

How to talk with a co-worker or employee who is experiencing abuse

If you suspect that an employee or co-worker is the victim of domestic violence, it's okay to reach out to them to understand the situation and offer help.

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.

Never ask this question

Well-meaning people often ask victims "Why don't you just leave?" Not only does that question place the blame on the victim, but domestic violence situations are complex. Leaving an abuser may put a victim at significantly higher risk for increased violence, including murder. The victim may also lack resources to leave safely, be worried about children or pets or has been threatened if they try to leave.

Ways to offer support

If you believe that one of your employees or co-workers may be a victim, approach them and start a private conversation with them.

- Follow your company's domestic violence policy if one is available.
- Communicate your concern and let them know you are here for them if they need support. Say what you have noticed to be different.
- Assure them that you and the company will help.
- Ask what you can do to ensure their safety.
- Make sure they're aware of resources available to them, such as an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and the local domestic violence agency.
- Document any noticeable injuries, incidents, or unusual behaviors.
- Be sure to abide by all legal responsibilities.

In addition, there may be situations in which both the victim and the abuser are employees.

ASK QUESTIONS: Is your employee at High Risk?

Are they experiencing:



he/she spying & controlling the victim



he/she threatening the victim/children



he/she has access to a weapon

Is the victim at risk?

Domestic violence shelters and law enforcement officials use several questions to determine whether a victim is at higher risk for increased violence and homicide.

If victims answer "yes" to any of these questions, they are viewed as a high risk:

- Has he/she ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a weapon?
- Has he/she threatened to kill you or your children?
- Do you think he/she might try to kill you?

If victims answer "yes" to at least four of these questions, they are also seen as high risk:

- Does he/she have a gun or can he/she get one easily?
- Has he/she ever tried to strangle you?
- Is he/she violently or constantly jealous or does he/she control most of your daily activities?
- Have you left him/her or separated after living together or being married?
- Is he/she unemployed?
- Has he/she ever tried to kill himself/herself?
- Do you have a child that he/she knows is not his/hers?
- Does he/she follow or spy on you or leave threatening messages?

If you or a colleague/employee need help, talk to your supervisor or call the Sheltering Wings Help Line at 317-745-1496 (24 hours).

SHELTERING WINGS