



Dear Clients and Friends,

When an employee is a victim of domestic violence they may still come to work – and that is often the case. But, with their lives in turmoil they may also be dealing with injury, fear, depression – the list goes on. And, other employees may be at risk if the violence spills over into the actual workplace.

Employee benefits programs such as Employee Assistance Programs, policies

that allow for leave and other accommodations can be a lifeline for employees caught up in these situations.

There are also laws that may require certain responses. Employers should know what is required of them and build their responses around any requirements.

*Sincerely yours,
Jim Lill, CEO*

Domestic Violence in the Workplace

Most employers – and employees – prefer to keep work and personal lives separate. Despite these preferences, personal issues, especially domestic violence, can spill over into the workplace.

Some employers have decided to be more proactive in this arena. Sometimes this is due to a tragedy when an employee is assaulted on the job. Other employers realize that to an employee in an abusive relationship their job may be a lifeline.

What is domestic violence and how prevalent is it? Domestic violence involves injuring someone or harassing them. Usually the victim is a spouse or partner. It can also be a parent, child or other family member. Domestic violence happens in every socioeconomic level, at all levels of education and at every age. Domestic violence is said to be the most common cause of injury to women ages 15 to 44.

Domestic violence is often invisible. Victims may suffer emotionally including bouts of depression or anxiety. The visible signs of domestic violence

include bruises and broken bones. Often, victims of domestic violence suffer in silence.

Employers covered by the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) may find that employees are using leave to address domestic violence issues for themselves or a family member. However, use of FMLA is limited since leave is available for a "serious medical condition" that is defined by the law. Many cases of domestic violence may not rise to this threshold.

States have taken steps to address this issue. Some extend unemployment insurance to people who leave their jobs because of domestic violence. Other laws require leaves "paid or unpaid" for workers who miss work due to violence, including time needed to deal with this problem in the court system.

Several states have taken measures to allow companies the right to obtain protective orders. This would help keep offenders from bringing their actions to the victim's workplace.

Ask us about free COBRA, FSA and FMLA administration!

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