Partner Violence: Recognition & Response in the Workplace

November 10, 2021
Partner Violence: Recognition & Response in the Workplace
What You Need to Know

National Safety Council
November 10, 2021
Today’s Discussion
STANDING FIRM

• Help employers understand the financial, safety and human costs of partner violence in the workplace.

• Equip employers with the tools necessary to take action.
Today’s Session

• What is partner violence?
• Its impact in the workplace
• Safety-specific considerations
• An employer response
Partner Violence Can Affect Anyone
Andrea’s Story
How Prevalent is Partner Violence?

1 in 4 women experience and report contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner and an IPV-related impact during their lifetime.

And 1 in 10 men.

Source: Center for Disease Control
COVID-19 and Partner Violence

• Stay at home is not safe at home.

• Partner violence increases during emergencies and research now points towards the same trend with the COVID-19 pandemic.
  — Domestic violence incidents in the U.S. increased by 8.1% following the imposition of stay-at-home orders.

• There are short-term and long-term implications for victims returning to work in-person and those who will continue to work remotely.

Sources: National Commission on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice
### COVID-19 and Partner Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Return to Onsite</strong></th>
<th><strong>Remain Remote</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• As employees in abusive relationships are asked to return to the office or worksite:</td>
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<td>— Returning may be the victim’s first opportunity to escape their abuser.</td>
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<td>— The employee’s return to the worksite creates a loss of control for the abuser, acting as a trigger, and presenting an elevated concern for risk of violence at the workplace.</td>
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<td>— The perpetrator may prevent the employee from returning to the worksite.</td>
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<td>• Victims are likely experiencing heightened physical and emotional abuse.</td>
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<td>• The loss of work and school as an escape valve and the increased stress created by job losses, financial setbacks and forced contact can increase the risk of violence and abuse.</td>
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<td>• Be aware that phone conversations, emails, and text messages may be monitored by an abusive partner and managers/coworkers need to aware of how to safely intervene, if concerned.</td>
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What is Partner Violence?

Develop and maintain control over their partner.

- Psychological Abuse
- Physical Violence
- Sexual Violence
- Financial Control
- Interference with Ability to Work
- Isolation from Friends and Family
- Threats and Intimidation
- Threats to Harm Children and Pets
Why Do Victims Stay?

On average, a victim will leave an abusive relationship **seven** times before leaving for good.

Source: National Domestic Violence Hotline
Partner Violence and the Workplace

Violence against women directly impacts pay equity in the U.S.

Partner violence results in elevated risks and adverse health outcomes both physical and mental.

Almost 1/3 of all violent events in the workplace are tied to partner violence.

Sources: World Health Organization; McKinsey Global Institute; Allstate Purple Purse; Department of Labor
Obstacles to Awareness

It is an important issue, but it won’t happen here.
• We don’t look for what we don’t believe is there. The first step to addressing partner violence in the workplace is to acknowledge the issue.
• No workplace is immune.

This is a personal issue.
• Partner violence is a workplace issue, not just a 'personal' issue. Even if the violence occurs away from work, it has significant impacts on the workplace.
• Employees don’t leave partner violence at home.

We are not equipped to address this issue.
• And that’s true, but an employer is not expected to be the expert. It is about being able to respond effectively.
• Create a culture where employees are comfortable to disclose.
Considerations for Safety Professionals

The General Duty Clause – 29 USC §654
Section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (the "General Duty Clause") requires an employer to furnish to its employees:
"employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees..."
Considerations for Safety Professionals

• State/Local Requirements
  — The state of Hawaii enacted requires employers to make reasonable safety accommodations for employees who are victims of domestic or sexual violence.
  — California requires employers to make reasonable accommodations to help ensure a victim’s safety while at work.

• Negligence lawsuits can result from an employer’s failure to implement adequate safety measures to address threats and prevent violence in the workplace due to intimate partner relationships.
An Employer Response

**Leadership Buy-In**
- Support from leadership is critical.
- Leadership buy-in provides the momentum necessary to initiate and sustain action.
- Empathy by leadership is extremely impactful, particularly for employees in violent relationships.

**Policy and Procedures**
- Communicates the organization’s recognition of the issue and support for employees.
- Provides leaders and employees with the information they need to know when a situation arises in the workplace.

**Education**
- Educating employees is imperative. It is important to ensure that individuals respond effectively.
- “Setting the context” provides the why for employees.
- Sustainability of the message and information is key.
### An Employer Response: Resources

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<tr>
<th>Internal Resources</th>
<th>Employee Assistance Program</th>
<th>Community Resources</th>
<th>Local Shelters and Counseling Services</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online Resource Center</td>
<td>Hotlines/Helplines</td>
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<td>Paid Safe Leave,</td>
<td>(24/7)</td>
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<td>Leave Banks or Emergency</td>
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<td>Funds</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Apps (e.g. RUSafe)</td>
<td>Legal Aid (often pro</td>
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An Employer Response: Safety Planning at Work

A *workplace safety plan* sets out specific actions that will be taken to help keep the workplace and all workers safe from threats of domestic partner violence.

A *personal workplace safety plan* is designed to keep a specific employee who is experiencing domestic partner violence safe while at work.
How should you approach a coworker that might be a victim or perpetrator of partner violence?

What resources are available to assist you or a coworker who may be a victim or perpetrator of partner violence?

How should you share these resources with a coworker and stay up to date on what is available?

What signs would you see?

What might cause you to think a coworker might be a victim or perpetrator of partner violence?

What do you say? What should you not say? Who can help if you are concerned about a coworker?

What resources are available to assist you or a coworker who may be a victim or perpetrator of partner violence?
Koppers Inc.

• Global producer of carbon compounds, chemicals, and treated wood products.
• 2,100 employees; dozens of locations across North America.
• In 2019, CEO expanded Koppers “Zero Harm” initiative to focus on employee’s health and safety in and outside the workplace.
Koppers Inc.

• Identified partner violence as a safety risk to employee health and wellbeing.
  — Included partner violence as an identified workplace threat in Koppers workplace violence policy.
  — Introduced 10 days of unpaid leave annually to support individuals in abusive relationships.
    o Negotiated successfully with Koppers unions to include in collective bargaining agreements.
  — Trained Pittsburgh-area managers initially; expanded training to include all U.S. based managers and staff/hourly employees.
Customized training including a Koppers-specific introduction.

Delivered training at manufacturing plants via standing toolbox meetings.

Next step: Training being integrated into onboarding for all new employees.
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