

When DV comes to work, companies are starting to *recognize, respond, refer*

With a growing awareness that domestic violence can move from the home to the work place with ease — and cost employers money and lost production — more businesses are taking steps to make sure managers and employees know the signs of abuse and what to do about it.

In Memphis, Tennessee, the Erase Domestic Crime Collaborative, a partnership of nonprofit and government groups, uses three words to train groups when family violence comes to work: recognize, respond and refer.

Recognize

Recognizing the signs begins with noticing bruises, black eyes and cuts. But there are other symptoms to watch for, including:

- Tardiness or unexplained absences
- Anxiety, lack of concentration, changes in job performance
- A tendency to remain isolated
- Disruptive phone calls, emails, visits from intimate partners
- Sudden requests to be moved from public locations
- Frequent financial problems indicating a lack of access to money
- Inappropriate clothes/accessories
- Sudden change of address
- Time off requested for court appearances

Respond

Employers can respond to domestic violence, or the threat of it, by first taking a position that the company will not tolerate abuse of employees at work and encouraging employees to disclose threats and potential incidents. Comprehensive written policies will make the company position clear.

Employees facing domestic violence should be allowed to seek medical and counseling services. The special needs of abused employees should be considered, including time off from work as situations require.

Some businesses hold workshops to train their managers and workers about domestic violence and company policies concerning abuse.

Security, of course, should be examined. A safe work place requires more than security cameras. There should be a business-wide security plan and all employees should know it well.

Refer

Referrals for help can begin with an internal resource if the company has an Employee Assistance Program. Make sure EAP services are well known and communicated clearly to employees on a regular basis.

Most communities have other resources that can be helpful. In Memphis, several agencies and faith-based groups offer services for DV victims and their families. Long-time service providers include Memphis Area Legal Services, Exchange Club Family Center, the YWCA of Greater Memphis, and the Family Safety Center, which is scheduled to open in late 2011.

Be sure employees are aware of available resources, and provide them with contact information.

A complete list of community resources, which is updated on a regular basis, can be found at www.erasedomesticcrime.com. For further information on local efforts to prevent domestic violence contact Deborah M. Clubb at the Memphis Area Women's Council, 901.378.3866 or dclubb@memphiswomen.org.