



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AT WORK: SUPPORTING YOUR COLLEAGUE



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Domestic violence constitutes the behavior and actions of one person to gain control and power over someone they are involved with in an intimate or personal relationship. Such behavior includes physical, sexual, emotional, verbal and intellectual abuse and violence. It can be prevalent at work and remain hidden from everyone where a fellow worker can be the victim, or even the abuser. When signs of domestic violence appear at work, it may create a situation where the employees or employer would have to step in to support the victim or handle the abuser. Not only does this create a difficult situation for the worker involved in domestic violence, but it can also be a safety risk for other workers. The question remains, how can you help your fellow worker?

There are multiple ways to help and support colleagues at the work place who may be facing domestic violence, in any capacity. Domestic violence can present itself in various ways at work:

- The abuser harassing the victim at the workplace

- The abuser harassing other workers or being violent at the work place regarding whereabouts of the victim
- The victim showing poor working capacity and/or behavioural change
- Absence of the victim from meetings and missing deadlines
- Visible signs of violence on the victim or the victim hiding bruises or marks of physical violence.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If signs of domestic violence are visible at the workplace, and you want to support your colleague, start with taking small steps. Observation and identification of signs of domestic violence is the first key step when trying to support your colleague. Following are some ways to help and support your colleague, depending if they are the:

VICTIM	ABUSER
<p>Slowly and gently initiate the conversation, show your colleague you believe in them</p> <p>Offer support and resources for her to contact such as Employee Assistance Programs, Counselling services, police or the regional Domestic Abuse helpline.</p> <p>Inform supervisor, encourage a support group/network</p> <p>Listen, be patient and do not pass judgement</p> <p>Encourage the importance of their safety and dependents - DO NOT encourage victim to confront their abuser</p>	<p>Approach the topic carefully, and when fellow worker is calm – Your Safety is key</p> <p>Be direct about your observations but do not accuse</p> <p>DO NOT get involved in a confrontation with the abuser or an event of violence yourself</p> <p>Inform your supervisor/employer of the abuser and the observations. Call the police if situation escalates</p> <p>Convey available resource information such as Employee Assistance Program or Counselling services.</p>

REFERENCES

<http://canadianlabour.ca/how-does-domestic-violence-impact-people-work>

https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/violence_domestic.html

<https://www.sadvreatmentcentres.ca/>