

Workplace Policy

Where Do I Start?

- Establish Company Position
- Developing Guidelines
- Training Employees
- Approaching Victims of Violence
- DV Checklist: Threat Assessment
- Implementing Safety Procedures
- Generating Awareness
- The Role of the Union

DV Policy Links

- Generic DV Policy Sample
- Altria Group, Inc. Policy
- Liz Claiborne DV Policy
- Mintz Levin DV Policy

Approaching Victims of Violence

If you or another employee suspects a co-worker is a victim of domestic violence, it is important to confront the employee in a professional, yet sensitive manner. When approaching the employee, remember that **you are NOT providing counseling**; this is to be left to trained professionals. Your role is to:

- Provide initial support
- Discuss the specific steps that can be taken to help this person stay safe in the workplace
- Refer them to the Employee Assistance Program or other appropriate DV resources

The following suggestions will help you if and when you need to initiate a conversation or react to self-disclosure:

- Meet in private
- Start by expressing concern ("I thought it was possible that you are being hurt by someone and I am concerned about you")
- State the facts of job performance, observations, co-workers concerns ("I noticed the bruises you had last week and you look upset and worried today")
- Be sensitive, don't accuse or diagnose; don't draw conclusions
- Listen to what the associate has to say and empower her/him to make decisions
- Make a strong statement of support ("No one deserves to be hit by someone else")
- Reassure the associate that her/his situation will not adversely affect how she/he is regarded at the company, barring continued performance issues (if there are any)
- Offer company and community resources (literature, EAP hotline, national domestic violence hotline, local domestic violence hotline, etc.)
- Develop a plan for assistance/performance improvement
- Set-up a strategy for follow-up -- being clear that no one in the company is a domestic violence counselor
- If available, identify any contacts in your company with particular training in the problem of violence against women. Encourage employees to contact these people if they have concerns
- Trained employees, counselors or employee assistance program staff can assist women in developing a safety plan. Every woman's circumstances will be unique, but an objective, trained listener can help her develop a program to minimize the risk of continued violence
- Reassure the employee that, if necessary, security will be informed of the situation and will provide necessary measures to protect the victim. If you don't have a security department, [click here](#).

If There Are Performance Problems

Regardless of whether the associate discloses abuse or not, you need to address any performance issues that exist. If you feel they are related to domestic violence, use the following outline:

- Find a private space to talk
- Clearly identify the performance problems you have seen
- Express empathy that sometimes "personal issues" can interfere with good performance
- If the signs of abuse are clear, gently urge the associate to share what may be upsetting her/him
- Remind the associate about the availability of the EAP and offer a referral
- Suggest ways to improve performance, being clear about the review process and the consequences
- If the associate does disclose during the conversation, ask the questions detailed on the [DV Threat Assessment Checklist](#)

Follow-up

The follow-up strategy is as important to the workplace as it is to the victim. Assign a case manager (likely a security supervisor or HR representative; whomever the associate is more comfortable with) to each incident.

Follow-up is mandatory - two weeks, four weeks, three months and so on until there is satisfactory resolution or until it is determined it is no longer necessary. Staying in contact with the victim will demonstrate your commitment to helping employees. With each follow-up conversation, any new information may change the plan of action. Even cases that do not seem dangerous at first can become risky.

This Web site is provided as an informational resource only and is not intended to be legal or professional advice. If you have questions about the application of issues raised to your particular situation, seek the advice of a competent attorney or other professional.