

RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

BEST POLICIES AND PRACTICES



cca | DV

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

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Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state’s leading voice for survivors of domestic violence and those organizations that serve them. We provide training and technical assistance to our partners and stakeholders, as well as work to advance legislative and administrative systems policies that strengthen the state’s response to domestic violence. Our 18 member organizations provide comprehensive, life-saving services to nearly 40,000 victims across the state each year.

Domestic violence can impact the workplace whether the violence actually takes place there or somewhere outside the place of employment. Economic security is a critical component of safety for victims of violence; the ability to maintain one’s employment can greatly enhance a victim’s ability to create safety in her or his life and begin psychological/emotional recovery. Studies indicate that one of the best predictors of whether individuals will leave their abusive relationship is their degree of economic independence. However, domestic violence can jeopardize a victim’s ability to keep a job. Every workplace is different, and there’s no one-size fits all approach.

Understanding the significant impact that domestic violence can have on the workplace and the important role that employers can play in helping their employees to be safe, CCADV has compiled this resource guide. You’ll find helpful information to better understand the issue of domestic violence and how it might impact your workplace, as well as the tools you’ll need to develop comprehensive programs so that your workplace can both prevent and respond to domestic violence.

For more information or to schedule a training or consultation, please contact:

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Domestic violence affects not just one, but all. In addition to its multiple negative consequences for victims and survivors, domestic violence can spill over to the workplace by compromising the safety of both victims and their co-workers. It results in not only lost productivity but also increased absenteeism, healthcare costs and employee turnover.

As an employer, you have an important role to help ensure your employees’ safety, maintain their job security and to be a part of our society’s response to domestic violence.

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive, controlling behavior. These behaviors are intentional with the purpose of gaining and maintaining power and control over another person. Domestic violence is sometimes referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV) when the violence occurs between current or former spouses, current or former dating partners, or individuals who have a child together. Domestic violence can take many forms, such as:



EMOTIONAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL:

- Public or private name calling or put-downs
- Exhibiting extreme jealousy
- Isolating the victim from seeing family or friends
- Threatening



STALKING & HARASSMENT:

- Constantly calling or checking up on the victim
- Showing up to victim's home or place of work uninvited
- Sending unwanted gifts



PHYSICAL:

- Hitting, pushing, slapping, shoving
- Strangling/choking
- Restraining



SEXUAL:

- Non-consensual sexual acts or violence
- Transmitting STIs
- Using date rape drugs



FINANCIAL:

- Withholding money or giving an allowance
- Forbidding the victim to work or sabotaging employment
- Running up debt in the victim's name



TECHNOLOGICAL:

- Excessive texting
- Following the victim or tracking the victim through GPS
- Monitoring and/or controlling social media

JOB-RELATED IMPACT ON VICTIMS

If a victim chooses to end their relationship and leave, studies indicate that one of the best predictors of the ability to do so is the victim's degree of economic independence. However, domestic violence can jeopardize a victim's ability to keep a job. Victims of violence sometimes lose jobs because of absences or related job performance matters. Yet in order to address the abuse and keep themselves and their children safe, they may need time to:

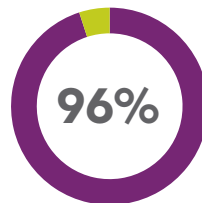
- Attend court appearances;
- Obtain legal assistance, medical assistance, or counseling;
- Find a new place to live; or,
- Arrange transportation or child care, etc.

Lack of workplace accommodations for these very real needs can result in the loss of a job and therefore make the victim even more financially dependent on their abuser.

When your employees experience domestic violence, it impacts your workplace. Numerous studies have found that experiencing violence and abuse in the home can result in absenteeism and impaired job performance. The abuse can also sometimes spill over into the workplace. Repeated phone calls or the abuser showing up constantly can disrupt the workplace and even lead to property damage. Some national statistics about the impact on the workplace include:



More than
7.9 MILLION PAID WORKDAYS
are lost each year because
of domestic violence



A 2005 study found that
96% OF FEMALE VICTIMS reported that
domestic abuse **AFFECTED THEIR ABILITY** to perform their jobs
while **60%** reported that they **LOST THEIR JOBS** due to the abuse



- ➔ More than 50% of stalking victims reported being stalked at work.
- ➔ A 2005 study found that 87% of victims received harassing phone calls at work.
- ➔ A 2004 study found that 78% of abusers reported using company resources in connection with their abuse.
- ➔ In 2008, 94% of corporate security and safety directors ranked domestic violence as a high security concern.
- ➔ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the annual cost of lost productivity due to domestic violence is approximately \$727.8 million.

WARNING SIGNS

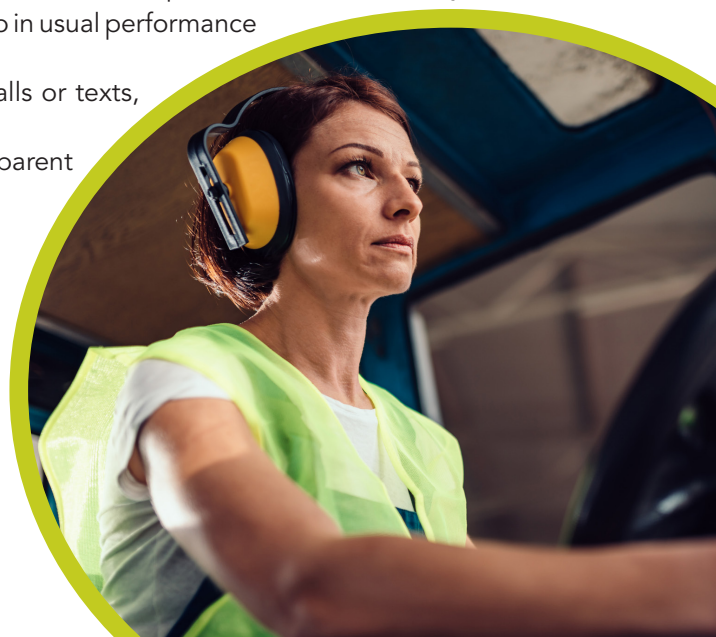
It is not always easy to know when an employee is experiencing domestic violence. If you think that one of your employees might be in an abusive relationship, take a moment to review this checklist. Domestic violence isn't just about being physically hit, it also involves patterns of coercion and control that may be emotional, sexual, technological or financial.

WORK PRODUCTIVITY

- Change in the person's working patterns: frequent absence, tardiness or requests to leave work early
- Reduced quality and quantity of work: missing deadlines, a drop in usual performance standards
- Change in the use of the phone/email: excessive personal calls or texts, avoiding calls or a strong reaction to calls/texts/emails
- Spending an increased number of hours at work for no apparent reason
- Frequent visits to work by the employee's partner

CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR OR DEMEANOR

- Becoming very quiet, anxious, frightened, tearful, aggressive, distracted, or depressed
- Being isolated from colleagues
- Being obsessed with have to leave work on time
- Being secretive about his/her home life
- Being worried about leaving the children at home



For some victims, the workplace may be the only place where they are able to feel safe. Making a commitment to creating a non-judgmental, safe and inviting work setting for victims of domestic violence is beneficial not only to the victim, but to the organization as a whole. The following are some simple things that you can do as an employer to help victims and survivors of domestic violence working within your organization.

DEVELOP A WORKPLACE POLICY

Any employer can adopt a workplace policy as part of its commitment to a healthy, safe organizational climate and to the prevention and reduction of the incidence and effects of domestic violence. Creating a policy or guidance document will help create a safer culture where employees feel able to disclose issues of domestic violence, and feel reassured that appropriate support will be provided. Every organization is different, and your approach should take into account your business activity, size and structure. You can take simple steps or develop a proactive policy or guidance document that defines your organization as a responsive employer.

You can easily develop a Model Workplace Policy using a simple online tool created by Workplaces Respond to Domestic & Sexual Violence – A National Resource Center. Workplaces Respond is a public-private partnership led by Futures Without Violence, and funded by the US Department of Justice’s Office on Violence Against Women (OVW).

A model policy establishes guidelines for workplace responses to victims and survivors of violence, as well as perpetrators of violence. A comprehensive model policy will include the following elements:

- Statement of purpose
- Definitions
- Persons covered by the policy
- Statement of confidentiality
- Employer responses to violence
- Reporting by employees who are victims
- Violations of the policy

Visit www.workplacesrespond.org to learn more and to create your workplace policy.



"I was fortunate to have unquestioning and unqualified support at my workplace from my coworkers. That was my anchor; emotional support and financial security so I could focus on keeping my family safe and getting away from the abuse."

- Survivor



HOW EMPLOYERS CAN RESPOND

Start the conversation. By starting a conversation with an employee, she or he may feel comfortable and encouraged to disclose rather than discouraged. It often takes time for someone to disclose abuse they are experiencing at home. Many people dealing with domestic violence will never feel comfortable disclosing it to their employer, particularly if they are not even ready to admit it to themselves.

ASSESS: Speak with the employee that is the victim and gather as much information as possible about the situation to better advise and assist the employee. Some examples of questions and prompts that could be used are:

- How are you doing at the moment?
- Your wellbeing is important to me and I've noticed that you seem distracted and upset – are you ok?
- If there's anything you'd like to talk to me about at any time I'm always here to support you.
- Is everything all right at home?
- You don't have to tell me anything, but please know that I would like to support you if and when you feel ready.
- What support do you think might help? What would you like to happen? How would you like that to happen?

ADVISE: Make sure the employee knows his/her rights. Inform the employee about available resources and accommodations and let the employee know that your office is there to provide support.

ASSIST: Work with the employee to create a workplace safety plan and implement it immediately. Refer the employee to a victim advocate at one of CCADV's member organizations who can help the employee find and maintain safety. (Refer to the resources section of this toolkit.)

IF THE EMPLOYEE DOES CONFIDE IN YOU, YOU CAN...

In a confidential space, ask the employee:

- Whether she/he feels safe in the workplace.
- Whether a change in her/his work schedule or work location is necessary to maintain the employee's safety.
- Whether the physical layout of the workplace should be changed to protect her/him.
- Whether she/he has an order of protection against the abusive person. If so, ask her/him if they are comfortable giving you a copy and perhaps a photo of the abusive person to share with security personnel, reception staff or other relevant persons.
- Whether it is necessary to share information with others in the workplace in order to maintain her/his safety.

IF THE EMPLOYEE DOES NOT WISH TO CONFIDE IN YOU, YOU CAN...

- Share helpful information with him/her including the organization's domestic violence policy and information helpful domestic violence resources.
- Let the employee know that you care about his/her safety and are always available to talk.

ALWAYS PROTECT A VICTIM'S INFORMATION...

- Share safety plans with relevant people on a need-to-know basis.
- Remove employee's information from employer's website.
- Develop protocols for responding to abuse at work via phone, fax, or email.

DOs & DON'Ts

DO:

- Express concern and let the employee know that you are there to listen.
- Listen to and believe the employee without judgment.
- Offer your help and support and refer the employee to human resources or to a victim advocate (see resources section) for more assistance.

DO NOT:

- Ignore the situation or push the employee to talk.
- Blame the employee or make assumptions about the situation
- Tell the employee what to do or place conditions on your help or support.

Connecticut has two primary laws directly addressing survivors in the workplace:

CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES § 31-51ss

LEAVE FROM EMPLOYMENT FOR VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

If an employee is a victim of family violence, an employer shall permit the employee to take paid or unpaid leave during any calendar year in which such leave is reasonably necessary:

- To seek medical care or psychological or other counseling for physical or psychological injury or disability for the victim
- To obtain services from victim services organization on behalf of the victim
- To relocate due to such family violence, or
- To participate in any civil or criminal proceeding related to or resulting from such family violence.

An employer may limit unpaid leave under this law to twelve days during any calendar year. Leave under this section shall not affect any other leave provided under state or federal law.

This law defines “employer” as a “person engaged in business who has three or more employees.” Upon an employer’s request, an employee who takes leave pursuant to this section shall provide the employer a signed written statement certifying that the leave is for a purpose authorized under this section.

Visit www.cga.ct.gov to view the full statute.

CONNECTICUT GENERAL STATUTES § 31-51ll (as amended by Public Act 19-25)

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

As of January 1, 2022, eligible workers can take up to 12 weeks of leave during a twelve month period, plus an extra two weeks if experiencing pregnancy complications. Currently, workers may be eligible for unpaid family and medical leave not to exceed sixteen weeks during any twenty-four month period. Workers can take family and medical leave to, among other things, recover from a serious health condition.

A “serious health condition” is defined as “an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves (A) inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, nursing home or residential medical care facility; or (B) continuing treatment, including outpatient treatment, by a health care provider.”

As of January 1, 2022, this law defines “employer” as a “person engaged in any activity, enterprise or business who employs one or more employees.” The law currently applies to businesses with seventy-five or more employees.

Visit www.cga.ct.gov to view the full amended statute (Section 18 of Public Act 19-25, page 31).

OTHER RELEVANT LAWS FOR VICTIMS:

Connecticut has several other laws that may help keep a victim safe. Some of these laws include:

- Civil restraining order
- Early lease termination
- Address confidentiality
- Firearm protections
- Various arrest statutes

Connect your employee to a domestic violence advocate to learn more about these options and to discuss which might work best for them.



Developing workplaces policies to address domestic violence and creating a supportive workplace culture for survivors does not mean that you need to become an expert in domestic violence. CCADV and our 18 member organizations offer a number of valuable, comprehensive resources to meet the needs of survivors and professionals.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES IN CONNECTICUT

In Connecticut, there is a network of 18 domestic violence organizations (see map on next page) that offer comprehensive services including, but not limited to:

- Safety Planning
- Counseling
- Risk assessment
- Emergency shelter, transitional living, and rental assistance/rapid re-housing
- Legal advocacy including assistance with obtaining a restraining order
- Information & referrals
- Support for children

All services are **CONFIDENTIAL**, **SAFE** and **FREE**. Services are available to all individuals regardless of age, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, physical and/or intellectual ability, or immigration status.

Your employee can be connected with an organization in your area **24 HOURS PER DAY, 7 DAYS PER WEEK** by calling Connecticut's statewide domestic violence hotline at **888.774.2900 (ENGLISH)** or **844.831.9200 (ESPAÑOL)**.

OTHER RESOURCES

Some additional resources for survivors may include:

- ➔ **211/United Way of CT**
2-1-1 is a one-stop connection to a variety of local human services and basic needs, such as utility assistance, food, housing, child care, and more.
Dial 211 or visit www.211ct.org
- ➔ **Statewide Legal Services**
Statewide Legal Services is the entry point for low-income individuals in need of legal assistance in Connecticut.
Call 800.453.3320 or visit www.slsc.org to apply online.
- ➔ **CTLawHelp**
CTLawHelp was created by several nonprofit legal services organizations in Connecticut and provides information and self-help materials on a variety of legal issues.
Visit www.ctlawhelp.org

TRAINING & CONSULTATION

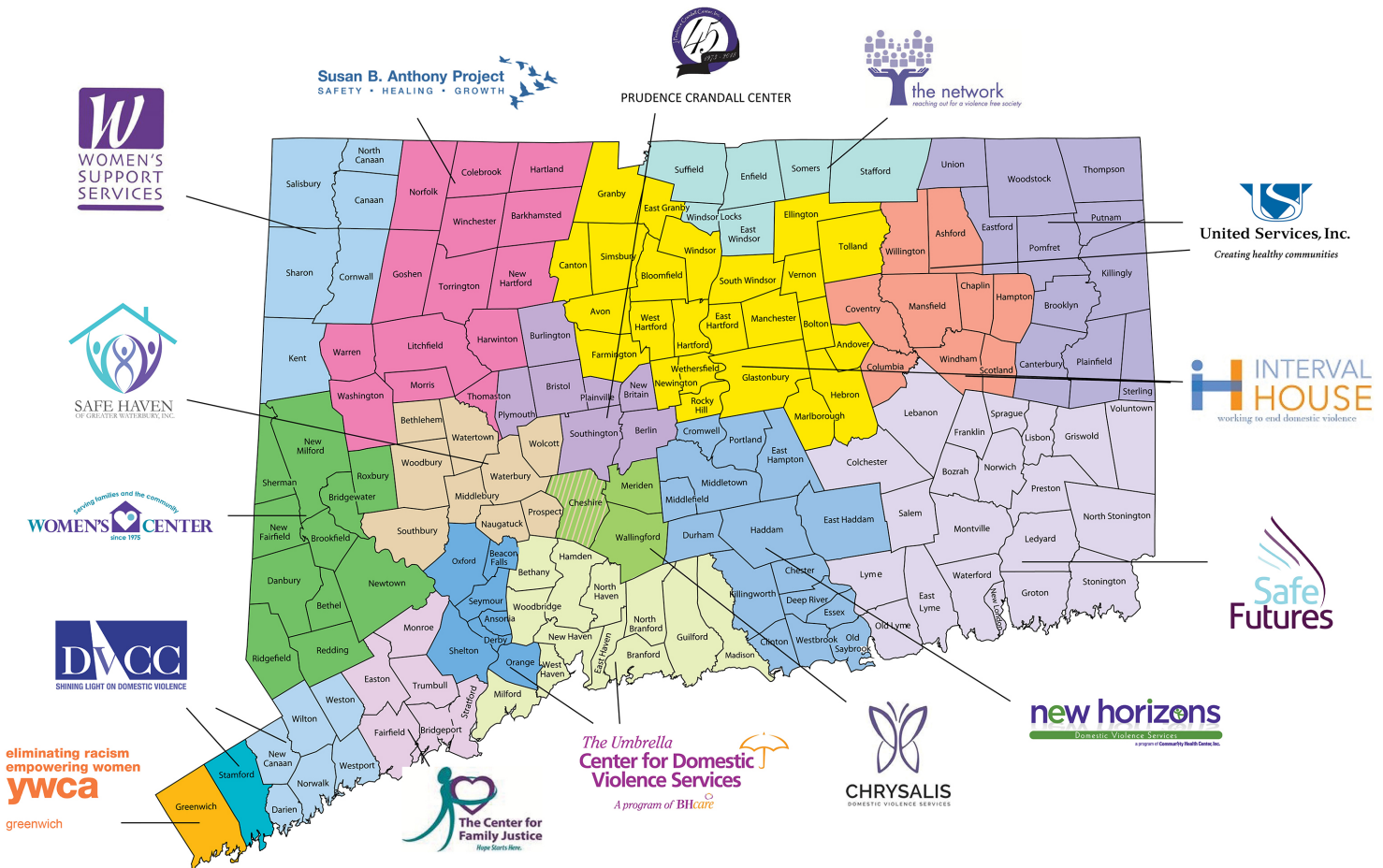
CCADV is available to provide training and consultation for your workplace. This may include assisting with the development of workplace policy and practice, or training employees on what domestic violence is and how to respond. To schedule a training or consultation, please contact:

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You can also view a webinar conducted by CCADV and Aetna by visiting ctcadv.org/projects-initiatives/workplace. This webinar identifies strategies to prevent and respond to domestic violence in the workplace and discusses best practices.

Below is a map of CCADV's 18 member organizations. These organizations provide comprehensive, life-saving services to survivors 24 hours per day, 7 days per week (see list of services on previous page). All services are confidential, safe, and free. To learn more about their available services or to connect with them, please visit www.ctadv.org.



If you have an employee who would like to be connected to a domestic violence advocate at one of CCADV's member organizations, or if you have questions about how to talk to an employee you suspect is experiencing domestic violence at home, please call the statewide domestic violence hotline:

888.774.2900 (ENGLISH) | 844.831.9200 (ESPAÑOL)
24/7 STATEWIDE TOLL-FREE HOTLINE
 CONFIDENTIAL, SAFE, FREE

Safe Connect



CALL | TEXT | CHAT | EMAIL | 24/7

Connecticut's Domestic Violence Information Hub
A New Way to Connect to Safety

Coming November 2019!

Strengthening Access to Safety through a Comprehensive, Coordinated Response

WHAT IT IS: CCADV's newest initiative, Safe Connect, will allow Connecticut to streamline the many access points that currently exist for survivors of domestic violence seeking services into one comprehensive, statewide coordinated triage and response. Safe Connect will provide victims with extensive information, safety planning, counseling, and case management, as well as referrals to one of our 18 member organizations and community resources.

HOW IT WORKS: Survivors or anyone looking for guidance about how to help someone experiencing domestic violence will be able to contact Safe Connect 24 hours per day, 365 days per year via:



CALL



TEXT



CHAT



EMAIL

WHY: The ways in which people communicate have evolved since Connecticut's statewide domestic violence hotline was first established. For some people, it's more comfortable to tell their story in writing, for others it's simply not always safe to call. Incorporating these new modes of communication will make services more accessible for more people.

Safe Connect will also prioritize increasing accessibility for traditionally underserved or underrepresented communities who may have struggled in the past to obtain services due to various obstacles such as cultural or language barriers.

WHO: To be successful in this endeavor, CCADV has built a team of highly compassionate, bilingual and multicultural individuals who are reflective of the communities we serve. Safe Connect staff have diverse cultural backgrounds and 70% are bilingual in English and Spanish.

Advocates will work in cohorts developing expertise in critical areas impacting survivors. They will provide technical assistance and training around their areas of expertise and develop key community partnerships to ensure strong systemic responses to domestic violence. Some identified areas of expertise include:

trauma • substance use • mental health • immigration • criminal justice system • offender behavior
child development • housing/homelessness • HIV/AIDS • humanitarian aide • advocacy/outreach

Stay Tuned for More Information!



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

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888.774.2900 (ENGLISH) 844.831.9200 (ESPAÑOL)

STATEWIDE TOLL-FREE HOTLINE

CONFIDENTIAL, SAFE, FREE