

## HEALTHCARE RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

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### Agenda

- About the UNC Hospitals Beacon Program
- Effect of Domestic Violence on the Workplace
- Incident
- Prevalence
- Warning Signs
- How to Help
- Institutional Response

### How Does Domestic Violence Affect the Workplace?

- Domestic violence affects the workplace when an abuser harasses an employee who is on the job, when a victim is absent because of injuries or less productive due to stress, or when violence occurs at the workplace.

### UNC Health Care Administrative Building November 2003



- Employee arriving at work, walking with a friend
- Estranged boyfriend shot and killed her and himself in front of the building



### Prevalence of Domestic Violence in the Workplace

- Homicide is the leading cause of death for women on the job\*
- Half of domestic violence assaults end with at least one homicide, usually the victim\*\*

\* Safe@work Coalition, citing Bureau of Labor Statistics

\*\* Peace@Work, Domestic Violence Assaults in the Workplace Study, October 2009)

### Domestic Violence in the Workplace Statistics

- 20% of assaults occurred in the parking lot at the beginning of their shift\*
- In 12% of the cases there was a previous incident at the workplace or a direct warning from the abuse victim about a potential threat.\*

\* Peace@Work, Domestic Violence Assaults in the Workplace Study, 2009



### Domestic Violence in the Workplace Impact on Job Performance

- In a national survey, 21% of full-time employed adults were victims of domestic violence and 64% indicated their work performance was significantly impacted.\*
- In a survey of employers with 1,000 or more employees, 50% had an incident of workplace violence within the last 12 months.\*\*

\*Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence National Survey, 2005  
 \*\*Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence, 2007, Workplace Statistics

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### Abusers' Impact on the Workplace

- § Assaults or threats against the victim, children, or co-workers
- § Making the victim late for work or sabotaging job performance
- § Isolating the victim from co-workers, friends, and family so there is no support system other than the abuser.

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### Possible Indicators of Domestic Violence

- § Unexplained bruises/injuries in different stages of healing
- § Feelings of panic/depression/alcohol/drug problems
- § Headaches/problems with sleeping/low energy
- § Attendance problems/difficulty concentrating/problems meeting deadlines
- § Repeated upsetting telephone calls at work
- § Withdrawal from co-workers

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**Barriers to Employee Disclosure**

- Fear that disclosure will jeopardize their family's safety
- Worried about losing job
- Embarrassed by situation
- In denial about the danger to the workplace

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**Response to Domestic Violence in the Workplace**

- Mosaic Threat Assessment Tool  
[www.mosaicmethod.com](http://www.mosaicmethod.com)
- Organized institutional response is necessary
- Policies should be put in place to outline:
  - Definition of Domestic Violence in the Workplace
  - Reporting Requirements
  - Guidelines for supervisory staff to assist employee
  - Institutional Resources for Employees

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**UNC Hospital Policy**

If there is a potential of violence or if an employee has a valid Domestic Violence Protective Order (DVPO) or Ex parte order, the employee has a duty to report this to the supervisor and provide a copy to Hospital Police.

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## Institutional Response

- General orientation for new employees
- Yearly employee competency training
- Manager training
- Information on institution website
- Brochures
- Posters in the bathrooms

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## How UNC Hospitals Handles Domestic Violence Threats

- Team effort of HR, Hospital Police and Beacon Program
- Beacon social worker talks to the employee about the incident and background of abuse
- Team invites the employee and supervisor to a meeting
- Assures employee of confidentiality unless it is a danger to the institution
- Reviews hospital domestic violence policy
- Sends out general guidelines on protecting employee's location or Security Alert, depending on potential threat

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## Role of Beacon Program Domestic Violence Services



- \*Contacts employee/conducts interview
- \*Obtains social and family history
- \*Obtains history of abuse and relationship
- \*Inquires if this is a recent separation
- \*Determines if the employee has a new relationship
- \*Investigates whether the abuse is escalating
- \*Provides ongoing support to employee

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## Employee Interviews

### § Gather info about the abuser

- ü Details of precipitating incident
- ü Examples of communicated threats
- ü History of violence, criminal background
- ü History of mental disorder
- ü Drugs/alcohol abuse
- ü Financial stressors, job loss or death in the family
- ü Access to weapons
- ü Abuser's attitude toward law enforcement



## Gathering Information



### Employee's work situation

- Does the employee have a protective order?
- Do coworkers know about abuse?

### § Does the abuser know:

- ü Specifically where the employee works
- ü Where the employee parks, type of car
- ü Employee work hours and location

## Threat Assessment

### § Low Risk

- ü No history of physical abuse
- ü No criminal history
- ü Vague threats, harassing phone calls only
- ü Abuser unaware of employee's work location/hours

## Threat Assessment

- § Medium Risk
  - ü History of physical abuse
  - ü Abuser has threatened or actually come to the hospital
  - ü Abuser aware of employee's work location/hours/parking

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## Threat Assessment

- § High Risk
  - ü Abuser criminal history, including rape, assault on a female, and use of a weapon
  - ü Employee is abuser's only source of income
  - ü Substance abuse
  - ü Mental health Issues/suicidal threats

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## Action Plan

- § What employee can do to maintain safety at home and at work
  - ü Protective Order
  - ü Police surveillance of home
  - ü Shelter, if needed
  - ü Family/friends' support
- § What the institution or work unit should do to create a safer environment for the employee and coworkers



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### Examples of Actions Taken

- § Inform coworkers not to disclose any information to callers about employees (Script on directing phone calls)
- § Move employee's parking
- § Change work hours or work unit
- § Security Alert with abuser's picture and description to be placed in designated areas
- § Criminally trespass the perpetrator
- § Access help of local domestic violence agency
  - Shelter options, protective order, safety planning, hidden cell phone

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### Contact Information Q & A

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### Resources

- Mosaic Threat Assessment Tool  
[www.mosaicmethod.com](http://www.mosaicmethod.com)
- Peace at Work  
[www.peaceatwork.org](http://www.peaceatwork.org)
- Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence  
[www.caepv.org](http://www.caepv.org)
- The Workplace Responds to Domestic and Sexual Violence: A National Resource Center  
[www.workplacesrespond.org](http://www.workplacesrespond.org)
- Safe@work Coalition  
[Safeatworkcoalition.org](http://Safeatworkcoalition.org)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline and Referral Service  
Toll Free Number: 1.800.799.SAFE (7233)

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