

# BWCCADV

Bellingham - Whatcom County  
Commission Against Domestic Violence



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## Domestic Violence in the Workplace...

...an initiative of the Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence.  
*The mission of the DV Commission is to provide leadership in the community's efforts to reduce and prevent domestic violence.*

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### How does domestic violence impact employers?

#### Domestic violence affects many employees.

*According to a U.S. telephone survey of full-time employed adults...*

- 21 percent identified themselves as victims of domestic violence. 64 percent of these victims indicated their ability to work was significantly impaired.
- 31 percent felt obliged to cover for a co-worker who was a victim.
- 38 percent of were concerned for their own safety.

*According to a survey of perpetrators by the Maine Department of Labor...*

- 78% had used workplace resources to express remorse or anger, check up on, pressure, or threaten their victim.
- 74% had easy access to their victim's workplace.
- 21% reported they had contacted the victim at the workplace in violation of a no contact order.

#### Domestic violence is a security and liability concern.

- Employers who fail to protect their employees from violence at work may be liable. Jury awards for inadequate security suits average \$1.2 million nationwide, and settlements average \$600,000.

#### Domestic violence is a performance and productivity concern.

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the annual cost of lost productivity due to domestic violence equals \$727.8 million, with more than 7.9 million paid workdays lost each year.

### What is an employer's role in responding to domestic violence?

1. **Recognize** domestic violence as an issue that impacts the workplace.
2. **Respond** appropriately within the context of the workplace, ensuring safety and confidentiality of the victim whenever possible.
3. **Refer** the victim to domestic violence advocates such as DVSAS or Womenscare Shelter.
4. **Reach out** to community resources such as the DV Commission for partnership, expertise, and assistance, including the model policies and procedures for domestic violence in the workplace.

## What is the Washington State domestic violence leave law?

In 2008, a new law went into effect that allows:

- Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking to take reasonable leave from work for legal or law-enforcement assistance, medical treatment, social-services assistance, or counseling.
- Family members may also take reasonable leave to help a victim obtain treatment, services, or seek help. Family members include child, spouse, parent, parent-in-law, grandparent, or person the employee is dating.
- The leave can be with or without pay.

An employer may require verification from an employee who is requesting leave. The employee may provide one or more of the following:

- A police report.
- A court order of protection.
- Documentation from a healthcare provider, advocate, clergy, or attorney.
- An employee's written statement.

All employers, public and private, are required to follow this law, regardless of size. An employee must give advance notice, when possible.

## DV in the Workplace Guidelines

As an employer, know what you can do in your workplace to prevent or reduce the impact of domestic violence on your employees' well-being and productivity.

**Adopt a domestic violence policy or guidelines** as part of your employee handbook. Include these key points:

- Ensure no employee will be penalized or disciplined solely for being a victim of domestic violence.
- Any employee who threatens, harasses, or abuses a domestic partner at the workplace or from the workplace using any workplace resources such as work time, workplace phones, fax machines, mail, e-mail, or other means may be subject to corrective or disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**Know your legal responsibilities** as an employer under current employment law:

- Victims of domestic violence may qualify for unemployment insurance.
- Both victims and victims' family members may qualify for paid or unpaid leave to address issues related to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

**Know available domestic violence resources in the community (list current as of September 2012):**

**Domestic violence victim services in Whatcom County**

- **Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services (DVSAS)** provides confidential housing and services for those affected by domestic violence including emergency shelter, information and referral, advocacy and support groups.  
**24 hour Helpline: 360-715-1563 or toll-free: 877-715-1563**  
Website: [www.dvsas.org](http://www.dvsas.org)
- **Lummi Victims of Crime** provides 24-hour crisis intervention, information, referrals, legal advocacy, domestic violence shelter, and healing services to those living on the Lummi Reservation and Native American people in Whatcom County.  
**24 hour Helpline: 360-384-2285**  
Website: [www.lummi-nsn.gov/Court\\_law\\_ps/VOC/VOC\\_body.htm](http://www.lummi-nsn.gov/Court_law_ps/VOC/VOC_body.htm)

**Domestic violence perpetrator treatment providers in Whatcom County**

- **Lummi Behavior Accountability Program** is a state certified domestic violence perpetrator treatment provider in Bellingham. Phone: 360-384-2373
- **Relationship Resources (WOMEN ONLY)** is a state-certified domestic violence perpetrator treatment provider located in Bellingham. Phone: 360-393-9063
- **Violence Intervention Professionals** is a state-certified domestic violence perpetrator treatment provider located in Bellingham. Phone: 360-756-9929
- **Waterfront Counseling** is a state-certified domestic violence perpetrator treatment provider located in Custer. Phone: 360-332-1000

**State and National Domestic Violence Helplines**

- **Washington State Domestic Violence Helpline**  
**24 hour Helpline: 1-800-562-6025**
- **National Domestic Violence Helpline** provides assistance in English and Spanish with access to more than 170 languages through interpreter services.  
**24 hour Helpline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY)**

**Provide tools, resources, and action steps** to help employees who are victims of domestic violence:

- Provide a confidential means for coming forward for help when possible.
- Keep a list of available resources and referral information, i.e. referral to EAP and/or local DV service providers who can help create a personal safety plan. *NOTE: Helplines are not just for victims. They are valuable resources for managers, supervisors, and employers.*
- Offer to sit with the victim while s/he calls a helpline for information and support.
- Support the employee without putting yourself in a dangerous situation.
- Offer to change parking arrangements, relocate the victim's work space, screen phone calls or adjust work schedules when appropriate, to keep the victim and all your employees safe. Allow work absences, as needed, by victims to obtain assistance or attend court dates.
- If there is a restraining or protection order in place, be aware of whether it includes the workplace, and make sure the workplace has a copy on hand at all times. Call the police immediately and instruct employees to call the police immediately if the perpetrator violates the order by coming on the premises.

- Make domestic violence resources and referral information easily available to employees by posting it conspicuously in lunchrooms, restrooms, and other areas frequented by staff. Signs and business cards may be available from the resources listed above.

**Know what NOT to do:**

- Do not ignore the situation. If a workplace intervention is appropriate, either at the employee's request or to respond to a workplace threat, it can prevent incidents of workplace violence.
- Do not try to counsel the employee. Instead, make referrals to local domestic violence resources.
- Do not tell a victim s/he should leave the abuser. Keep in mind that in some cases, violence actually escalates when the perpetrator believes the victim has left the relationship or plans to. Instead, refer the employee to community resources for practical assistance.
- Do not tell a victim s/he should get an order of protection. Keep in mind that in some situations it helps, but in others it may escalate the danger. Refer the employee to local domestic violence resources for assistance with identifying options, safety planning and decision making.
- Do not encourage coworkers to become overly involved in helping the victim. They may be putting themselves in danger or be disappointed if the victim does make the choices they think s/he should.
- Do not tell others (with no "need to know") about the situation. Instead, tell the victim you will protect his or her confidentiality to the fullest extent possible, then do it.
- Do not judge or blame the victim for the abuse. Only the abuser is responsible.
- Do not hesitate to call one of the domestic violence helplines at any time to get information and support for yourself. *REMEMBER: Domestic violence helplines are not just for victims. They are valuable resources for managers, supervisors, and employers too.*

**For more information:**

- Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence  
Website: [www.dvcommission.org](http://www.dvcommission.org)
- Washington State Legislature, Chapter 49.76 RCW, Domestic Violence Leave  
Website: [apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=49.76](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=49.76)
- <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=49.76>
- Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence  
Website: [www.caepv.org](http://www.caepv.org)
- Family Violence Prevention Fund:  
Website: [www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org)
- Washington State Department of Labor and Industries Domestic Violence Leave:  
Website: [www.lni.wa.gov/WorkplaceRights/LeaveBenefits/FamilyCare/](http://www.lni.wa.gov/WorkplaceRights/LeaveBenefits/FamilyCare/)