



Domestic Violence Resource for Stewards and Local Officers

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence or intimate partner violence is a pattern of assaults and controlling behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks and economic control that adults and adolescents use against their intimate partners. Domestic violence is lethal, common, and affects people of all cultures, religions, ages, sexual orientations, educational backgrounds, and income levels. The overwhelming majority of adult domestic violence victims are women, and perpetrators are men. It is a certainty that union members are affected personally by domestic violence.

Domestic Violence: A Workplace Issue

Domestic violence often becomes workplace violence. It is crucial that domestic violence and other forms of workplace violence be seen as serious, recognizable, and preventable problems like thousands of other workplace health and safety issues. Victims of Domestic Violence may be especially vulnerable while they are at work. The workplace can often become the only place the assailant can locate and harm a victim. Without knowledge of the signs of domestic violence, the risk of danger is magnified to the victim as well as to their co-workers.

Why Is Domestic Violence a Union Issue?

Domestic violence is a violation of one's rights and exists in a society in which victims, frequently women, experience a higher rate of intimate partner violence. The labor movement and other social movements in the U.S. share responsibility in the struggle for human dignity, including freedom from violence.

Unions work to protect all workers - both on the job and in the community. In addition to bread and butter issues, unions work to protect the health, safety, and well being of the workers they represent. Women and men facing domestic violence are at higher risk of on-the-job violence. They are more likely to have frequent absences, late arrivals, and other issues at work.

Victims of domestic violence may be disciplined by management for job performance problems and can lose opportunities for promotion, advancement and financial security. When issues such as high absenteeism and declining job performance result in disciplinary actions, union stewards may become involved.

Many CWA members work in professions that deal directly with domestic violence and its consequences, including emergency dispatchers, social workers, police officers, and health care workers. We can help victims of domestic violence access services, information, and protections available to them.

For Stewards and Officers:

Make sure any information about the victim's situation is confidential.

Let victims know that the union is there to support them when domestic violence causes on-the-job problems. Offer to be an advocate to get the employer to make some accommodations to help them through a crisis.

Check to see that your Member Assistance Program and/or Employee Assistance Program includes services for members dealing with domestic violence.

Work with personnel or human resources departments to ensure procedures that are in place to protect victims from domestic violence in the workplace are implemented.

Provide victims with information about their rights.

Assist Members in Creating a Workplace Safety Plan.

The Workplace Safety Plan can include:

- Notifying security of your safety concerns. Provide a picture of the batterer and a copy of protective orders to security, supervisors, and reception area staff.
- Reviewing the safety of your parking arrangements. Have security escort you to your car and obtain a parking space near the building entrance.
- Asking coworkers to call the police if your partner threatens or harasses you at work.
- Talking to union representatives or supervisors about flexible or alternate work hours.
- Talking to union representatives or supervisors about relocating your workspace to a more secure area.