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University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension EC04-466

There's No Excuse For Abuse: Domestic Violence Affects the Workplace (Part 3 of a four part series)

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It's no secret that domestic violence is an epidemic that is profoundly affecting American communities and workplaces. The U.S. Justice Department reports that in 60,000 incidents of on-the-job violence each year, the victims immediately knew their attacker.

For many women suffering from domestic violence, the workplace is no haven because stalking, threats and violence follow them to their job. In the past, workplaces did little to address domestic violence issues. But today, businesses realize the great costs incurred from domestic violence in lost production estimated at $3-5 billion annually. Employers and labor organizations have begun to consider the special needs of their workers who may be abused or perpetrators of domestic violence, and the implications of those needs for corporate policy and programs. Employers and unions realize that domestic violence affects people in the workplace in many ways that have a direct bearing on productivity and effectiveness. Following are some steps employers, employees, and unions may take in the workplace to help end domestic violence.

- Discuss with management the possibility of adopting principles that would establish a workplace that is intolerant of domestic violence.
- Work with leadership to develop and implement personnel leave and benefit policies which recognize and are responsive to employees who are abused by intimate partners.
- Determine if the company program includes domestic violence services or referrals. If not, work with your human resource director to determine the possibility of expanding the program to address employee needs.
- Establish a training program for all supervisors and managers on how to respond when an employee is abused by an intimate partner.
- Sponsor a workshop at the workplace or in the community on domestic violence. Invite a survivor to speak about her experiences and to discuss the impact abuse had on her life and work.
- Distribute educational materials about domestic violence to all employees in the workplace. Display posters and brochures in public places. Make safety information available in private places such as the rest room or in paycheck envelopes.
- Large businesses may have a security guard. Small businesses can train management to provide security or notify the police about special safety needs of women who may be stalked at work.
- Set up meetings between law enforcement and management to facilitate appropriate information sharing.

- Conduct a drive in your workplace to collect items for your local domestic violence shelter. Food items, good used clothing, sheets and towels often are needed. Contact the shelter first to find out what is needed.
- Adopt a local shelter by collecting money from coworkers for a joint donation or getting a group to make a commitment of volunteer hours. Again, contact your local shelter to see what is needed. In many areas, volunteers must be trained.
- Adopt an action policy or statement for your workplace that specifies your opposition to domestic violence, your support for employees who have abusive partners and your support for their access to services, information and protection.

Components of the statement could include creating a safe workplace, creating a fair and equal workplace, creating an informed and productive workplace, and creating a socially responsible workplace where abusive behavior and harassment are not tolerated.

For help in domestic abuse or violence call any of the following:

In the event of an attack or immediate threat, call 911 or your local police.

Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition (NDVSAC)
Toll free crisis line 1-800-876-6238.
Web site: http://www.ndvsac.org

Kansas Crisis Hotline: 1-888-END-ABUSE
Outside Nebraska or Kansas, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE (7233) (voice) or 1-800-787-3224 (TDD).

File EC466 under FAMILY
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