

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE WORKPLACE

Domestic violence may happen behind closed doors (or in more public areas), but the impact of domestic violence reaches into all areas of society, including our places of employment. For example:

- ◆ Intimate partner violence victims lose a total of nearly 8 million days of paid work a year as a result of the physical and mental abuse they suffer. This is the equivalent of more than 32,000 full-time jobs and nearly 5.6 million days in household productivity. (*Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States, US Centers for Disease Control. Report released April 28, 2003*)
- ◆ The health-related costs of rape, physical assault, stalking and homicide by intimate partners exceed \$5.8 billion each year. \$4.1 billion are for direct medical and mental health costs, and losses in productivity account for nearly \$1.8 billion each year. (*Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States, US Centers for Disease Control. Report released April 28, 2003*)
- ◆ Interviews with low-income women in Chicago, Boston and San Antonio found that domestic violence did not necessarily prevent a woman from finding a job. However, keeping a job and becoming economically self-sufficient was less likely if she was in an abusive relationship. (*Votruba-Drzal et al, "Work stability threatened by domestic violence," Institute for Policy Research News, Fall 2002, Volume 24, Number 1, page 3*)
- ◆ 74% of employed battered women reported being harassed at work by their abuser. (*Family Violence Prevention Fund, The workplace guide for employers, unions and advocates, 1998*)
- ◆ Men convicted of domestic violence offenses shared in focus groups that they made costly and dangerous mistakes on the job because of their abuse. Most used company phones and/or e-mail to reach their victim. Most used paid work time to attend court. Most of their employers showed support for the abuser and not the victim. 10% of their employers posted bail for abusers or knowingly granted the abusers paid leaves of absence to attend court. (*Employers Against Domestic Violence, Focus groups, Boston, 2001, reported on Corporate Alliance to End partner Violence website at <http://www.caepv.org/membercenter/facts.asp>*)

Given the extent of domestic violence, it is likely that every mid-sized to large workplace has victims, survivors and abusers among its employees. The Community Crisis Center offers workplace education on domestic violence. If you would like a domestic violence professional to speak with employees at your agency, call us at 1-847-697-2380. Below are links to two handouts that provide information for employers and co-workers.

EMPLOYEES WORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (PDF to DVINdoc11)

EMPLOYERS WORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (PDF to DVINdoc12)

Illinois Resources

One important legal support for victims of domestic violence is the *Victims' Economic Security and Safety Act* (VESSA). VESSA provides an employee who is a victim of domestic violence, or who has a family or household member who is a victim of domestic violence, with up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave in any 12-month period to address issues arising from domestic or sexual violence.

Employers with more than 50 employees, the State of Illinois and any unit of local government or school district are subject to this law. Employers must post a notice summarizing the provisions of the Act.

This is currently the most comprehensive state law in the U.S. to prohibit employment discrimination against victims. For more information, go to the Illinois Department of Labor's website at <http://www.state.il.us/agency/idol/vessa/vessa.htm>.

*The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity oversees the IEAAP – Illinois Employers Awareness and Assistance Program for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. This includes a downloadable copy of *Guidelines for employers addressing domestic violence and sexual assault*. Go to <http://www.illinoisbiz.biz/bus/domes.html>.*