

## SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACES

One of the most critical factors in helping people experiencing domestic abuse find their way to a life free from abuse is a consistent, non-judgmental support system. This includes friends, family, neighbors, coworkers and...their employer. Employers don't always realize the power they have to support their employees who are being terrorized at home.

Although we often think of domestic abuse as being, well, domestic—the reality is that the problem doesn't stay at home when victims go to work. The abuse (and, at times, the abusive partner) follows that person to the workplace and significantly impacts their safety, productivity, attendance and general ability to perform job duties. Research shows that 96% of domestic abuse victims experience problems related to their abuse at their workplace, including 74% who are harassed by the person harming them while at work.

Domestic abuse is a public health and public safety issue that requires a community response. We all have a role to play and a responsibility to collectively create safety for all people wherever they are, including at work.

The good news is that there are many proactive steps that companies can take to create supportive and safer environments for their employees who are being abused. Some examples include:

Adopt strong policies demonstrating the company's commitment to supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse. These include:

- policies addressing confidentiality for employees who are experiencing abuse,
- non-discrimination/non-retaliation against employees who need support as a result of domestic abuse,
- leaves of absence and other flexibility for employees experiencing abuse,
- accountability for workers who commit workplace-related incidents of relationship violence,
- formal referral mechanisms, and many others.

A great resource for helping to create such policies is *Workplaces Respond to Domestic & Sexual Violence* at [workplacesrespond.org](http://workplacesrespond.org). Among other tools available through this online resource center, employers can follow a quick and simple template for creating domestic abuse related policies.

- Let employees know it's safe for them to ask for help from their employer if they are in a domestic abuse situation, without fear of being judged or having negative repercussions related to their job. If an employee does come to you for help, as their employer, you should let them know that you believe them and that you're glad they've come to you for support. Given that every individual's situation is unique, each person needs a unique plan and Emerge's 24/7, free, confidential, multilingual crisis hotline (520-795-4266) can help. You can offer to sit with the employee while they call our hotline if they find that helpful, or you can also call the hotline yourself to get support in how to best offer help to the employee. Let all department managers know to do the same.
- Develop security protocols for reacting to an employee's abusive partner who shows up at the workplace.
- Preventatively create safer, more secure work environments through the use of employee IDs/badges, security codes, etc. to reduce the chance of unauthorized visitors (e.g., abusive partners) accessing the worksite.
- Consider developing a "medical leave bank" for employees to donate time for when a coworker needs it as a result of domestic abuse.
- When requested by an employee, consider flexible schedules, rotating shifts, comp time, changing work spaces, etc. as needed to increase their safety.
- Partner with Emerge by participating in Domestic Violence Awareness Month and Paint Pima Purple activities to publicly proclaim the company's support for ending domestic abuse, provide information to all employees on how to best respond when a coworker is suffering from abuse, and provide victims with easy access to information on how to get help.
- Display posters and brochures with information about domestic abuse (available from Emerge) year-round.
- Respect a person's choices related to how they manage their safety in the situation – they know best what will be safest for them (which isn't always leaving the abusive partner)

We hope that all employers will consider which policies and practices they can adopt that will strengthen their ability to support victims of abuse and make a clear statement to all of their employees that abuse will not be tolerated. Emerge is also available for presentations to your management team or full staff related to domestic violence dynamics, how to support people experiencing domestic violence, and safety planning in the workplace.

#### **Emerge Center Against Domestic Abuse**

2545 E. Adams St., Tucson, AZ 85716

Phone: 520.795.8001

**24-hour Multilingual Crisis Line:** 520.795.4266 or 888.428.0101

**[www.emergecenter.org](http://www.emergecenter.org)**

