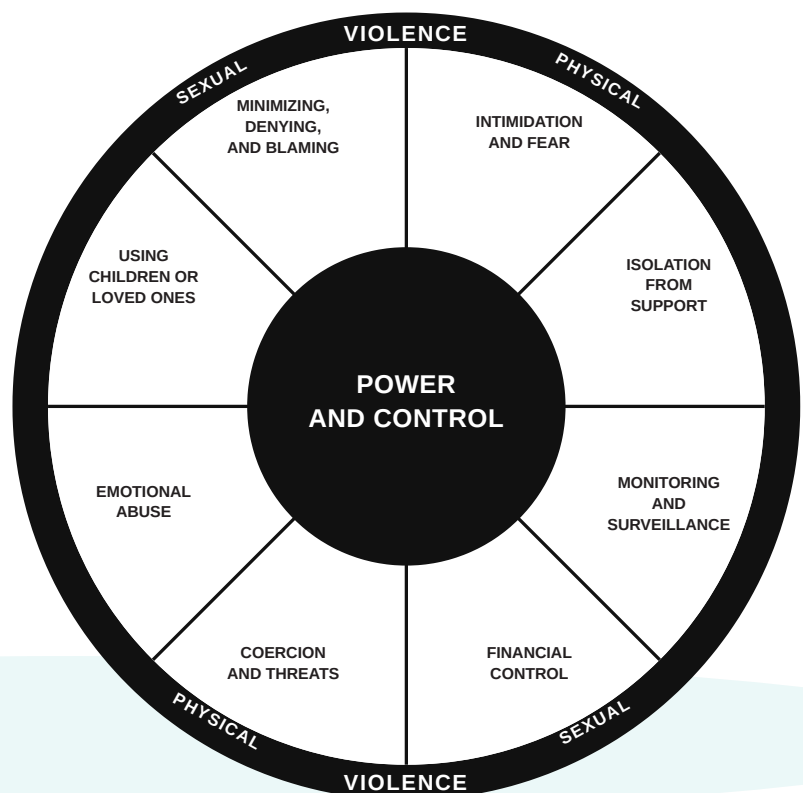
Perpetrators may use many forms of abuse to **control** their victims. Abuse may manifest as physical violence, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or coercion, financial abuse, isolation, blaming, intimidation and threats, etc.

Survivor or Victim

is an individual who is or has been in a relationship with someone who is perpetrating acts of violence. Relationships can include current or former dating partners, cohabitating partners, or even family members/relations. For the purposes of this guide, we will focus on current and former intimate or dating partners.

Perpetrator or Abuser

is an individual who commits or threatens to commit an act of violence.



Types of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Physical and Sexual

- Hitting/punching/kicking
- Slapping
- Pushing/shoving
- Strangling/choking
- Non-consensual sexual activities

Emotional/Psychological

- Public and/or private insults
- Isolation
- Threats
- Extreme jealousy
- Gaslighting
- Threats to children or pets

Stalking and Harassment

- Frequent unwanted calls or texts
- Showing up uninvited to victim's home or place of work
- Sending unwanted gifts
- Tracking on GPS
- Monitoring online activity or hacking into accounts

Financial

- Limiting access to money/controlling all the finances
- Blocking employment
- Sabotaging work
- Incurring debt in the victim's name

Note: This is a general overview. For more in-depth training on IPV, the Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence offers comprehensive resources.

Why Care?

IPV can spill into the workplace by impacting job performance, diminishing morale, and making employees feel unsafe. Abusers often know that even if their victim has left the relationship, they can find the victim at the workplace.

Perpetrators may monitor, manipulate, threaten, harass, or even attack their victims in the workplace, jeopardizing a victim's and other's productivity and safety.

IPV Hurts Employers

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, victims lose nearly **8 million days** of paid work per year due to IPV/domestic violence. The cost of this lost productivity totals between **\$3 billion and \$5 billion** every year with another \$100 million in lost wages, paid sick leave, and absenteeism (1).

IPV does not discriminate based on economic status, educational attainment, age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, or religion. **It can happen to anyone.**

1 in 5

workers report experiencing the effects of domestic violence in the workplace (2).

25%

of women murdered at worksites were killed by current or former partners (4).

90%

of survivors reported that an abuser disrupted their ability to obtain or maintain a job (3).

84%

of survivors reported that IPV negatively impacted their job performance (3).

Warning Signs

Victims of IPV face various obstacles to their productivity at work. This is due to the controlling and harassing behaviors exhibited by their abuser.

Signs at Work

Victims may:

- Show up late to work.
- Exhibit signs of stress.
- Have excessive absences.
- Be unable to concentrate at work.
- Show signs of decreased productivity.
- Have frequent or unexplained injuries.



IPV at the Workplace

Sometimes abuse happens while an employee is working. Abusers often know they can find a victim at their workplace, even if the victim has left the relationship.

You may notice:

- An employee receiving numerous phone calls from an abuser.
- An abusive partner coming to or driving by the workplace repeatedly.
- If the abuser works with the victim, they may have a greater ability to monitor and control their victim.

How to Address IPV in the Workplace

Employee Discloses Domestic Violence

SUPPORT

Assure the employee information they disclose will be shared on a need-to-know basis only. Discuss reasonable work accommodations you can provide to support them.

ASSIST

Provide local resources. Create an individualized workplace safety plan with the employee.

If there is an
imminent threat
CALL 9-1-1

If the abuser is on property or has threatened to come to the property, it is appropriate to ensure the safety of your employee and others on your property by calling police. However, allow the victim to decide if they personally want to report to police or not. Do not attempt to force the victim to file a police report against their abuser as that may not be safest for them.

Considerations:

- Can you make sick or other vacation time available for your employee for court date attendance or other needs?
- Can you switch up their schedule so an abuser will be less able to track them or show up while they are there?
- Can there be flexibility in workplace expectations to lighten the burden without negatively affecting pay?

Considerations:

- If there is an Order of Protection in place, request a copy and ensure any security staff are aware.
- If there is not an Order of Protection in place, provide information about obtaining one.
- Provide victim with local domestic violence resources and/or hotline numbers for individualized needs assessment.



How to Respond When an Employee Discloses IPV

When an employee discloses they are experiencing IPV, your response matters.

Key Principles:

Listen & Believe

- Let them share at their own pace.
- Validate their experience.
- Avoid judgment or blame.
- Express concern for their safety.

Provide Resources

- Share hotline numbers.
- Offer Employee Assistance Program information.
- Connect to local DV programs.
- Provide time-off options.

Maintain Confidentiality

- Keep disclosures private.
- Only share on a need-to-know basis.
- Document only what is necessary.
- Respect their autonomy.

Support Safety Planning

- Ask what they need.
- Offer workplace accommodations.
- Adjust schedules if needed.
- Create a safety plan together.

Remember: Your role is to support, not to investigate or counsel. Connect survivors with trained professionals who can provide specialized assistance.

What NOT to Do

- Do not ask why they stay or went back.
- Do not contact the abuser.
- Do not promise confidentiality you cannot keep.
- Do not make decisions for them.
- Do not minimize or dismiss their experience.

Ways Workplaces Can Support Survivors

- Provide relevant and up-to-date resources and/or referrals to services

- Provide trainings to all staff, especially to managers and leaders to inform people of the warning signs, impacts, and responses to IPV in the workplace.

- Offer as much accommodation as reasonably possible to allow a survivor to take time off to attend court dates or attend to medical and other needs, offer flexible scheduling, etc. (See Safety Planning later in this guide)

- Hold abusers accountable instead of survivors. Do not punish or fire survivors if abusers are harassing or causing harm in the workplace.

Notes on Confidentiality and Autonomy

Remember:

- Survivors may not feel safe disclosing their survivor status. Do not push an employee to disclose abuse. If someone does disclose, hold that disclosure in confidentiality.
- Survivors may make different choices than you would or that you think they should. Your job is provide resources and reasonable accommodations for safety, not to advise or counsel.

Every situation is different. Consider building capacity to provide different types of support, including paid leave, childcare options, protections against workplace retaliation, and other creative supports and protections.

Additional Safety Considerations in the Workplace

Safety Planning with a victim is an individualized process and will depend greatly on your organization's specific **risks factors** and **available resources**. Conduct a comprehensive **risk analysis** to identify possible factors in your workplace. **Include the victim** in the planning. They often know their abuser best and will have ideas as how to stay safe.

In general, here are some things to consider when planning for safety:

- Minimize initial risk by conducting comprehensive background checks on all new hires to screen for violent offenses.
- Does your organization have guidelines for firearms or other weapons on site?
- Analyze your organization for risk.
 - Consider parking areas, lobbies, entrances, break rooms, etc. and assess how they can be made safer. Can access be limited? Are there security cameras?
- Can the victim be given parking closer to the entrance? Can someone escort them to their car or to their public transportation stop?
- Is the workstation away from the main entrance, or can it be moved to a safer location?
- If an employee discloses IPV, can you adjust their work hours or location to make it harder for an abuser to find them?
- Can their calls be screened, or can you limit the information disclosed to people outside the workplace? Abusers often call to obtain scheduling or other personal information about a victim from coworkers.
- If an employee has an Order of Protection against someone, request a copy of it and provide it to any security staff, or other frontline staff, such as receptionists, along with a picture of the perpetrator.
- An employer may also obtain an Order of Protection to prohibit an offender from coming onto workplace property.
- Post resources, like hotline numbers and other local IPV/domestic violence services, in public spaces such as break rooms and restrooms.
- Conduct trainings with staff about IPV that include information about local resources.
- Conduct training with supervisory staff to ensure they are aware of IPV risks in the workplace as well as local resources available.



Tip Sheet: Creating a Safe Workplace

Employers can take proactive steps to ensure the safety of all employees, especially those experiencing IPV. Consider the following measures:

Physical Security

- Secure entry points
- Escort services to parking
- Relocate employee workspace
- Alert security/reception
- Remove employee from directories

Technology Safety

- Change phone extensions
- Screen calls and emails
- Review online presence
- Update emergency contacts
- Monitor for tracking devices

Workplace Accommodations

- Flexible scheduling
- Transfer to different location
- Modified duties if needed
- Time off for court/legal matters
- Adjusted break times

Documentation & Reporting

- Document incidents at work
- Save threatening communications
- Obtain protective orders
- Coordinate with law enforcement
- Maintain confidential records

Important: Always consult with the employee before taking action. Safety planning should be collaborative and respect the survivor's autonomy.

Policy Considerations

The Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence recommends the implementation of a Violence-Free Workplace Policy according to Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) safety standards.

ACCORDING TO OSHA:

"THE BEST PROTECTION EMPLOYERS CAN OFFER IS TO ESTABLISH A ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICY TOWARD WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AGAINST OR BY THEIR EMPLOYEES. THE EMPLOYER SHOULD ESTABLISH A WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM OR INCORPORATE THE INFORMATION INTO AN EXISTING ACCIDENT PREVENTION PROGRAM, EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK, OR MANUAL OF STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES. EMPLOYERS WHO DO NOT TAKE REASONABLE STEPS TO PREVENT OR ABATE A RECOGNIZED VIOLENCE HAZARD IN THE WORKPLACE CAN BE CITED."

Any policy should include a **safe complaint procedure** for employees to report their concerns about potential or actual threats, intimidation, or violence **without fear of reprisal**. The procedure should protect confidentiality and should identify a designated official to receive such reports. The type of policy you put in place will depend greatly on many factors, such as the **size of your organization, resources available, and unique risk and protective factors**. Your policy may be as simple or as detailed as you deem necessary. Consult with your HR department or legal counsel to identify the best policy and procedural options for your workplace.

Additional Policy Considerations

We have included in the Appendices an example of a model policy template from Oregon. It includes guidelines and considerations for you to incorporate based on your workplace's individual needs.

In addition to an IPV and the Workplace Policy:

There are many policies a workplace can consider that work as protective factors, decreasing the likelihood of violence occurring or minimizing the negative impacts on survivors. Investing in financial security and supports for employees decreases the risk and impact of violence for workers, creating safer workplace environments and communities.

Examples of financial empowerment policies::

1. Providing childcare or childcare assistance/vouchers.
2. Providing protected/confidential time off, not requiring court notes or other forms of proof that survivors may not be safe in obtaining or feel safe disclosing.
3. Paid leave benefits (see the next page for more details on how paid leave functions as a protective factor in preventing violence).

Paid Family Leave (PFL) & Violence Prevention

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) affects workplaces by causing reduced workplace performance, absenteeism and tardiness, and violent incidents in the workplace. Paid family leave policies are a promising strategy for preventing IPV while providing additional benefits to employees and families.

IPV accounts for nearly 30% of incidents of violence that take place in workplaces, harming IPV victims as well as their coworkers, supervisors, and the work environment (5).

Workers experiencing IPV experience significantly higher levels of absenteeism, tardiness, distraction, and lost productivity at work (6).

PFL policies enable workers to take partially or fully compensated time away from work to care for their own or a family member's serious health condition, or care for and bond with a new child. In the absence of federal legislation, thirteen states plus Washington D.C. have enacted statewide policies. Most states fund their policy through payroll contributions. While cost is a concern for most employers, **evidence suggests that state paid parental leave programs increase profitability or have no effect on employers' bottom line (7).** In states without paid family leave some employers have adopted their own versions.

PFL benefits employers by attracting workers, increasing retention, reducing employee absenteeism and health care costs, and increasing employee productivity and morale.

Tennessee does not have a statewide paid family leave system. There is a paid family leave policy for state employees and a voluntary opt-in system for the private sector whereby employers can buy paid family leave policies from private insurance companies. These insurance policies pay for a percentage or portion of an employee's income loss due to taking time off to welcome a new child or qualifying caregiving needs. A statewide rather than voluntary, private insurance system is needed to achieve the numerous positive impacts state paid leave policies have been found to have for employers and families (8).

Conclusion

Intimate Partner Violence is an issue that affects millions of people every year, with specific impacts to workers and workplaces. Workplaces can take steps to learn the warning signs of IPV and how to respond, including creating policies and procedures that center survivor safety and wellbeing. Taking proactive steps not only increases workplace safety, it also increases productivity, worker retention, and worker satisfaction. It also strengthens communities by increasing financial security, which decreases violence!



**Thank you for your commitment to creating safer workplaces
and communities!**

Resources

Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence

- Phone: 615-386-9406
- Website: www.TNCoalition.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline

- Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
- Text: 1-866-331-9474
- Website: www.thehotline.org

RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)

- Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE(4673)
- Website: www.rainn.org/

Workplaces Respond to Domestic and Sexual Violence

- Web: <https://www.workplacesrespond.org/>

Futures Without Violence

- Website: www.futureswithoutviolence.org/

National Network to End Domestic Violence

- Website: <https://nnedv.org/>

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

- Website: <https://ncadv.org>

CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

- Website:
www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/index.html

FreeFrom: Survivors at Work

- Website: www.freefrom.org/survivors-at-work/

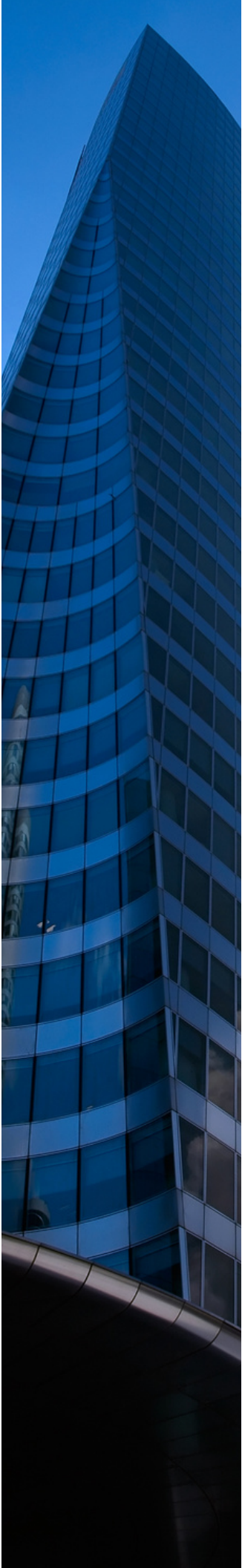
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Appendices

Appendix A: Printable Information Poster

Appendix B: Model Policy Guide (from Oregon)



Know the Early Warning Signs of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

- Extreme jealousy, demands to check your phone, follows you, frequent accusations of cheating
- Quick and intense temper or anger
- Intends to control who you hang out with, what you wear, etc.
- Makes insulting jokes about you, especially in front of others
- Controls all financial and other important decisions
- Always blames you or someone else for their own behaviors
- Demands that you follow strict gender roles

You Should Know:

It is not your fault.

- Abuse is always the fault of the person choosing violence, not the fault of the victim.

You are not alone.

- 41% of women and 26% of men experience IPV/domestic violence in their lifetime.

There is help available.

- The National Domestic Violence hotline is here to help.

Call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or text "START" to 88788 to talk

with someone confidentially who can listen and help you make a plan.

If You Are in Danger:

- **Call 9-1-1**
- Let HR or your immediate supervisor know if your abuser may come to your workplace or has harassed you while at work. They can help you make a workplace safety plan.

Model Workplace Policy Guide

Purpose

[Employer X] is committed to providing a workplace in which domestic violence is not tolerated or excused. The workplace should be a safe environment for everyone. This workplace policy is intended to increase awareness of domestic violence, help in responding to the needs of victims and preventing the perpetration of domestic violence by an employee or visitor to the workplace.

Definitions

Terms used in this workplace policy are defined as follows:

A. Domestic Violence:

A pattern of coercive control tactics carried out by an abuser against an intimate partner, family or household member (the victim) with the goal of establishing and maintaining power and control over the victim. These tactics can be physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and emotional.

B. Abuser:

A person who carries out a pattern of coercive tactics against an intimate partner, family or household member (the victim).

C. Victim:

The person against whom an abuser directs his/her coercive control and violent acts (physical, psychological, sexual, economic and emotional).

D. Intimate Partner, Family or Household Member:

Intimate partner, family or household member are persons legally married to one another; persons formerly married to one another; persons who have a child in common, regardless if married or have lived together at any time, and unrelated persons who are continually or at regular intervals living in the same household or who have in the past continually or at regular intervals lived in the same household.

E. Domestic Violence Service Provider:

Agency or a domestic violence advocate from the agency that helps victims of domestic violence. Victim services include crisis hotlines, shelters, transitional housing, group and/or individual counseling, counseling for children of victims, and advocacy with the criminal justice and legal systems. The agency or advocates from the agency also provide domestic violence training for workplaces and other community organization

F. Batterers Intervention Program:

A program that includes educational classes for abusers as part of a coordinated response by the community, courts and criminal justice agencies. Workplaces can work with their employees who are perpetrating domestic violence to access Batterers Intervention Programs in their community. The Batterers Intervention Program can include community education and training.

Model Policy Language

A. Education and Support for Employees Who Are Victims of Domestic Violence

1. [Employer X] will make available a list of resources for victims of domestic violence and abusers. The list will be posted in highly visible locations, such as bulletin boards, break rooms, rest rooms, health or first aid offices, company phone directories, and online information data bases (link to local domestic violence service providers, including Batterers Intervention Programs)
2. [Employer X] will make reasonable efforts to provide a safe environment for the victim.
3. [Employer X] will not discriminate against a victim of domestic violence in hiring, staffing, or other terms, conditions, or privileges of employment.

4. [Employer X] will maintain confidentiality and respect the victim's need to be self-directing. When appropriate, and with the victim's consent, provide information about resources related to issues of domestic violence in the workplace.

B. Leave Options for Employees Who Are Victims of Domestic Violence

1. [Employer X] will make reasonable efforts to help victims who need time off for medical and legal assistance, court appearances, counseling, relocation, or to make other safety arrangements (link to Domestic Violence Leave Law).
2. [Employer X] will grant leave with or without pay or adjust work load and assignments as needed (link to Domestic Violence Leave Law)
3. [Employer X] will assist victims regarding issues of leave, performance problems, safety needs, other needed services

C. Employee Payroll and Benefit Change Request

1. [Employer X] will make reasonable efforts to get company benefits in the victim own name when the victim leaves a spouse (or covered domestic partner).
2. [Employer X] will process the victim requests for making changes to his/her electronic payroll transfers.
3. [Employer X] will make reasonable effort to offer the victim a payroll advance to deal with domestic violence issues, if requested

D. Performance Issues Related to Being a Victim of Domestic Violence

1. [Employer X] is aware that victims may have performance issues because of domestic violence such as being late, missing days or trouble concentrating on work.
2. [Employer X] will make reasonable efforts to consider all aspects of the employee's situation and, to the extent possible, utilize all reasonable options to attempt to resolve the performance issues.
3. If reasonable attempts to resolve the performance issues are unsuccessful, [Employer X] will inform the employee that he/she may be eligible for paid or unpaid leave (see Domestic Violence Leave Law) and/or unemployment insurance (see Unemployment Insurance for Domestic Violence Victims) or other resources.

E. Employees Who Commit Acts or Threats of Domestic Violence

1. Any employee who threatens, harasses or abuses an intimate partner, family or household member at, or from, the workplace will be subject to corrective action up to and including dismissal. This includes employees who use workplace resources such as telephones, fax machines, e-mail, mail, vehicles or other means to threaten, harass or abuse an intimate partner, family or household member.
2. Employees who commit acts or threats of domestic violence may be late to work, have performance issues and difficulty concentrating on the job.
3. Some job positions may give an employee access to certain types of information or resources. If he or she uses this access to enable an abuser to harm the victim, that employee may be subject to corrective action up to dismissal.
4. Some employees may be licensed to possess firearms as a condition of employment. If such employee is arrested, convicted or the subject of an order of protection in a domestic violence related offense the employee's authority to possess a firearm may be unlawful under Federal and State Law. The employee is responsible to notify [Employer X] in the event any of these circumstances below occur.

Guidelines for the Employer and designated Human Resource Manager

1. Establish a relationship with domestic violence service providers in the community. One method of establishing a working relationship with a domestic violence service provider is to ask their staff to participate in workplace training on domestic violence.
2. Participate in domestic violence training coordinated through a local domestic violence service provider. The training should include, at a minimum, information on ways in which domestic violence impacts on the workplace and its potential impact on worker performance, overview of local domestic violence services and batterers intervention programs, and existing laws to protect victims and hold perpetrators of violence responsible`.
3. Arrange for training by domestic violence service providers for workplace supervisors and employees on how to identify indicators of domestic violence victimization and perpetration and how to intervene most effectively.
4. Maintain a list of domestic violence services available to victims. This list should include the phone number and description of local domestic violence service providers, such as services in other languages for example Spanish speaking advocates are available. Additionally, helpful information may include how to obtain restraining orders/orders of protection, contact the police and any other available community resources.
5. Post information about domestic violence in your work area, including information in multiple languages. Also, have information available where employees can obtain it without having to request it or be seen removing it.
6. Work with supervisors and union representatives to grant reasonable leave (see Domestic Violence Leave Law) and adjust work schedules or location of assignment for employees who are victims of domestic violence.
7. Maintain the confidentiality of domestic violence circumstances and any other referrals under this policy.
8. Consult legal counsel and advise supervisors when corrective actions are considered against employees who commit acts of domestic violence at [Employer X] work sites, or who are convicted of a crime as a result of domestic violence.
9. Work with the victim and, with the victim's consent, work with the supervisor, and other workplace resources such as human resource personnel, as well as law enforcement and domestic violence service providers, if necessary, to develop a personal workplace safety plan for the victim (see guidelines for a safety plan for employers and employees below).

Guidelines for a Workplace Safety Plan for Employers and Employees

A. For Employers

1. Employers will provide annual mandatory domestic violence training to all employees. The training will include workplace safety planning as well as information on community resources.
2. Employers are encouraged to collaborate with local domestic violence service providers to implement workplace domestic violence training.
3. When assisting an employee to develop a personal workplace safety plan, ask what changes, if any, could be made at their workplace to make them safer. Victims of domestic violence know their abusers better than anyone else. When it comes to their own safety, offer to assist them in developing a personal workplace safety plan.

4. If it is determined that other employees or customers are at risk of physical harm from an abuser, it is essential to take reasonable actions to provide protection for everyone at the workplace.

B. For Employees

1. Employees will be required to attend annual domestic violence training. The training will include workplace safety planning as well as information on community resources.
2. Consider supporting the victim in obtaining a restraining order/order of protection that includes a provision that the abuser must stay away from the workplace. A copy of the restraining order can be provided to the police, your supervisor, human resources director (if available), security (if available) or the reception area.
3. Ask co-workers and/or supervisors to call the police if the abuser threatens, harasses them or the victim at work.
4. Consider asking the victim to provide a picture of the abuser to the reception areas and/or security (if available).
5. Consider identifying an emergency contact person for the victim so the employer can contact if the victim does not show for work or is unable to contact during work hours.
6. Consider having security escort the victim to/from car or public transportation and/or obtaining special parking access, if available.
7. Where possible, consider allowing the victim to request a change in work schedule, work site, or work assignment if such a change is possible and would enhance safety at work.
8. If appropriate, consider having victim's incoming telephone calls limited at the workplace.
9. Where possible, discuss additional security measures with the on-site security department.
10. Review the safety of child care/school arrangements with the victim. If the victim has a restraining order, ask her to make sure the child care or school provider has a copy.



For more information of help developing policies contact Technical Assistance for Employers at the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries <http://www.oregon.gov/BOLI> or 971-673-0824.

