

## How to be a Supportive Supervisor

- **Protect confidentiality.** Assure the employee that you will maintain confidentiality to the fullest extent possible. Consider, together with the employee, who in the agency has a "need to know." Explain that if there is a clear threat to workplace safety, you will need to inform security.
- **Be understanding and approachable.** In most stressful situations, one source of anxiety for the victim is a sense of being out of control. Employees will feel better if they are comfortable approaching you with their questions.
- **Respect her decisions.** Since she is the best judge of her abuser's actions and the potential risks involved with her decisions, respect her choices. Realize that every step toward achieving safety presents risks and may take time.
- **Convey that she is a valued part of the team.** Having a chance to be productive can do wonders for the battered self-esteem and sense of isolation that often go along with being a victim. One way of doing this is by addressing an employee's performance if it has been declining.
- **Address performance/conduct problems.** If an employee is experiencing any performance or conduct problems, document deficiencies and consult with your human resources specialist. Whether or not formal action is appropriate at this time, it is essential to counsel the employee about the deficiency and refer the employee to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). It may seem cruel to confront a person who is obviously suffering, but sometimes this is the only way to help.
- **Meet with the employee privately** to identify clearly the performance or conduct problems. You could state that you understand that sometimes "personal issues" can interfere with good performance or conduct, but don't assume that there is violence. If there are clear signs of abuse, gently encourage her to discuss what may be upsetting her. Whether or not she discloses the abuse, offer referrals. Finally, suggest ways that performance or conduct improvements can be achieved.
- **Be flexible.** Keep your standards high, but allow as much flexibility as possible in getting the work done. If you set clear standards, but give employees the freedom in working out ways to meet them, they will probably find a way to satisfy expectations. Consider providing additional job training if that will aid the employee's job security or job transition.
- **Educate yourself about domestic violence.** Inaccurate attitudes and beliefs about domestic violence hinder your ability to help. Domestic violence is a complex issue, and for many people, is hard to understand. Education emphasizes important points about the obstacles a woman faces, and reminds us not to be judgmental or to think there are "quick fixes" to this problem.

## Employee Workplace Safety Plan

When helping the victim to develop her own workplace safety plan open-ended questions should be asked about what changes, if any, could be made in the workplace to make the employee feel safer. Asking the following questions can help to form an effective workplace safety plan:

- Has the abuser threatened the employee at the workplace or threatened to come to the workplace?
- Has stalking been a problem?
- Have co-workers been threatened by the abuser?
  - Consider a restraining order.
  - If a restraining order has been filed, give a copy to facility security.
  - Does her work area need to be relocated for better security?
  - Save any threatening or intimidating e-mail, letters or voicemail messages from the perpetrator
  - 9 Have the employees phone calls screened.
  - The employee should transfer harassing phone calls to security
- Is the employee's parking arrangement safe?
  - Have security to escort the employee to and from her car
  - The employee should park as close to the entrance as possible
- Are current child care arrangements safe?
  - Review the employee's child care situation if applicable. Does the restraining order need to include the childcare facility?
- Do security staff and co-workers have the information they need to help protect the employee, such as a photograph of the abuser?
  - Provide a picture of the perpetrator to security and reception areas.
- How else can security assist the employee?
- If the employee is temporarily residing in a shelter or some other confidential location, do designated workplace personnel have emergency contact information?
  - Identify an emergency contact person should your employer be unable to reach you
- Is the employee's work schedule flexible enough for her to manage court appearances, legal matters, and child care without having to take a cut in pay or use unpaid leave?
- Is the travel route between the employee's home and work safe?
  - Is it possible to change the employees work a schedule?
  - Have co-workers been threatened by the abuser?
  - Is the travel route between the employee's home and work safe?

Reviewed...

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Employee Name

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Signature

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Date

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Supervisor Name

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Signature

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Date