



Resource Type: **Tips**  
Primary Audience: **Employers**

# Federal Supervisors Supporting Survivors of Domestic Violence

Supervisors are at the front lines in assisting employees who face domestic violence. As a supervisor, you have the ability to recognize the impacts of domestic and intimate partner violence, respond in a way that puts the employees' needs first, and refer them to the appropriate resources. When your team sees you intervening in a positive way, they are more empowered to step up as bystanders or ask for help as needed. Below are some key steps you can take to create a more supportive workplace for all.

## Recognize

Some common signs\* that your employee may be experiencing domestic violence:

1. Significant and ongoing difficulty concentrating on work tasks.
2. Repeated absences or tardiness to work.
3. Frequent visible physical injuries such as bruising, cuts, etc. that come with questionable explanations.
4. Harassing phone calls and e-mails from a non-work-related number or e-mail address that results in an employee being distracted or upset.
5. Overall negative changes in job performance.

\*This list is not exhaustive. Individuals experiencing violence may exhibit one or more signs, or none at all. This in no way indicates the veracity or severity of their experiences.

## Respond

If a survivor discloses abuse:

1. Ask "How can I help you?"

2. Convey the message: "You do not deserve this violence" and offer to support their efforts to stay safe.
3. Inform them about options available under the agency's personnel policies related to domestic violence, including information on privacy and confidentiality, relevant leave policies, and what reasonable accommodations can be made to keep them safe at work.

If you suspect someone is experiencing abuse:

1. DON'T CONFRONT them about your suspicions. DO focus on the employee's behavior at work. It is appropriate for a supervisor to show concern for an employee who seems distressed and may be struggling at work.
2. Offer help and referrals, and discuss potential accommodations that may better support them at work.
3. Remind them that they are an essential and valued employee, and you are here to help.

## Refer

1. If the person is in immediate danger, call 911.
2. You are not expected to be an expert. Trained domestic violence advocates are available 24 hours/? days a week at the National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1- 800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233) | TTY 1-800-787-3224.
3. Contact your agency's Work/Life Coordinators, as Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) policies and programs vary among agencies. You can find your agency's contact(s) by using the agency points of contact searchable database.

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Workplaces Respond provides technical assistance to workplace stakeholders seeking to better prevent and respond to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sexual harassment impacting the workplace. Scan this QR code to access the Resource Center.



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