

Employees and Domestic Violence

Intimate partner violence in the workplace may occur. Victims may be dealing with a partner who follows him or her to work and displays stalking behavior. Although it is not a supervisor's place to counsel employees about their personal relationships, providing a safe work environment is an employer's responsibility. An alert and supportive supervisor can make a difference. It is important to understand that an employee may not be ready to admit that she or he has been victimized by a partner or family member and may choose not to discuss the topic. Managers and supervisors should respect this decision but should give information about available resources. By recognizing the signs, consulting with your [HR Consultant](#) and the EACC, and assisting the employee with getting the right help at the right time, you can help the employee and reduce any risk to the workplace.

Workplace-Related Incidents: Workplace-related incidents of domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence, and stalking include acts, attempted acts, or threatened acts by or against employees, the families of employees, and/or their property, that imperil the safety or wellbeing of any person associated with an employee of UAB, regardless of whether the act occurred in or outside the organization's physical workplace. An employee is considered to be in the workplace while in, or utilizing the resources of the employer, including but not limited to facilities, work sites, equipment, or vehicles, or while on work-related travel.

■ If an Employee Self-Discloses

GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGER/SUPERVISOR

- Communicate your concerns for the employee's safety. Communicate that you are concerned for the safety of her/his children if there are any.
- Tell the employee that you believe her/him and that what is happening is wrong. No one deserves to be hurt. (The abuser may say, "You made me do it, it's your fault.")
- Tell the employee that the EACC and UAB Police can help with safety planning, based on the wishes and needs of the employee.
- Be clear that your role is to try to help and not to judge. The employee needs to know that someone cares, will listen and can help her/him find the right resources.
- Refer to the EACC as a resource with expertise in counseling employees who are living with domestic violence and knowledge about services. If the employee chooses not to use the EACC, reiterate safety and refer to other community resources.
- Discuss concerns about the employee's situation confidentially with the EACC for consultation and support as needed, with the UAB Police Department or BTAM if there is a concern about workplace safety, or with Human Resources regarding earned time or paid time off, leaves and performance issues. Do not discuss the employee's situation with anyone else without permission.
- A victim may choose to stay in or return to an abusive relationship out of fears for safety, economic survival, religious convictions or out of shame. As managers and supervisors, it is not your place to counsel the employee or express frustration, but rather to refer to helpful resources.

What Not to Say:

- Why don't you just leave?
- What did you do to provoke your partner?
- Why did you wait so long to tell someone?
- Don't use labels such as "battered" or "abused."
- Don't tell the employee what she/he must do.
- DO NOT confront the individual about your suspicions of abuse.

What to Do:

- If possible, rework the employee's work assignment or schedule to decrease stress.
- Follow up to see how the employee is doing.
- Ask general questions such as "How are you doing?" or "How are things going?"
- Respect the employee's privacy, even if you think she/ he is still in an abusive relationship.
- Maintain your relationship as manager/supervisor, not as counselor.
- DO share your concern about their changes in behavior, and their safety and wellbeing.

■ Signs & Symptoms of a Victim of Violence

Look for a pattern rather than one sign/symptom.

- Repeated discussion of marital/relationship problems
- Flowers/gifts sent to employee at the workplace for no apparent reason
- Bruises, chronic headaches, abdominal pains, muscle aches
- Recurrent vaginal and bladder infections as reported by employee
- Vague, non-specific medical complaints
- Sleeping or eating disorders
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Signs of fear, anxiety, depression
- Fatigue
- Intense startle reactions
- Difficulty in making decisions alone
- Suicidal or homicidal thoughts
- Tension around receiving repeated personal phone calls
- Nightmares/flashbacks
- Tardiness, or very early arrival at work
- Unplanned or increased use of paid time off
- Decrease in job performance
- Unkempt or disheveled appearance
- Inability to concentrate

■ EACC Domestic Violence Policy

The EACC seeks to maintain an office environment that is free from violence or threats of violence against clients or potential clients. Therefore, partner violence between couples should be shared with your counselor in order to assist with safety planning. Partner violence is defined as any on-going physical violence, sexual violence, intimidation, and/or stalking behavior between persons within an intimate relationship.

The EACC will not engage in couples or marital therapy with clients when such behavior is evident due to the volatile dynamics of the relationship, which may exacerbate the abuse. Individual therapy is the appropriate modality of treatment for both parties; however, the EACC reserves the right to refuse treatment of one client to protect the wellbeing of another client.