

WORKPLACE POLICY CHECKLIST

Newspapers carry stories every day about domestic violence that spills over into the workplace. The workplace may not be a safe haven when violence, or threats of violence, come to work. But workplaces can have certain safeguards and structures that can be of great help to workers who are abused at home. Make sure your company or organization is doing all that it can.

1. **EAP:**
Do you offer an Employee Assistance Program or other counseling service? Are counselors trained to provide counseling on domestic violence? At the very least, they should offer referrals to service providers in your area who specialize in domestic violence.
2. **Manager Training:**
Do managers know how to recognize the signs of domestic violence in their staff? Do they know the workplace policies that apply to the issue? Check to see if this important issue is a part of manager training.
3. **Security:**
Security can play a critical role in the safety of an employee at work. It may help to move a victim's workspace to a safer location if it is in a public area. If an employee has a restraining order against someone, or is being stalked, suggest that the employee provide a recent photograph of the batterer for security and/or reception areas. If the batterer comes to the victim's work, stalking laws and restraining orders can be applied. There are other steps security can take: special training in domestic violence, escorts to parked cars, installing extra lighting in the parking lot, and priority parking near the building for employees who fear an attack at work.
4. **Leave and Benefit Policies:**
Employers can offer leave or flexible schedules so that employees can go to court to testify, or to counseling or a shelter, without fear of losing their jobs. Temporary assignments are another option, if employees need to leave the area for a period of time to stay safe.
5. **Education:**
Employee training, Brown Bag seminars, newsletter articles, posters and brochures on domestic violence are all ways that an employer can create an environment where it is safe to talk about domestic violence.
6. **Financial Support:**
Emergency funds that offer financial support to employees in crisis can make a dramatic difference in the life of someone escaping domestic violence. Community resources need support as well: consider conducting a workplace drive to collect clothes, toys, furniture or money for a local domestic violence program or shelter.
7. **Working with Abusers:**
When an employee perpetrates domestic violence, either against a co-worker or on company property or time, the employer should take disciplinary action. Referrals should be made to the EAP or appropriate community treatment programs.
8. **Clear Human Resources Policies:**
Fair practices are key in dealing with domestic violence, including non-discrimination against victims in recruiting, hiring and promoting, and sensitivity in performance evaluation.
9. **Compliance Issues:**
Aside from the safety, ethical and bottom-line incentives for employers to develop positive policies regarding employees facing domestic violence, there are liability issues to consider. Some federal, state and local laws may mandate certain actions and policies on the part of an employer, including anti-discrimination laws, the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family and Medical Leave Act. Prompt and proper compliance and reasonable accommodations can reduce the risk of employer liability for harm that may come to an employee from domestic violence.