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**

* Sagedeleon 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

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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

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.

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
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

Response to Domestic Violence in the Workplace

- Mosaic Threat Assessment Tool
  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

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.
Institutional Response

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

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

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
Employee Interviews

Gather info about the abuser

- Details of precipitating incident
- Examples of communicated threats
- History of violence, criminal background
- History of mental disorder
- Drugs/alcohol abuse
- Financial stressors, job loss or death in the family
- Access to weapons
- 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:

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

Threat Assessment

Low Risk

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

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

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

**Action Plan**

- What employee can do to maintain safety at home and at work
  - Protective Order
  - Police surveillance of home
  - Shelter, if needed
  - Family/ friends’ support

- What the institution or work unit should do to create a safer environment for the employee and coworkers
Examples of Actions Taken

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

Contact Information

Q & A

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Resources

Mosaic Threat Assessment Tool
www.mosaicmethod.com

Peace at Work
www.peaceatwork.org

Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence
www.caepv.org

The Workplace Responds to Domestic and Sexual Violence: A National Resource Center
www.workplacerepond.org

Safe@work Coalition
Safeatworkcoalition.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline and Referral Service
Toll Free Number: 1.800.799.SAFE (7233)