



Workplace Violence

How Do You Know Something is Wrong?

There are lots of ways you can tell if something is wrong. Does your co-worker have unexplained bruises? Does she appear anxious, upset, or depressed? Has the quality of her work fluctuated for no apparent reason? Is she receiving harassing messages? Does she appear upset after getting a call from her partner? Is she absent frequently?

How You Can Help as a Co-Worker

- Express concern and a willingness to listen and be supportive.
- Listen without judging. It's possible that she believes her abuser's negative messages about herself. She may feel responsible, ashamed, inadequate, and afraid she will be judged by you.
- Tell her she is not responsible for the abuse. Explain that violence in a relationship is never acceptable. There's no excuse for it.
- Give her information on resources. Call **1-800-838-8238**, the Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline, to find local resources.
- Give her written materials about what she can do to keep herself and her children safer. The Virginia Hotline and local shelters have that information.
- Contact the Virginia Hotline yourself to get advice on how to approach your co-worker and get help for her.
- Respect her right to make her own decisions, even if you disagree with them.
- Encourage her to call the Virginia Hotline to get help developing a safety plan.

How You Can Help as a Supervisor

- Encourage her to talk to other supportive people. Respect her confidentiality if she chooses to tell no one except you.
- Create a working environment where employees feel safe breaking the silence about abuse they may be suffering.
- Display posters, safety cards, and other materials about domestic violence and how to get help.
- If an employee discloses abuse to you, give her these messages:
 - “I'm concerned for your safety.”
 - “I am here for you when you need help.”
 - “You don't deserve to be abused.”
 - “There are resources in the company/organization and in the community that can help you.”
- Give her the Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline number to call for support and information, **1-800-838-8238**.

- Refer her to the Employee Assistance Program, Human Resources Department, and the local domestic violence program for additional support.
- Encourage her to tell others about what is happening, including security.
- Be flexible and creative in helping her increase her safety. Some options she may consider that might help limit the abuser's access to her: changing break times, taking vacation leave if necessary, changing her schedule, relocating to a different work area.
- Ask her if she would like to arrange to have her calls screened, transfer harassing phone calls to security, or remove her name and number from automated phone directories.
- Assist her in documenting all incidents with the batterer that occur in the workplace.
- If she is interested in learning about Protective Orders, refer her to the Virginia Hotline, **1-800-838-8238**, or to her local shelter. If she obtains a Protective Order, help ensure that it is enforced at work.

Regardless of her decisions or actions, respect confidentiality in all your discussions with her.

**For Fairfax and Falls Church:
Fairfax Victim Assistance Network
24 hour hotline: 703-360-7273
TTY: 703-799-8253**

Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline

1-800-838-8238 (V/TTY)