

Recognizing workplace signs of domestic violence

What is domestic violence?

Also known as intimate partner violence, domestic abuse or relationship abuse, domestic violence is a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship.

Is someone a victim?

How can you tell if an employee or a co-worker is a victim of domestic violence? No two cases are identical, but there are red flags that frequently signal that someone is being exposed to abuse.

Signs in the workplace

- Significant changes in work performance, such as poor concentration, errors, and slowness.
- Frequent (and often unexplained) absenteeism or lateness.
- Unusual and suspicious changes to workday such as requests to leave early or change schedules.
- Reluctance to leave for home at the end of workday.
- Unusually high number of personal phone calls/text messages.
- An emotional response to personal phone calls/text messages.



Watch for signs

isolation • distress/anxiety/flat mood
depression/suicidal • visible injuries
denial • inappropriate clothing/makeup

What you might notice

- Unusual isolation from and unwillingness to interact with fellow co-workers.
- Frequently having to check in with their partner.
- Emotional distress or “flat” behavior.
- Tearfulness, depression, or comments about suicide.
- Visible signs of anxiety and fear.

- Visible injuries such as bruises, black eyes, and broken bones, often brushed aside as “being clumsy” or “having accidents.”
- Reacting to questions about visible injuries by strong denials that anything is wrong.
- Wearing clothing that are inappropriate for the season or workplace, such as long sleeves and turtlenecks in warm weather.
- Heavier makeup or wearing sunglasses indoors.

Partner’s behavior

- Frequent and disruptive visits to the workplace by current or former partner.
- Intrusive questions about the employee or workplace by partner.
- Seeing partner waiting in parking lot or near workplace during work hours.
- Comments from employee hinting about problems in home life, such as partner’s bad moods, temper, or substance abuse.
- Employee never has money at work or states that partner controls money.

Is someone an abuser?

People who are abusing their partners at home may be model employees at work, never showing signs of violent behavior. However, others may behave in ways that suggest they engage in abuse, such as:

- Frequent absenteeism or lateness blamed on situations at home.
- Bullies other employees.
- Calls their partner repeatedly during the workday, often leading to confrontation.
- Denies problems or blames others such as partner for problems.
- Unwilling to listen to criticism or reacts defensively.
- Badmouths partner while at work and behaves as though they are superior.

For help with any of the above or if one of your employees needs assistance, we stand ready to assist. Call the Sheltering Wings Help Line at 317-745-1496 (24 hours).

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