

## What Employers Can Do To Make a Difference

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- ◆ **Establish sound workplace policies.** Lead efforts to develop and implement workplace policies. Take all disclosures of abuse—whether in or out of the workplace—or security concerns seriously. Respond promptly, and investigate allegations thoroughly.
- ◆ **Form partnerships.** Establish partnerships among management, unions, and community-based organizations to address violence against women in the workplace.
- ◆ **Communicate workplace policies.** Publicize workplace policies to management, supervisors, and all employees.
- ◆ **Train employees.** Train management, supervisors, and all employees in how to respond when a coworker is a victim or perpetrator of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking.
- ◆ **Develop safety plans.** Work with victims to develop personal safety plans for women while they are at work, including safety plans for coworkers as appropriate. Recognize the continuum of sexual violence, from sexual harassment to sexual assault.
- ◆ **Provide comprehensive health care coverage.** If possible, offer health care coverage that includes mental health care and does not discriminate against victims of sexual assault and domestic violence.
- ◆ **Mentor small businesses.** Help small businesses develop tools and resources to address violence against women.
- ◆ **Provide adequate security.** Ensure adequate security for all employees. Conduct background checks on employees of security firms.
- ◆ **Distribute resources proactively.** Use company conferences, Web sites, and publications to provide employees with information and resources on sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.
- ◆ **Develop intervention strategies.** Devise and implement effective strategies detailing how to intervene when employees harass, sexually assault, batter, or stalk.

## Chapter 8

# Promoting Safety and Nonviolence in the Workplace

**M**any victims of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking are working women, which makes the workplace a central point for intervention and prevention. For some women, work may be the only place in which they are away from their abuser. For other women, perpetrators (who may be coworkers or outsiders) sexually harass, physically or sexually assault, or stalk them in the workplace.

Data from the National Crime Victimization Surveys for 1992–96 indicate that during each of the study years, more than 42,400 American women reported they were sexually assaulted while working or on duty.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of whether sexual assault occurs in or out of the workplace, the experience can impair an employee’s work performance, require that she take time away from work, and undermine her professional life. Although not the focus of this discussion, sexual harassment—a serious form of sex discrimination that can include sexual assault—remains a significant issue in the workplace for both employees and companies. In 1999, more than 15,000 sexual harassment charges were filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and state and local fair employment practice agencies, up from 10,500 in 1992. Women are nine times more likely than men to quit their jobs because of sexual harassment, five times more likely to transfer, and three times more likely to lose their jobs.<sup>2</sup> A 1994 survey of federal workers estimated that incidents of sexual harassment cost the government \$327 million because of job turnover, sick leave, and individual and work group productivity losses.<sup>3</sup>

Statistics indicate that stalkers commit a significant number of violent acts against their victims in or around where victims work,<sup>4</sup> creating greater incentives for employers to enhance security for such victims while the victims are at work. This is particularly true when stalkers are coworkers of the victims. More than 25 percent of stalking victims lost time from work because of the stalking, and 7 percent of these employees never returned to work.<sup>5</sup>

An increasing number of companies and unions are recognizing the adverse effect of domestic violence on the workplace. Specifically, costs to employers can be measured in lost productivity, absenteeism and turnover, increased health care costs, and other direct and indirect expenses. In recent surveys, more than three-fourths of human resource professionals agreed that domestic violence is a workplace issue,<sup>6</sup> and two-thirds of senior corporate executives agreed that their company’s financial performance would benefit from addressing domestic violence among their employees.<sup>7</sup>

Although more employers and unions are addressing domestic violence as a workplace issue, less attention has been paid to sexual assault and stalking. Several major corporations paved the way to addressing domestic violence by developing comprehensive policies and sharing information with colleagues. These efforts can be broadened to address other forms of violence against women and include separate workplace education and intervention initiatives on sexual assault and stalking.<sup>8</sup> Helping small businesses that employ 50 or

fewer people collect information, develop networks, and offer tools to implement cost-effective programs represents an additional challenge. Smaller workplaces—including fast food restaurants—may employ more young women, who are statistically at greatest risk for sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.<sup>9</sup>

As companies and labor organizations continue to develop and expand initiatives to end workplace violence, community-based organizations working with survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence should be seen as collaborative partners. Sexual assault and domestic violence advocates can support and guide efforts to address violence against women in the workplace, including providing personnel training. In turn, businesses and unions can train community-based program staff to work effectively with the business community, labor organizations, and employed victims.

Outlined below are specific actions community-based organizations, businesses, employers, and labor organizations can take to create safe, nonviolent workplaces and play a role in ending violence against women.

## What Businesses, Employers, and Labor Organizations Can Do

**1. Develop and implement written policies that address sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking. Ensure that these policies apply to all employees, including managers and supervisors.**

- ◆ Use specific guidelines rather than vaguely worded “zero tolerance” statements when writing such policies.
- ◆ Demonstrate strong employer and union leadership support for such policies.
- ◆ Issue policies (including those that specifically target young employees) to all employees, interns, and contractors in a form that is accessible to those who do not speak English, are hard of hearing, have limited reading skills,

or have cognitive and physical disabilities. Publicize that such policies exist.

- ◆ Prohibit discrimination against employees who disclose their experiences with violence.
- ◆ Provide victims with avenues to confidentially disclose victimization and guide them on ways to seek assistance that safeguard privacy and confidentiality.
- ◆ Take all disclosures of abuse and security concerns seriously, whether in or out of the workplace. Respond promptly, and investigate allegations thoroughly.
- ◆ Offer victims paid and unpaid leave options to allow victims to obtain protective orders and seek counseling.
- ◆ Devise appropriate and feasible options for a victim whose perpetrator is a coworker.
- ◆ Extend policies and services to secondary survivors, such as the partner of a sexual assault survivor or children of a domestic violence victim, as possible.
- ◆ Apply all policies to same-sex sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking victims.

**2. Teach all employees about intervention and prevention strategies for sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.**

- ◆ Teach all employees how to respond to coworkers who are victims or perpetrators of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.
- ◆ Ask employees to protect the confidentiality of victims whenever possible.
- ◆ Educate and train small businesses via local chambers of commerce, small business trade organizations, and professional associations.
- ◆ Ensure that information is accessible to employees who do not speak English, are hard of hearing, have limited reading skills, or have cognitive or physical disabilities.

**3. Provide benefits that support victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking.**

- ◆ Provide victims with flexible and paid administrative leave or sick days, permit them to use the Family and Medical Leave Act, and allow them to use flextime during the workday so that they may have time to address issues related to victimization.
  - ◆ Offer health care coverage that includes mental health care comparable to other health care benefits. Such benefits are particularly helpful to adult survivors of child sexual abuse.
  - ◆ Ensure that health care plans do not discriminate against victims of sexual assault or domestic violence.
  - ◆ Provide assistance to victims of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking through an employee assistance program.
  - ◆ Provide flexibility and support for employees with special childcare needs as a result of their victimization.
  - ◆ Provide victims with emergency financial and legal assistance. Offer them relocation options, when appropriate. Extend access to support programs to part-time employees.
  - ◆ Identify community resources that may offer the support and assistance needed by employees of small businesses that are unable to provide these benefits. Publicize that such resources exist.
- 4. Reduce the risk of workplace assaults.**
- ◆ Develop plans in collaboration with survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking to address immediate safety issues if the perpetrator is also a coworker of the survivor.
  - ◆ Implement safety measures, such as escorts or emergency telephones, and provide adequate security at entrances and exits (e.g., denial of admission to perpetrators).
  - ◆ Supply sufficient lighting in areas used by employees.
  - ◆ Provide appropriate workplace safety training to employees, particularly security and reception personnel.

- ◆ Furnish at-risk employees who are in the field or located in isolated worksites with cellular phones or security alarms.

**5. Work closely with employees threatened by an abuser or stalker to develop personal safety plans.**

- ◆ Consult victims concerning their wants and needs.
- ◆ Offer to transfer victims to different offices or worksites whenever feasible. Ensure that victims are not unfairly transferred in lieu of the perpetrator when the abuser is also a coworker of the victim.
- ◆ Vary or revise a victim's work schedule, change her telephone extension or e-mail address, and offer to assist her in monitoring or documenting harassing telephone calls, faxes, and e-mails.
- ◆ Ensure that victims who take a reasonable period of leave will still have job security.
- ◆ Suspend disciplinary actions against employees whose productivity or attendance has deteriorated due to their victimization.
- ◆ Help victims obtain services provided by law enforcement, legal aid, domestic violence shelters, and rape crisis centers.
- ◆ Permit victims to exercise flexible work schedules and leave policies so they can participate in the criminal justice process and recover from trauma.
- ◆ Protect both clients and employees against assault, particularly in workplace settings dealing with vulnerable populations, such as health care facilities, mental health care institutions, nursing homes, schools, and prisons.

**6. Encourage and reward behavior that contributes to a safe and supportive workplace.**

- ◆ Reward supervisors and managers who support the well-being of employees. Do not tolerate the use of abusive or coercive tactics in management techniques.

**7. Collaborate with community-based organizations to assist employees who have experienced sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking.**

- ◆ Offer company resources, skills, and volunteers to sexual assault and domestic violence service agencies in exchange for expertise and information about community resources.
- ◆ Establish relationships with community-based service providers to facilitate timely and appropriate referrals of victims to support networks.
- ◆ Collaborate with other businesses to encourage local, state, and national policymakers to support legislation that promotes victim safety and offender accountability.
- ◆ Develop partnerships with small businesses, trade associations, and local chambers of commerce to exchange information on workplace policies that address violence against women. Use conferences, newsletters, and Web sites to promote workplace policies and strategies. Conduct joint training and education programs that address violence against women.
- ◆ Work with researchers and victim advocates to develop appropriate tools for measuring the effectiveness of workplace programs, policies, and services.

**8. Devise and implement effective intervention strategies in collaboration with relevant government agencies and community-based victim advocacy organizations.**

- ◆ Initiate appropriate disciplinary and legal action if perpetrators use workplace communication vehicles such as e-mail, the Internet, a fax machine, or telephone to threaten, harass, or harm an employee.
- ◆ Hold perpetrators accountable by requiring that they fully participate in sex offender or batterer intervention programs and comply with any and all conditions of probation in conjunction with misdemeanor level offenses as a condition of continued employment.
- ◆ Adopt policies that make employees found guilty of acts of violence subject to disciplinary action. Notify all employees that such a policy has been implemented.

**9. Encourage workplaces to develop policies and strategies that respond to violence against women in the workplace, particularly small and midsize businesses, and support them.**

- ◆ Create structures within workplaces and labor unions that enable women to safely and confidentially report victimization and seek assistance and intervention.
- ◆ Publicize stories of employers and unions that have effectively addressed violence against women, using mainstream media and professional publications to support replication of such efforts.
- ◆ Develop brief user-friendly materials about violence against women, and share them with other workplaces.
- ◆ Provide specific assistance to businesses that employ young women, because young women are statistically at greatest risk for sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.
- ◆ Encourage chambers of commerce, state and national labor organizations, and other professional associations to develop materials in conjunction with local violence programs and coalitions about responding to sexual assault and domestic violence. Distribute such materials to the membership of each organization and through other companies and unions.
- ◆ Support business magazines that recognize employers for their family-friendly workplace policies and programs. Ensure that a criterion for recognition be how employers address sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.

**What Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Service Providers Can Do**

- 10. Increase the staff's knowledge about and capability to address the effect that sexual assault and domestic violence have on women's economic security and professional life while ensuring survivor confidentiality.**

- ◆ Include questions in the intake processes that assess the effect of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and domestic violence on a victim’s current job, work history, and career to help advocates work more effectively with employers.
- ◆ Support research on the impact of sexual assault and domestic violence on a survivor’s job, work history, and education.

**11. Teach employers and unions about ending violence against women.**

- ◆ Use various points of contact, including union stewards and employees who handle equal employment opportunities, occupational safety and health, benefits and compensation, and short-term disability and insurance coverage.
- ◆ Display posters, brochures, and informational flyers about sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking and local services.

**12. Work with businesses, unions, and employment experts to teach sexual assault and domestic violence service providers about the employment rights of survivors.**

- ◆ Include information on how to assist survivors in keeping jobs, accessing benefits, and taking advantage of legal rights regarding employment.

**13. Develop training programs with local businesses, unions, and public and private funders that specifically assist employees whose job-seeking abilities have been affected because they are victims of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking.**

*For related recommendations, see Toolkit chapter “Promoting Women’s Economic Security.”*

## Resources

**Commission on Domestic Violence**

American Bar Association  
 740 15th Street NW.  
 Washington, DC 20005-1022  
 Phone: 202-662-1744  
 Fax: 202-662-1594  
 Web site: [www.abanet.org/domviol](http://www.abanet.org/domviol)

This American Bar Association Web page provides online links and resources for people who need counseling following a domestic violence incident and people who are searching for publications about violence against women.

**Corporate Alliance To End Partner Violence**

2416 East Washington, Suite E  
 Bloomington, IL 61704-4472  
 Phone: 309-664-0667  
 Fax: 309-664-0747  
 Web site: [www.caepv.org](http://www.caepv.org)

The Corporate Alliance To End Partner Violence promotes workplace awareness of and efforts to prevent partner violence. Resources include a quarterly newsletter, a toolkit to help businesses design awareness programs, a dating violence awareness program, and materials for coordinating Work To End Domestic Violence Day and Domestic Violence Awareness Month efforts in the workplace.

**Employee Relations and Employee Health Services**

U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
 1900 E Street NW.  
 Washington, DC 20415  
 Web site: [www.opm.gov/er/index.html-ssi](http://www.opm.gov/er/index.html-ssi)

The Employee Relations Branch of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) provides information and assistance to federal agencies on employee discipline, misconduct, performance

problems, and dispute resolution. Under Employee Health Services, OPM provides information and assistance on employee health programs, counseling, preventive health services, and responding to domestic violence, workplace stress, and workplace violence. Services for federal agencies include management guidance, newsletters and other publications, seminars and workshops, inter-agency committees, and day-to-day consultations; the Web site provides online resource information that may be helpful to any employer.

#### **National Sexual Violence Resource Center**

123 North Enola Drive  
Enola, PA 17025  
Phone: 1-877-739-3895  
TTY: 717-909-0715  
Fax: 717-909-0714  
Web site: [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) is a clearinghouse for resources and research about all forms of sexual violence. NSVRC works with its partner agency, the University of Pennsylvania, to provide new policies for establishing sexual violence interventions and prevention programs.

#### **National Training Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence**

2300 Pasadena Drive  
Austin, TX 78757  
Phone: 512-407-9020  
Fax: 512-407-9022  
Web site: [www.ntcdsv.org](http://www.ntcdsv.org)

The National Training Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence provides consultation and training (including national and regional conferences), helps government decisionmakers develop and evaluate policies and programs, and promotes collaboration among government agency staff, victim advocates and service providers, university researchers, and related professionals in working to end domestic and sexual violence. The Web site includes a calendar of training sessions throughout the United States.

#### **National Workplace Resource Center on Domestic Violence**

Family Violence Prevention Fund  
383 Rhode Island Street, Suite 304  
San Francisco, CA 94103-5133  
Phone: 415-252-8900  
Fax: 415-252-8991  
Web site: [www.fvpf.org/workplace](http://www.fvpf.org/workplace)

The National Workplace Resource Center on Domestic Violence helps workplaces respond to and support employees who are facing domestic violence. The Web site offers materials for supervisors, tips for improving workplace security, program recommendations, legal guidelines, sample policies and best practices, and related resources.

#### **Stalking Resource Center**

National Center for Victims of Crime  
2000 M Street NW., Suite 480  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: 202-467-8700  
Fax: 202-467-8701  
Web site: [www.ncvc.org](http://www.ncvc.org)

The National Center for Victims of Crime's (NCVC's) mission is to help victims of crime and their families rebuild their lives. The Stalking Resource Center provides resources, training, and technical assistance to criminal justice professionals and victim service providers to support locally coordinated, multidisciplinary antistalking approaches and responses.

#### **Women's Bureau**

U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue NW.  
Washington, DC 20210  
Phone: 1-800-827-5335  
Fax: 202-219-5529  
Web site: [www.dol.gov/dol/wb](http://www.dol.gov/dol/wb)

The U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau is the only federal agency mandated to represent the needs of wage-earning women in the public policy process. The bureau champions fair wages and benefits, reasonable work hours, expanded training and job opportunities, and improved workplace conditions, as well as helping workers balance job

and family responsibilities. The Web site includes a library of press releases and publications, statistics, information on programs and services, and related materials.

### **Women's Rights Department**

American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees  
1625 L Street NW.  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: 202-429-5090  
Fax: 202-429-5088  
Web site: [www.afscme.org](http://www.afscme.org)

The Women's Rights Department of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) works to ensure equity in the workplace by fighting for equal pay and promotional opportunities and against workplace discrimination and violence against women. AFSCME supports new workplace initiatives and changes in law and public policy, holds regional conferences, provides leadership training, and distributes booklets and other resource publications.

## **Endnotes**

1. Bureau of Justice Statistics (1998). *Workplace Violence, 1992-96*. Special Report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. NCJ 168634
2. Konrad, A., and Gutek, B. (1986). "Impact of Work Experiences on Attitudes Toward Sexual Harassment." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 31(4): pp. 422-438.
3. U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (1995). *Sexual Harassment in the Federal Workplace: Trends, Progress, and Continuing Challenges*. A Report to the President and Congress by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board. Washington, DC: U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Office of Policy and Evaluation.
4. Tjaden, P., and Thoennes, N. (1998). *Stalking in America: Findings From the National Violence Against Women Survey*. Research in Brief. Washington, DC, and Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of

Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

5. Violence Against Women Grants Office (1998). *Stalking and Domestic Violence: The Third Annual Report to Congress Under the Violence Against Women Act*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. NCJ 172204
6. Solomon, C.M. (1995). "Talking Frankly About Domestic Violence." *Personnel Journal* 74(4): pp. 62-65.
7. Roper Starch Worldwide for Liz Claiborne, Inc. (1994). *Addressing Domestic Violence: A Corporate Response*. New York, NY: Patrice Tanaka and Co.
8. Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, the extent of an employer's obligation to address workplace violence is governed by the General Duty Clause, which provides, "Each employer shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which is free from recognized hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees."
9. More than 50 percent of all stalking victims are between ages 18 and 29. Source: Violence Against Women Grants Office (1998). *Stalking and Domestic Violence: The Third Annual Report to Congress Under the Violence Against Women Act*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. p. 10; The highest rate of intimate partner violence is among women ages 16 to 24. Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics (1998). *Violence by Intimates: Analysis of Data on Crimes by Current or Former Spouses, Boyfriends, and Girlfriends*. Factbook. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. p. 13; Thirteen percent of female adolescents have been victims of sexual assault at some point during their lives. Source: Kilpatrick, D.G., and Saunders, B.E. (1997). *Prevalence and Consequences of Child Victimization*. Research Preview. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice; See also Tjaden, P., and Thoennes, N. (1998). *Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences*



*of Violence Against Women: Finding from the National Violence Against Women Survey. Research in Brief.* Washington, DC, and Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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Office of Workforce Relations (1999). *Responding to Domestic Violence: Where Federal Employees Can Get Help.* Washington, DC: U.S. Office of Personnel Management. Number OWR 16

Office of Workforce Relations (1998). *Dealing with Workplace Violence: A Guide for Agency Planners.* Washington, DC: U.S. Office of Personnel Management. Number OWR 09

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