

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE Goes to Work

## What should employers do?

By helping people experiencing domestic violence (predominantly women), employers can reduce workplace violence risks, increase productivity, and protect themselves from liability by ensuring that a domestic violence response is part of all workplace safety plans.

## Best practices for employers

A safe and supportive work environment can provide a person affected by domestic violence with a safe haven. The work environment can also provide information about services that employees can access to enable them to safely remain in their relationship or leave, if they choose.

Supporting your employee who is experiencing domestic violence provides you with the opportunity to build loyalty and trust and can improve the value your employee adds to your workplace.

## Ensure a safe and secure workplace

Employers have a duty of care to their employees and responsibility for providing a safe and healthy workplace. Providing safety can include:

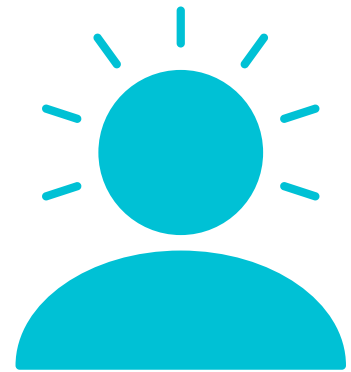
- Reassignment, modified schedules, or a transfer to a different position, workstation, and/or work telephone number.
- Providing a personal alarm.
- Other adjustments to job structure, workplace facility or work environment in response to actual or threatened domestic violence.
- Assistance with an employee safety plan and working with your security and/or local law enforcement to develop an emergency response plan.

Consult your local Domestic Violence Resource Service and/or specialist legal services for assistance on compliance and updating workplace protocols and policies.



## Be AWARE that

- all employees are entitled to five days domestic and family violence leave regardless of award coverage (Fair Work Ombudsman, n.d.)
- detailed support and resources are available to strengthen safety and other protocols to better support victims of domestic and family violence within Queensland workplaces (DFV Work Aware, 2021)
- domestic and family violence can impact on a victim's capacity to ask for help directly, as the violence can intersect with additional barriers to safety such as gender, race, citizenship, language, geographic location, and other identity or situational factors (DFV Work Aware, 2021)



## Train and educate

Provide training and information to employees, managers, and human resource staff in best practice for recognising and responding to domestic violence, the victim's rights, the employer's obligations, and where the victim can find help. Training and education raises awareness and sensitivity and makes the workplace safer for all employees, while increasing the organisation's reputation for best practice.

## Connect and create

Create a work environment where it is safe to talk about domestic violence and where employees experiencing domestic and family violence feel supported. Connect with local referral options for employees who use or who are experiencing domestic and family violence, and ensure that the workplace employee assistance program has specialised domestic and family violence counselling, safety planning, and risk assessment capabilities.





## When a colleague is a victim of domestic violence - what should you do?

Recognising signs that a colleague is being abused gives you the opportunity to support and encourage them to talk about their situation and enables them to explore their options. A place of work should be safe for an individual and their co-workers, so it is in everyone's best interest to look for the signs and take steps to be supportive.

Co-workers and employers should always be supportive, respectful, and encouraging when they communicate to a victim that they are willing to help - if and when their colleague chooses to discuss their situation.

If you know or believe that a colleague is experiencing domestic violence, communicate your concerns for their safety.

If your colleague chooses to disclose about their abusive relationship to you, consider the following responses:

- "It's not your fault. You do not deserve to be treated this way."
- "You're not alone, and I'm glad you told me about what you're going through."
- "I'm here for you, and you also have support within this organisation."
- "What can I do to help you?"



Your colleague needs support and validation, not judgement. Leaving is only possible when they believe it is safe to do so.

- Be clear that your role is to support and help, not to judge. Maintain confidentiality of your colleague's domestic violence situation. Encourage them to seek help from a domestic violence service and offer to attend with them if they need your support.
- Report any threats of violence you experience or witness to your manager/supervisor, site security personnel, the police, or human resource staff.
- Increase your knowledge about supporting someone experiencing domestic and family violence (Queensland Government, 2021)
- Tell your colleague that seeking help may seem confronting, but help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year from confidential telephone counsellors who understand their situation. Call DVConnect on 1800 811 811. There's a list of services on the Queensland Government (2021b) Where can I find help? site.

Warning signs that a colleague is being abused at home can include:

- Persistent lateness due to being prevented or delayed from getting to work.
- Absenteeism without explanation.
- Needing time-off beyond usual life commitments.
- Their partner visiting at work in inappropriate ways.
- Receiving repeated upsetting phone calls/emails/texts.
- Staying at work beyond what is reasonable.
- Changes in quality of work performance.
- Being obsessed with time or needing to always leave on time.
- Appearing withdrawn and isolated.
- Making last minute cancellations.
- Apologising for a partner or family member's behaviour.
- Loss of control over the work schedule – i.e., the partner controls dropping off and picking up from work.
- Wearing clothing to cover up bruises (DFV Work Aware, 2021).



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