

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (H&S Pr. 2)

Amendments to the Occupational Health & Safety Act (OH&S Act) now requires an employer to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker when they become aware or ought reasonably to be aware that domestic violence would likely expose a worker to physical injury while in the workplace.

There is no legal definition for Domestic Violence in the OH&S Act. However, it can be characterized as: A pattern of behavior used by one person to gain power and control over another with whom he/she has or has had an intimate relationship. This pattern of behavior may include physical violence, sexual, emotional or psychological intimidation, verbal abuse, stalking and using electronic devices to harass and control.

Recognizing Domestic Violence

Some victims may not realize that the actions they are enduring are domestic violence. Those around the victim and abuser may also not recognize the signs. The list below provides some examples of abusive behavior and the impact on the victim.

Attempts to prevent the victim from getting to work or looking for work, such as:

- Interfering with transportation by hiding or stealing the victim's car keys or transportation money.
- Hiding or stealing the victim's identification cards.
- Threatening deportation in a situation where the victim was sponsored
- Failing to show up to care for children.
- Physically restraining the victim.

The victim may:

- Try to cover bruises.
- Be sad, lonely, withdrawn and afraid.
- Have trouble concentrating on a task.
- Apologize for the perpetrator's behavior.
- Be nervous talking when the perpetrator is there.
- Make last-minute excuses/cancellations.
- Use drugs or alcohol to cope.
- Miss work frequently or more often than usual.

Interfering with the victim while at work by:

- Repeatedly phoning or e-mailing the victim.
- Stalking and/or watching the victim.
- Showing up at the workplace and pestering co-workers with questions about the victim



(where is she, who she's with, when will she be back, etc.).

- Lying to co-workers (she's sick today, she's out of town, she's home with a sick child, etc.).
- Threatening co-workers (if you don't tell me, I'll...).
- Verbally abusing the victim or co-workers.
- Displaying jealous and controlling behaviors.
- Destroying the victim's or organization's property.
- Physically harming the victim and/or co-workers.

The most common tactics are:

- Repeated harassing phone calls
- In-person harassing at the workplace

Supervisor Responsibilities

When a Supervisor becomes aware or ought reasonably to be aware that a staff member may be subjected to Domestic Violence, they should take the following steps:

- Take every precaution reasonable in the circumstance for the protection of the worker including the development of a Workplace Safety Plan.
- Encourage the victim to contact a professional (i.e. Victim Abuse Hotline) who can assist in the development of a Personal Safety plan.
- Incorporate this plan into the Workplace Safety Plan where possible.
- Encourage the victim to have the workplace included in the restraining order.
- Communicate reported incidents of Domestic Violence to the appropriate Senior Manager, Employee Services or Designate.
- Provide victim with information about the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

What Can a Co-Worker do?

- Encourage the colleague to talk to Supervisor.
- Provide information about Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Support them with actions outlined in Workplace Safety Plan.
- Report any signs of abuse to your immediate Supervisor.
- Encourage all workers to report domestic violence that they witness.

Other Resources

- Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services (VCARS) 416-314-2447
- Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres www.satcontario.com

